

Effects of Anxiety on Perceived Body Image Dissatisfaction
Among Young Adults.
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ABSTRACT

The relationship between anxiety and body image dissatisfaction was examined among college students. Analyses revealed that highly anxious participants reported more body image dissatisfaction than their low anxiety counterparts. Highly anxious women were also more likely to report body image dissatisfaction than men. Results suggest anxiety may impact treatment success.

400 word Summary (Required for MPA Submission)

Past research in the area of body image dissatisfaction has indicated that numerous social and cultural influences play a powerful role in the development of body image among young women and men (Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990). However, recently researchers have begun to focus on the role of anxiety in the development of perceived body image dissatisfaction. For example, Kotstanski and Gullone (1998) demonstrated that high levels of anxiety increased perceived body image dissatisfaction among young adolescent girls. Unfortunately, there has been a paucity of research looking at the relationship between anxiety and perceived body image dissatisfaction among college students. In the current study it was hypothesized that high levels of anxiety would be associated with greater perceived body image dissatisfaction.

In the present study, college students were given the Cash Body Image Quality of Life Questionnaire (BIQLQ) and the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). The survey

was distributed to 137 college students enrolled in various introductory college courses at a private university in the Midwest. Men and women who scored in the upper 25% of the STAI were categorized as high in anxiety, whereas the individuals who scored in the lower 25% were considered low in anxiety.

A 2 X 2 (Anxiety X Gender) univariate analysis of variance was performed on the BIQLQ. The results revealed a main effect for anxiety, $F(1,94) = 34.99, p < .001$. As can be seen in Figure 1, highly anxious subjects reported more body image dissatisfaction ($M = 66.45$) than their low anxiety counterparts ($M = 94.31$). The main effect for gender was not significant, $F(1,94) = 0.70, ns$. However, the Anxiety X Gender interaction was significant, $F(1,94) = 5.03, p < .05$. As can be seen in Figure 2, low anxious participants had higher body image satisfaction than their highly anxious counterparts. While there was no significant difference between men and women in the low anxious condition, $t(40) = 1.30, ns$, there was a trend towards significance between highly anxious men and women, $t(54) = -1.89, p = .065$. The results suggest that highly anxious women tend to be more apt to feel body image dissatisfaction than their male counterparts.

A cautious interpretation of the findings may be warranted given participants were college students who were not diagnosed as having an anxiety disorder. However, the results of the current study are very suggestive that anxiety may play a role in perceived body image dissatisfaction.

References

- Cash, T. F., & Pruzinsky, T. (1990). *Body images: Development, deviance, and change*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Kotstanski, M., & Gullone, E. (1998). Adolescent body image dissatisfaction: Relationships with self-esteem, anxiety, and depression controlling for body mass. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry & Applied Disciplines, 39*, 255-262.

Figure 1: Mean Body Image Dissatisfaction as a Function of Anxiety Level

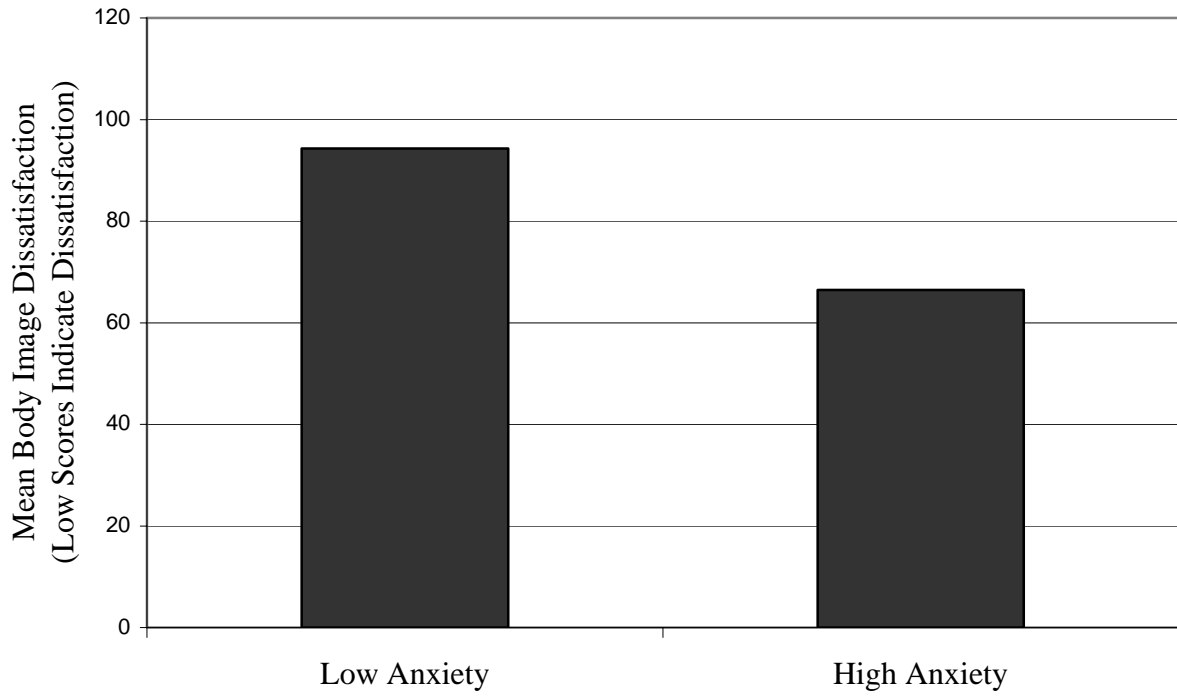


Figure 2: Mean Body Image Dissatisfaction as a Function of Gender and Anxiety Level

