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Perceived Body Image and Reasons for Exercise Among College Students

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Ideal body image perceptions from Western culture has led body dissatisfaction levels to increase significantly in the past 30 years. Researchers have found that individuals tend to have inaccurate perceptions of their bodies. Therefore, comparisons between inaccurate perceptions and an ideal body image cause body dissatisfaction. Minimal research has been done focusing on the relation between body image and specific exercise behaviors. The purpose of this research is to understand how someone's own body perception affects their exercise behavior, type and frequency. Specifically, does body perception affect the behaviors the individual demonstrates while exercising? Exercise behaviors may include decisions for specific types of exercises or their body language while exercising. A total of 30 participants were observed for 20 minutes focusing on behaviors like concentration, body surveillance, and confidence while exercising. Then, participants were approached to answer a questionnaire that included questions related to workout routine, motivational reasons to exercise, body size and satisfaction. Using the observations and questionnaires, relationships between body image and exercise types, frequencies and behavior were established. Understanding these relationships may help physical activity facilities better tend to their clients and allow them to understand the clients' reasons for visiting the facility. The facilities will then be aware of common behaviors of individuals who need more guidance and help when exercising in order to achieve better results. These results will also provide professionals who work with college-aged students a greater understanding of how distorted body image relates to behaviors during exercise.