

## The relationship of drive for muscularity to sociocultural factors, self-esteem, physical attributes gender role, and social comparison in middle school boys

Linda Smolak\*, Jonathan A. Stein

*Department of Psychology, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH 43022, USA*

Received 6 July 2005; received in revised form 17 March 2006; accepted 20 March 2006

---

### Abstract

This study examines the relationship of three sociocultural factors—media influence, peer teasing, and parent teasing/comments and three potential moderator variables—self-esteem, social comparison, and endorsement of male strength and athleticism—to drive for muscularity in middle school boys. There were 287 seventh and eighth grade boys who completed a questionnaire measuring these variables as well as body mass index (BMI) and pubertal status. Results indicated that media influence and male physical attributes endorsement were particularly important correlates of drive for muscularity. These findings have implications for programs designed to prevent body dissatisfaction among adolescent boys.

© 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Drive for muscularity; Gender role; Media; Peer teasing; Parent teasing/comments

---

### Introduction

A decade ago, body image researchers frequently limited their samples to girls and women on the assumption that boys and men were not particularly likely to suffer from serious body dissatisfaction problems. Since then, research has clearly established that body dissatisfaction is indeed a problem for a substantial percentage of boys and men but that male body concerns differ from those of girls and women (see, e.g., Cafri et al., 2005; McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004b; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2004 for reviews). Specifically, males are considerably more likely to want to increase their size, particularly in terms of muscularity, while females typically want to get thinner in order to match the culturally defined body ideals.

Compared to women, men may also be somewhat more invested in how well their bodies function, especially in terms of athletics and fitness, than in appearance. Thus men may engage in more exercise and weightlifting than dieting in attempting to influence their body shapes relative to what women do (e.g., Grogan & Richards, 2002). These findings suggest that body image is a gendered construct and that the meaning of body image differs for men and women (McCreary, Sasse, Saucier, & Dorsch, 2004; Smolak & Murnen, 2001, 2004).

Gender role, then, might be expected to be related to body image. Indeed, McCreary et al. (2004) have recently demonstrated that endorsement of masculine behaviors and attitudes is related to higher levels of drive for muscularity in college age men. Furthermore, qualitative research indicates that even young boys show the gendered patterns of body image suggesting that gender role may be operative in influencing body dissatisfaction in children and adolescents (Grogan & Richards, 2002). However, the relationship of gender

---

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 740 427 5374;  
fax: +1 740 427 5237.

E-mail address: [smolak@kenyon.edu](mailto:smolak@kenyon.edu) (L. Smolak).

role to body dissatisfaction, and more specifically to the apparently masculine-valenced drive for muscularity, has not yet been investigated in adolescents. One goal of the current study is to examine the relationship of gender role endorsement, particularly as it relates to physical attributes, to drive for muscularity among middle school boys. Middle school is a particularly interesting time to investigate the impact of gender role endorsement because boys' investment in masculinity may intensify at this time (e.g., Galambos, Almeida, & Petersen, 1990). In the present study, drive for muscularity may be defined as attitudes and behaviors related to a big, lean, and muscular body type that is culturally sanctioned for American males (McCreary & Sasse, 2000) and is operationalized as score on the Drive for Muscularity Scale (DMS; McCreary & Sasse, 2000).

More importantly, the role of gender in drive for muscularity has not been investigated. It is possible that there is simply a direct relationship, i.e., that investment in masculinity is positively correlated with drive for muscularity. McCreary, Saucier, and Courtenay (2005) found that unmitigated agency, male sex-typed behavior, and sex specific behaviors were positively correlated with DMS in college men. Indeed, the relationship between gender-role behavior and DMS was relatively strong; along with participant's gender, gender-role behavior accounted for over 25% of the variance in DMS.

However, it is also possible that gender role moderates the effects of sociocultural factors. Several studies have now suggested that sociocultural factors such as investment in media images, peer teasing and comments, and parental pressures may be at least correlated with drive for muscularity or dissatisfaction with muscularity among adolescent boys (e.g., Field et al., 2005; Jones, 2004; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001, 2003; Stanford & McCabe, 2005). However, as has been true of girls and drive for thinness (e.g., Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002; Keery, van den Berg, & Thompson, 2004), there are likely to be mediators or moderators of these sociocultural influences. In other words, not every boy who is exposed to these media images of muscularity or peer comments about muscularity will show a negative effect (i.e., body image issues). Personal characteristics that focus boys on these media, peer, and parent influences may help explain the individual differences. Indeed, several researchers have found that characteristics such as social comparison, self-esteem, or internalization of media ideals partially mediate or moderate the effects of sociocultural influences on either body dissatisfaction or, relatedly, use of muscle building techniques, by adolescent boys

(e.g., Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001; Smolak, Murnen, & Thompson, 2005). In the case of the personal characteristic of gender role investment, it is possible that boys who are invested in the male gender role will be particularly susceptible to sociocultural messages about muscularity because those messages fundamentally tell the boy how to be the "ideal" man. In the present study, both the direct and moderating relationships of gender to DMS are investigated. The measure of gender role used here emphasizes physical strength and athleticism.

The present study examined the influence of three sociocultural factors—perceived influence of media images, peer teasing, and parental teasing and comments—on drive for muscularity in middle school (approximately ages 11–13 years old) boys. Models of the development of body image problems in girls have often focused on these factors (e.g., Stice, 1994; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). Recent models of body image in boys and men have also suggested a prominent role for these sociocultural factors (e.g., Cafri et al., 2005; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2004; Smolak et al., 2005). Empirical data support the possibility that these factors are at least correlated with body image problems in boys and men (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2004).

Three potential moderators of sociocultural factors were also investigated. Two of these – self-esteem and social comparison – have been investigated previously (Jones, 2004; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001; Smolak et al., 2005). Social comparison based on appearance has been a particular focus because the Tripartite Influence Model of Body Dissatisfaction of Eating Disturbance (Thompson et al., 1999) suggests it is a mediator. Findings have been mixed, possibly because of the use of different measures for the dependent variables as well as regression equations that have employed various predictor variables. Smolak et al. (2005) reported that social comparison partially mediated the relationships between media influence, peer influence, and parent teasing and use of muscle building techniques. However, Jones (2004) reported no such role when investigating the longitudinal relationship of peer norms to body dissatisfaction (measured with a version of the EDI-Body Dissatisfaction Scale altered for use with boys). Ricciardelli and McCabe (2001) reported that self-esteem moderated the effects of media pressure to gain muscle on general body dissatisfaction. However, self-esteem did not moderate parental or peer pressure concerning muscularity in affecting general body dissatisfaction. Given that McCreary and Sasse (2000) showed a main effect of

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات