Actual vs. Perceived Body Composition and How Body Image Impacts College Students

Kiera Papish  
UNC, janice.dickensheets@unco.edu

Pyper Newton

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Actual vs. Perceived Body Composition and How Body Image Impacts College Students

Papish, Kiera and Newton, Pyper
Faculty Sponsor: Kage, Katie

It has been estimated that up to two thirds of young women and one third of young men experience significant dissatisfaction with their body size, shape, condition, or appearance. Body image dissatisfaction, weight concerns, eating problems, and physical attractiveness have become especially significant issues on college campuses due to the stresses accompanied with this major transition in a young person’s life. The purpose of this IRB approved quantitative study was to investigate perceived body composition compared to actual composition in college students. Participants were asked to complete three surveys that took a total of 20 minutes or less. These surveys included demographic data, general health behaviors, social physique and anxiety data correlated to body image, and perceived BMI. After completion of the surveys, the participants’ actual body composition was collected using the BodPod. Descriptive and statistical analysis of the data will be performed using SPSS to determine correlations and significance between body fat percentage and body image. A total of 50 of the projected 100 participants have completed the study. Preliminary results show that 66% of participants are overestimating their body fat percentage by an average of 13% and 23% have underestimated their percentage by an average of 6%. Results from this study will help direct programming initiatives on students’ body image and the development of healthy behaviors as they navigate the college experience.