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Interpersonal Sensitivity and Body Image across Gender

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Body image is the multifaceted cognitions and emotions we have regarding our appearance. Individuals with a positive body image (i.e., a positive regard for their appearance) are often protected from developing disordered eating (Cooley & Toray, 2001), depression and other psychological problems (McFarland and Kaminski, 2009). How body image develops is not currently understood. Recent studies suggest that interpersonal sensitivity, the excessive awareness of the thoughts and feelings of others about oneself, may be correlated to body image (Atlas, 2004; McFarland & Kaminski, 2009). However, none of these studies have investigated the possible moderator affect gender has on this relationship. For this study, 63 female and 29 male college students completed body image and interpersonal sensitivity questionnaires. Preliminary analysis shows that body image is negatively correlated to interpersonal sensitivity. Thus individuals who have higher levels of interpersonal sensitivity often have poorer perceptions of their bodies. It is hypothesized that females will have a stronger correlation between body image and interpersonal sensitivity; previous research has found that women have higher levels of interpersonal sensitivity (Hall & Schmidt-Mast, 2008) and lower body image (Cash, Winstead & Janda, 1986). This study is intended to provide a framework to inspire future research on the origins and causes of body image.

Atlas, J. G. (2004). Interpersonal sensitivity, eating disorder symptoms, and eating/thinness expectancies. *Current Psychology*, 22 (4), 368–378.

Cash, T. F., Winstead, B. A., & Janda, L. H. (1986, April). The great American shape up. *Psychology Today*, 20, 30–37.

Cooley, E., & Toray, T. (2001). Body image and personality predictors of eating disorder symptoms during the college years. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 30(1), 28–36.

Hall, J. A., & Schmid–Mast, M. (2008). Are women always more interpersonally sensitive than men? Impact of goals and content domain. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34 (1), 144–155.

McFarland, M. B., & Kaminski, P. (2009). Men, muscles and mood; the relationship between self–concept, dysphoria and body image disturbances. *Eating Behaviors*, 10 (1), 68–70.