

The Association of Body Image and Interpersonal Relationships as it relates to Happiness

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THE ASSOCIATION OF BODY IMAGE AND INTERPERSONAL
RELATIONSHIPS AS IT RELATES TO HAPPINESS.

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Psychology
in the College of Sciences
and in The Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Cyrus Azimi, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

As one of the most important emotional goals pertaining to humankind, achieving happiness has been the central focus of scientists, philosophers, and the general population alike since the beginning of recorded history. This study strove to examine the association of body image satisfaction and relationship quality as it relates to happiness. Four hundred college-age participants completed the Subjective Happiness Scale, the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (Appearance Scales), and the Network of Relationships Inventory (Relationships Quality Version) for close friendships of the same-sex and opposite-sex. Statistical analysis indicated that while body image satisfaction was significantly correlated with happiness, quality of interpersonal relationships was not. The results of this study emphasize the importance of one's satisfaction with one's body in the cultivation and maintenance of subjective well-being and the need to examine other potential predictors of happiness.

Keywords: body image, happiness, subjective well-being, interpersonal relationships

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to:

My family

For your undying love and support, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Other things may change us, but we start and end with family.

Alexis & Kiko

I love you both more than words can say.

A friend is someone who knows all about you and still loves you.

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Thank You!

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INTRODUCTION

As one of the most important emotions pertaining to humankind, happiness has been the central focus of scientists, philosophers, and the general population alike since the beginning of recorded history (Glatzer, 2000). In more scientific terms, happiness is generally described as subjective well-being, or an experiential state that is characterized by a globally positive affective tone (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013). Other definitions exist, of course – a study by Haller and Hadler (2006) described happiness as being formed by two separate meanings, one referring to the specific moment in which we are living and the other to life satisfaction as a whole. For the purpose of this study, the former definition of happiness, or subjective well-being, was used and the terms utilized interchangeably.

One would be hard-pressed to find someone who denies his/her desire to be happy. Virtually everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or age wants to be happy (Diener, Sapyta, & Suh, 1998), and more than a decade of research has revealed the benefits of happiness for psychological and physical health (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005; Steptoe, Dockray, & Wardle, 2009). Among other benefits, happiness has been shown to predict better work performance, stronger immune systems, and even higher quality relationships due to greater sociability and likability (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). However, do these variables in turn predict higher levels of happiness? Interpersonal relationships – whether they are with a spouse, family member, or friend – have long been associated with happiness (Baumeister et al., 2013; Demir, 2010; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Haller & Hadler, 2006; Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005; Zhu, Woo, Porter, & Brzezinski, 2013).

The type and quality of social relations are just as, if not more important than, their quantity. A study by Kamp Dush and Amato (2005) examining a national sample of more than two thousand married individuals found that as the commitment level of a relationship rose (dating, cohabiting, marriage, etc.), so did the individual's reported levels of subjective well-being. Additionally, the more satisfied individuals were with the quality of their relationship, the higher their reported levels of subjective well-being were. In simpler terms, individuals with a romantic partner were happier than single persons regardless of the quality of their relationship – but those who did report a higher level of satisfaction and quality were even happier. This refuted an earlier study in which it was found that unhappily married individuals reported significantly lower levels of subjective well-being than those who had no partner (Gove, Hughes, & Style, 1983). Regardless, studies have consistently demonstrated the association between romantic relationships and happiness (Demir, 2010; Diener & Seligman, 2002).

In that same vein, a marriage is much different than a friendship in that the latter typically lacks, among other characteristics, the deep roots of commitment found in established couples. A person in an unhappy marriage may be happier than unmarried individuals, but a person with a multitude of toxic friendships may report a lower level of happiness than a person with a singular best friend. Unfortunately, as this study was confined to the ages of 18-25 with the majority being between 18 and 19 and in their freshman year of college, being married was more of an exception than the norm. Thus, the present study partly focused on the quality of interpersonal relationships in regards to close friendships of the same and opposite sex and its correlation with subjective well-being.

Research has also shown that the vast majority of people consider their bodies to be an important component of their self-identity (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Subsequently, a strong contributing factor to subjective well-being is whether the individual is happy with their body or not. Negative body image has been shown to be associated with poorer psychological well-being overall, particularly in regards to symptoms of depression and depressive mood (Paxton, Neumark-Sztainer, Hannan, & Eisenberg, 2006; Sondhaus, Kurtz, & Strube, 2001; van den Berg, Mond, Eisenberg, Ackard, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2010).

In American culture, body image and physical appearance have traditionally received great emphasis. Largely unattainable for the average person, however, the feminine ideal of thinness and the masculine ideal of an overly muscled body (Bloch & Richins, 1992; Cash & Henry, 1995; Martin & Gentry, 1997; Neumark-Sztainer & Eisenberg, 2014) have led to a marked increase in the levels of body dissatisfaction and contributed to a rise in the prevalence of eating disorders (Cash & Deagle, 1997; Muth & Cash, 1997; Sondhaus et al., 2001).

Typically defined as the complex, multifaceted construct of an individual's self-concept of themselves, the term body image refers to a person's body esteem, attitudes, and accuracy of size perception (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). Individuals who self-identify as being of White ethnicity have historically reported higher levels of eating disturbance and body dissatisfaction when compared to non-whites (Wildes & Emery, 2001). In fact, two independent studies each examining the prevalence of eating disturbance and body dissatisfaction among Whites and minority women found that while African American and Asian American women are less likely than their White counterparts to develop eating disorders, Hispanic American women are equally likely and Native American women are more likely

(Crago, Shisslak, & Estes, 1996; Wildes & Emery, 2001).

Furthermore, large-sample studies have supported the notion that women are generally more discontent with their body appearance than men (Cash & Henry, 1995; Çatikkaş, 2011; Gillen & Lefkowitz, 2012; Muth & Cash, 1997; Pliner, Chaiken, & Flett, 1990). For example, a comprehensive study by Swami, Tran, Stieger, and Voracek (2014) surveyed nearly fifteen thousand women worldwide and successfully demonstrated that women who report higher levels of body image appreciation also report higher levels of happiness and subjective well-being. That is, their results heavily suggested that women who held more favorable opinions of their body while accepting, respecting, and protecting their bodies from unrealistic and unhealthy ideals were happier. In respect to men, very few studies have found no gender difference in regards to body-image evaluations (Cash & Brown, 1989). The present study will examine both men and women whilst seeking to reaffirm the primary assumption that the happier a person is with his/her body, the happier he/she will be overall.

Though satisfaction with one's body is conducive to a person's level of overall happiness, a common misconception is that the achievement of a "perfect body" will bring about complete success and contentedness. Furthermore, if the ideal body is simply impossible to achieve for the layperson, there will be scores of dissatisfied and unhappy people. Bodies vary tremendously in terms of their shapes, sizes, and colors – an individual's body image is only one contributing factor to the development of a person's overall happiness. Social experiences and quality of interpersonal relationships, for example, have been shown to be stronger determinants of a person's subjective well-being than body image (Gove et al., 1983; Haller & Hadler, 2006; House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988; Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005).

While this study focused on the association of body image and interpersonal relationships on happiness, it is not unreasonable to assume that these two variables will demonstrate some sort of interaction with each other as well. When one is uncomfortable with himself/herself, it would be logical to presume that he/she would be uncomfortable with others as well. Reis et al. (1982) showed that the attractiveness of an individual did indeed relate positively to the affective quality of social interactions for both genders. A study by Noles, Cash, and Winstead (1985) examining day-to-day social interaction and body image demonstrated that individuals with a more positive view of their body tended to be better adjusted than those with a less positive view. The individuals' self-perception of their bodies' attractiveness and how attractive people believed others found them showed a strong positive correlation with the levels of reported intimacy in interactions as well.

This dissatisfaction a person feels for his/her body and the resulting social anxiety it can cause may lead to difficulty in forming meaningful relationships and functioning in the everyday social encounters necessary for a fulfilling life. Though one study by Davison and McCabe (2005) examining nearly 500 men and women found no significant connection between body image and their social functioning, multiple studies have shown that individuals who perceive themselves as unattractive report higher levels of social anxiety (Cash & Fleming, 2002; Feingold, 1992) and tend to avoid social interactions with both the same and opposite genders (Mitchell & Orr, 1976; Nezlek, 1999). A fairly recent study by Cash, Thériault, and Annis (2004) examining the attachment styles of more than 200 college students further asserted that regardless of an individual's actual body mass index, there is a significant relationship between multiple facets of their body image and relationship quality.

Given the research done up to this point, several hypotheses are thus proposed. First, that the level of body image satisfaction will have a significant correlation with a person's subjective well-being. Likewise, (2) the quality of a person's interpersonal relationships will have a significant correlation with a person's subjective well-being as well. However, (3) the quality of interpersonal relationships will be more predictive of happiness than body image satisfaction and finally, (4) the quality of interpersonal relationships and body image satisfaction will be significantly correlated.

METHOD

Participants

A priori power analysis using the GPower program (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) indicated that a sample size of 400 would be sufficient to detect a significant interaction effect with a power of .95 and an alpha of .05. A sample population of 400 undergraduate students were recruited through the Research Participation System at the University of Central Florida known as SONA, which enables students to receive course credit in return for their participation. Prerequisites to take the study included being currently enrolled at UCF and between the ages of 18 and 25 ($M=19$ years). Participants were able to sign up for and respond to the study solely through the SONA system. Upon completion, 0.5 SONA credits were awarded as compensation. All participants were treated in accordance with APA guidelines.

Procedure

Data was collected through an online questionnaire made up of four parts, which included a short demographics survey and three instruments listed below. The presentation order of these four parts was kept consistent for each participant (demographics, SHS, MBSRQ, and NRI-RQV). Students who did not meet the prerequisites for the study were prohibited from participating. There was no time limit, and the average participant took between 20 to 30 minutes to complete the study.

Measures

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

The 4-item SHS (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) assessed the subjective level of overall happiness an individual experiences on a 7-point Likert-type response scale. On two questions, participants characterized themselves based on absolute ratings (1 = *Not a very happy person*, 7

= *More Happy*). On the two further items, they rated the extent to which descriptions of happy and unhappy people are characteristic of themselves (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *A great deal*). Following reverse-coding of one item, an overall score ranging from 4 to 28 was computed as the total of all items, with higher scores reflecting greater subjective happiness.

The assessment and reliability of the SHS was obtained through 14 samples, collected at different times and locations ranging from high school to senior centers in the community as well as one public university and a community of working adults in Russia. Using Cronbach's Alpha reliability, this survey showed good to excellent internal consistency (range .79 to .94), demonstrating comparability across samples of various ages, occupations, languages, and cultures. Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) were able to further demonstrate good test-retest reliability (.55 to .90) for periods of three weeks up to a year. For the present study, Cronbach's Alpha was .82.

Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire – Appearance Scales (MBSRQ-AS)

The 34-item short-form of the well-validated MBSRQ (Brown, Cash, & Mikulka, 1990) consists of five multi-item subscales that measure specific facets of appearance-related body image using a 5-point dissatisfactions-satisfaction response format. These include the following five subscales: (1) Appearance Evaluation, in which feelings of physical attractiveness or unattractiveness are measured, (2) Appearance Orientation, in which the extent of investment in one's appearance is measured, (3) Overweight Preoccupation, which assesses a construct reflecting fat anxiety, weight vigilance, dieting, and eating restraint, (4) Self-Classified Weight, the way in which one perceives and labels one's weight, from very underweight to very overweight, and finally (5) the Body Areas Satisfaction Scales (BASS), similar to the

Appearance Evaluation subscale except that the BASS taps satisfaction with discrete areas of one's appearance.

Scores for each subscale ranged from 5 to 35 (appearance evaluation), 12 to 60 (appearance orientation), 9 to 45 (body areas satisfaction), 4 to 20 (overweight preoccupation), and 1 to 10 (self-classified weight). Total scale scores ranged from 31 to 170, with higher scores indicating a higher level of body image satisfaction.

This scale's reliabilities and convergent, discriminant, and construct validities have been established by various studies with clinical and nonclinical populations (Cash & Brown, 1987, 1989; Keeton, Cash, & Brown, 1990; Noles et al., 1985). Investigation of factor structure demonstrated that it was stable and concordant for both females and males (Brown et al., 1990). For this study, further inspection of the coefficient alphas for all given scales indicated that the factors evidenced satisfactory internal consistencies (Cronbach's Alpha range = .78 to .86).

Network of Relationships Inventory – Relationships Quality Version (NRI-RQV)

The 30-item NRI-RQV (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992) has ten scales with three items each. It assessed five positive features (companionship, disclosure, emotional support, approval, satisfaction), and five negative relationship features (conflict, criticism, pressure, exclusion, and dominance). Participants were asked to rate the quality of various relationships they have with others, such as those with their parents, romantic partner, sibling(s), and close friends of the same- and opposite-sex. Sample questions included "How often do you depend on these people for help, advice, or sympathy?" and "How often do these people say mean or harsh things to you?" Participants rated how much each of the 30 items occurred in each relationship on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*little to none*) and 5 (*always*). Following reverse scoring of

appropriate items, the score for this scale was found by subtracting the sum of the negative subscales from the sum of the positive subscales. Composite score ranging from -150 to 150 for each relationship, with higher scores indicating higher relationship quality.

Unfortunately, a substantial number of individuals (nearly 300 out of the 400 participants) opted out of reporting relationship quality with their mother (or mother-figure), father (or father-figure), romantic partner, and/or with their sibling(s). This could be due participants simply not having the specified relationship or, more likely, survey fatigue. Questions regarding relationships with close same- and opposite-sex friends were presented first, followed by romantic, sibling, and parental relationships. In any case, there was an insufficient amount of data to examine these relationships. The study thus focused on the relationships between close friends of the same- and opposite-sex, as there was no missing data from those portions of the questionnaire.

Regarding validity, Furman and Buhrmester (1992) reported that the scale was sensitive to both gender differences and developmental changes experienced in close relationships from childhood to early adulthood. The scale has also been shown to relate to happiness by multiple studies (Bagwell et al., 2005; Demir & Weitekamp, 2007). Cronbach's Alpha for this study was .84 for friends of the same-sex subscale and .91 for friends of the opposite-sex subscale.

RESULTS

Sample demographics presented in Table 1 showed that participants ($N=400$) were on average, females (72%) between the ages of 18 and 19 (78%), mostly White (58%), and in their freshman year of college (61%). Descriptive statistics for the female and male group, female group, and male group, are presented in Table 2. As can be seen, the overall happiness averages for all three groups were relatively high, with males reporting slightly higher levels of happiness. Females, when compared to males, reported higher scores on the appearance orientation, overweight preoccupation, and self-classified weight subscales, and lower scores on the appearance evaluation and body areas satisfaction subscales. This suggests that women are, on average, more critical and self-conscious of their bodies than men, though the differences are small. Surprisingly, females still rated their overall body image satisfaction higher than males. In regards to relationship quality, females reported a substantially higher level of quality for both relationships with a close friend of the same-sex and with a close friend of the opposite-sex than did men.

The matrix for intercorrelations between all measures is presented in Table 3. Though body image satisfaction as a whole ($M=113.41$, $SD=11.75$) demonstrated a significant correlation with happiness ($M=18.09$, $SD=3.44$, $r=.28$, $p<.01$), neither of the quality of relationships between friends of the same-sex ($M=27.09$, $SD=14.29$, $r=-.003$, *n.s.*) nor of the opposite-sex ($M=25.18$, $SD=17.27$, $r=.033$, *n.s.*) were significantly related to levels of happiness. On an important side note, however, both relationship quality with close friend of the same- and opposite-sex were significantly correlated with overall body image satisfaction ($r=.18$ and $r=.21$, respectively).

Additionally, the appearance evaluation subscale ($M=23.73$, $SD=5.49$, $r=.366$, $p<.01$) and the body areas satisfaction subscale ($M=30.68$, $SD=6.03$, $r=.326$, $p<.01$) were found to have a significantly positive correlation with reported levels of happiness, while the overweight preoccupation subscale ($M=10.57$, $SD=3.95$, $r=-.09$, $p<.01$) was found to have a significantly negative correlation with reported levels of happiness. This indicates that individuals who consider themselves attractive are happier than those who demonstrate greater weight vigilance and dieting behaviors. The remaining subscales, appearance orientation ($M=42.17$, $SD=8.16$, $r=-.043$, $n.s.$) and self-classified weight ($M=6.28$, $SD=1.38$, $r=.013$, $n.s.$), as well as gender (coded as 1=female and 2=male) were not found to significantly predict levels of happiness.

Factors significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, appearance evaluation, body areas satisfaction, overweight preoccupation and overall body image satisfaction were fit to a multiple regression model with happiness as the dependent variable to determine the strongest correlates of happiness in the presence of other related factors. The regression equation for this model was significant, $R^2=0.14$, $F(4,395)=16.62$, $p<.001$, and statistics are presented in Table 4. These results indicated that together, all four predictor variables accounted for a little over 14% of the variance in levels of happiness. More specifically, however, appearance evaluation was revealed as the only variable with statistical significance given the other variables entered and accounted for 27% of the variance in happiness alone. Body areas satisfaction accounted for 12%, while overweight preoccupation and overall body image satisfaction accounted for 8% and 7%, respectively. This suggests that the degree to which one considers themselves attractive or unattractive is moderately related to their subsequent happiness.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Demographics	Frequency (%)
Females	289 (72)
Males	111 (28)
Age 18-19	311 (78)
Age 20-21	57 (14)
Age 22-23	22 (6)
Age 24-25	10 (3)
Freshmen	242 (61)
Sophomores	69 (17)
Juniors	46 (12)
Seniors	42 (11)
Decline to Answer	1 (<1)
Asian/Pacific Islander	33 (8)
Black or African American	46 (12)
Hispanic/Latino	77 (19)
Native American or American Indian	1 (<1)
White	230 (58)
Other	11 (3)
Decline to Answer	2 (<1)

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Measure	Male and Female (N=400)		Female (N=289)		Male (N=111)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Happiness	18.09	3.44	17.93	3.44	18.50	3.41
Appearance Evaluation	23.73	5.49	23.24	5.60	24.99	5.0
Appearance Orientation	42.17	8.16	43.26	8.07	39.33	7.7
Body Areas Satisfaction	30.68	6.03	30.29	6.13	31.68	5.68
Overweight Preoccupation	10.57	3.95	11.19	3.90	8.95	3.59
Self-Classified Weight	6.28	1.38	6.38	1.36	6.0	1.39
Overall Body Image Satisfaction	113.41	11.75	114.36	11.62	110.95	11.78
Quality of Interpersonal Relationship with Close Friend of the Same-Sex	27.09	14.29	29.79	13.96	20.05	12.69
Quality of Interpersonal Relationship with Close Friend of the Opposite-Sex	25.19	17.27	26.39	17.71	22.06	15.72
Gender ¹	1.28	0.45				

Note: ¹ coded as 1=Female and 2=Male

Table 3. Pearson Correlations

Measure	Happiness	Appearance Evaluation	Appearance Orientation	Body Areas Satisfaction	Overweight Preoccupation	Self-Classified Weight	Overall Body Image Satisfaction	Quality of Interpersonal Relationship with Close Friend of the Same-Sex	Quality of Interpersonal Relationship with Close Friend of the Opposite-Sex
Appearance Evaluation	.36**								
Appearance Orientation	-.04	-.25**							
Body Areas Satisfaction	.33**	.81**	-.302**						
Overweight Preoccupation	-.09**	-.49**	.52**	-.49**					
Self-Classified Weight	.01	.056**	.204**	-.34**	.44**				
Overall Body Image Satisfaction	.28*	.49**	.62**	.48**	.27**	.022			
Quality of Interpersonal Relationship with Close Friend of the Same-Sex	-.01	.056	.13**	.12**	-.007	-.031	.18**		
Quality of Interpersonal Relationship with Close Friend of the Opposite-Sex	.03	.201**	.056	.22**	-.079	-.11*	.21**	.36**	
Gender ¹	.07	.143**	-.22**	.103	-.26**	-.12**	-.13**	-.31**	-.11*

Note: ¹ coded as 1=Female and 2=Male; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 4. Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Predicting Levels of Happiness

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Appearance Evaluation	.17	.06	.27*
Body Areas Satisfaction	.07	.05	.12
Overweight Preoccupation	.07	.07	.08
Overall Body Image Satisfaction	.02	.02	.07
R^2		.17	
F		10.28	

Note: $p < .01$

DISCUSSION

Two of the four proposed hypotheses of this study were supported. First, the level of body image satisfaction was successfully demonstrated to have a significant correlation with a person's subjective well-being. The second and third hypotheses, however, that the quality of a person's interpersonal relationships have a significant correlation with a person's subjective well-being and that the correlation would be stronger than that of body image satisfaction, were not supported. Finally, the fourth hypothesis that body image satisfaction and quality of interpersonal relationships is significantly correlated was found to be true.

In other words, the results of this study indicated that for both males and females, one's overall satisfaction with their body image was a significant predictors of happiness, especially in regards to evaluation of their appearance, overweight preoccupation, and body areas satisfaction. On the other hand, relationship quality was not found to be a significant predictor of happiness. This outcome was unexpected given the amount of literature supporting the association between quality of interpersonal relationships and happiness (Baumeister et al., 2013; Demir, 2010; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Haller & Hadler, 2006; Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005; Zhu et al., 2013). Nonetheless, body image satisfaction was proven to have a significantly strong correlation with a person's reported level of happiness.

Limitations

As previously mentioned, the overwhelming majority of participants in the obtained sample self-identified as being White (58%), female (72%), in their freshman year of college (61%), and between the ages of 18 and 19 (78%). Females traditionally report higher levels of body image dissatisfaction than males (Cash & Henry, 1995; Çatikkaş, 2011; Gillen &

Lefkowitz, 2012; Muth & Cash, 1997; Pliner et al., 1990; Swami et al., 2014), as do those of who identify as White (Wildes & Emery, 2001). The results of this study did not support the findings of this previous research though, as females reported slightly higher levels of overall body image satisfaction than males, despite lower scores in regards to appearance orientation, and self-classified weight. However, the fact that the sample was mostly homogenous cannot be discredited from affecting the results.

Furthermore, the present study was only able to examine close friendships of the same- and opposite-sex due to missing data most likely caused by survey fatigue. Another possible reason for this paucity of data include simply the lack of such a person in their life (e.g., he/she was an only child raised by a single-mother). Unfortunately, this meant that vital relationships, such as those with one's parent(s), sibling(s), romantic partner, and other familial persons were unable to be analyzed. The results of this study indicating that the general quality of interpersonal relationships was not significantly correlated with a person's level of happiness should therefore be view with great caution.

Finally, data obtained and the subsequent analyses were correlational in nature and relied entirely on self-report measures, preventing causal claims and calling into question how accurately each participant was able to answer each question. This study was also limited to the student population at the University of Central Florida, making it difficult to confidently generalize the findings of this research to other populations.

Implications

The results of this study indicated a few findings about the correlation of body image satisfaction on a person's level of happiness. First, appearance orientation, or the extent of

investment in one's appearance and how much importance he/she places on "looking good", is not meaningfully related to his/her happiness. In simpler terms, the amount of time one spends on grooming behaviors does not relate to how happy he/she reports to be. Secondly, a person's self-classified weight, or the way in which one perceives and labels one's weight from very underweight to very overweight, was not related to his/her level of happiness either, suggesting that people who consider themselves overweight (or underweight) can still be happy, and vice versa. Finally, the negative correlation between overweight preoccupation and happiness suggests that fat anxiety, weight vigilance, dieting, and eating restraint are not conducive to a person's level of happiness.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that those who evaluate themselves as more attractive and report being more satisfied with specific body areas as measured by the body areas satisfaction subscale are happier in general while those who are overly absorbed in their perceived overweightness are less happy in general.

More generally, these results suggest that body image dissatisfaction is related to a marked decrease in psychological well-being. As previously mentioned, this may be due to the slender nature of the feminine ideal body and the bulky, overly muscled masculine ideal body (Bloch & Richins, 1992; Cash & Henry, 1995; Martin & Gentry, 1997; Neumark-Sztainer & Eisenberg, 2014) that is largely unattainable for the average person. However, the fact that a person's self-classified weight is not significantly related to their happiness indicates that whether one thinks they are underweight or overweight is not related to their happiness, so long as they still consider themselves attractive. Consequently, it may not necessarily be whether a person believes their body matches the ideal body type that affects their happiness so much as

whether they have accepted and embraced their body or not. Regardless, this impossible ideal can and will lead to an increase in body dissatisfaction (Cash & Deagle, 1997; Muth & Cash, 1997; Sondhaus et al., 2001), and, as a result, a decrease in overall subjective happiness.

A more diverse representation of bodies in the media that include, but are not limited to, different sizes, ages, shapes, and ethnicities may be beneficial in addressing this issue. Education and simply ensuring that people understand that what they see on television and in magazines does not necessarily reflect real life may help as well. Ultimately, to create happier and more productive citizens, our society must address the issue of body image dissatisfaction. The media has come a long way in diversifying the types of bodies we see in popular culture in the past decade, but there is always room for improvement.

Future Research

In the future, studies should strive to examine a wider variety of specific interpersonal relationships (marital, familial, etc.) as they relate to body image and happiness. A substantial amount of missing data prevented this analysis from being done in the present study, but it is still an important area of research that can and should be examined in the future. Other variables that may be of interest to future researchers include physical health, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and more. The association of these three variables in a cross-sectional study of different ages (e.g., young, middle-aged, older) may yield some meaningful results as well. Additionally, future studies should strive to obtain a more diverse, representative sample.

In conclusion, the findings of the present study highlight the important of body image satisfaction in the cultivation and maintenance of happiness. Given that diverse cultures and

various minority groups emphasize different aspects of body image and vary in the importance attributed to different interpersonal relationships, this study was able to examine only a small sliver of our population. More in-depth knowledge about this phenomenon may promote our understanding of this important arena and encourage others to re-evaluate how one goes about trying to achieve happiness.

APPENDIX A
Demographic Questionnaire

APPENDIX A

Demographics Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?

- a. Female
- b. Male

2. What is your age?

- a. 18-19
- b. 20-21
- c. 22-23
- d. 24-25

3. What is your student status?

- a. Freshman
- b. Sophomore
- c. Junior
- d. Senior
- e. Other
 - i. If other, please specify: _____.

4. Please specify your ethnicity:

- a. White
- b. Hispanic/Latino
- c. Black or African American
- d. Native American or American Indian
- e. Asian/Pacific Islander
- f. Other
 - i. If other, please specify: _____.

APPENDIX B

Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire – Appearance Scales (MBSRQ-AS)

APPENDIX B

THE MBSRQ-AS

INSTRUCTIONS--PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

The following pages contain a series of statements about how people might think, feel, or behave. You are asked to indicate the extent to which each statement pertains to you personally.

Your answers to the items in the questionnaire are anonymous, so please do not write your name on any of the materials. In order to complete the questionnaire, read each statement carefully and decide how much it pertains to you personally. Using a scale like the one below, indicate your answer by entering it to the left of the number of the statement.

EXAMPLE:

_____ I am usually in a good mood.

In the blank space, enter a **1** if you **definitely disagree** with the statement;
enter a **2** if you **mostly disagree**;
enter a **3** if you **neither agree nor disagree**;
enter a **4** if you **mostly agree**;
or enter a **5** if you **definitely agree** with the statement.

There are no right or wrong answers. Just give the answer that is most accurate for you. Remember, your responses are confidential, so please be completely honest and answer all items.

*(Duplication and use of the MBSRQ-AS only by permission of
Thomas F. Cash, Ph.D., Department of Psychology,
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA 23529)*

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Mostly Agree	Definitely Agree

- _____ 1. Before going out in public, I always notice how I look.
- _____ 2. I am careful to buy clothes that will make me look my best.
- _____ 3. My body is sexually appealing.
- _____ 4. I constantly worry about being or becoming fat.
- _____ 5. I like my looks just the way they are.
- _____ 6. I check my appearance in a mirror whenever I can.
- _____ 7. Before going out, I usually spend a lot of time getting ready.
- _____ 8. I am very conscious of even small changes in my weight.
- _____ 9. Most people would consider me good-looking.
- _____ 10. It is important that I always look good.
- _____ 11. I use very few grooming products.
- _____ 12. I like the way I look without my clothes on.
- _____ 13. I am self-conscious if my grooming isn't right.
- _____ 14. I usually wear whatever is handy without caring how it looks.
- _____ 15. I like the way my clothes fit me.
- _____ 16. I don't care what people think about my appearance.
- _____ 17. I take special care with my hair grooming.
- _____ 18. I dislike my physique.

continued on the next page

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Mostly Agree	Definitely Agree

- _____ 19. I am physically unattractive.
- _____ 20. I never think about my appearance.
- _____ 21. I am always trying to improve my physical appearance.
- _____ 22. I am on a weight-loss diet.

For the remainder of the items use the response scale given with the item, and enter your answer in the space beside the item.

- _____ 23. I have tried to lose weight by fasting or going on crash diets.

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Very Often

- _____ 24. I think I am:

1. Very Underweight
2. Somewhat Underweight
3. Normal Weight
4. Somewhat Overweight
5. Very Overweight

- _____ 25. From looking at me, most other people would think I am:

1. Very Underweight
2. Somewhat Underweight
3. Normal Weight
4. Somewhat Overweight
5. Very Overweight

continued on the next page

26-34. Use this 1 to 5 scale to indicate how dissatisfied or satisfied you are
with each of the following areas or aspects of your body:

1	2	3	4	5
Very Dissatisfied	Mostly Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Mostly Satisfied	Very Satisfied

- _____ 26. Face (facial features, complexion)
 - _____ 27. Hair (color, thickness, texture)
 - _____ 28. Lower torso (buttocks, hips, thighs, legs)
 - _____ 29. Mid torso (waist, stomach)
 - _____ 30. Upper torso (chest or breasts, shoulders, arms)
 - _____ 31. Muscle tone
 - _____ 32. Weight
 - _____ 33. Height
 - _____ 34. Overall appearance
-

MBSRQ-AS © Thomas F. Cash, Ph.D.

APPENDIX C

Network of Relationships Inventory – Relationships Quality Version (NRI-RQV)

APPENDIX C

The Network of Relationships—Relationship Quality Version

Description. The NRI-RQV is a combination of the Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) and a family relationship measure developed by Buhrmester, Camparo & Christensen (1991). This 30-item survey has ten scales with 3 items per scale. It assesses 5 positive features, including companionship, disclosure, emotional support, approval, and satisfaction, and 5 negative relationship features including, conflict, criticism, pressure, exclusion and dominance.

Companionship (COM)

- 1 How often do you spend fun time with this person?
- 11 How often do you and this person go places and do things together?
- 21 How often do you play around and have fun with this person?

Intimate Disclosure (DIS)

- 2 How often do you tell this person things that you don't want others to know?
- 12 How often do you tell this person everything that you are going through?
- 22 How often do you share secrets and private feelings with this person?

Pressure (PRE)

- 3 How often does this person push you to do things that you don't want to do?
- 13 How often does this person try to get you to do things that you don't like?
- 23 How often does this person pressure you to do the things that he or she wants?

Satisfaction (SAT)

- 4 How happy are you with your relationship with this person?
- 14 How much do you like the way things are between you and this person?
- 24 How satisfied are you with your relationship with this person?

Conflict (CON)

- 5 How often do you and this person disagree and quarrel with each other?
- 15 How often do you and this person get mad at or get in fights with each other?
- 25 How often do you and this person argue with each other?

Emotional Support (SUP)

- 6 How often do you turn to this person for support with personal problems?
- 16 How often do you depend on this person for help, advice, or sympathy?
- 26 When you are feeling down or upset, how often do you depend on this person to cheer things up?

Criticism (CRI)

- 7 How often does this person point out your faults or put you down?
- 17 How often does this person criticize you?
- 27 How often does this person say mean or harsh things to you?

Approval (APP)

- 8 How often does this person praise you for the kind of person you are?
- 18 How often does this person seem really proud of you?
- 28 How much does this person like or approve of the things you do?

Dominance (DOM)

- 9 How often does this person get their way when you two do not agree about what to do?
- 19 How often does this person end up being the one who makes the decisions for both of you?
- 29 How often does this person get you to do things their way?

Exclusion (EXC)

- 10 How often does this person **not** include you in activities?
- 20 How often does it seem like this person ignores you?
- 30 How often does it seem like this person **does not** give you the amount of attention that you want?

APPENDIX D
Subjective Happiness Scale

APPENDIX D

Subjective Happiness Scale

For each of the following statements and/or questions, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.

1. In general, I consider myself:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not a very happy person						a very happy person

2. Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
less happy						more happy

3. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						a great deal

4. Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all						a great deal

APPENDIX E
IRB Approval Letter

APPENDIX E

IRB Approval Letter



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Cyrus Azimi and Co-PI: Michelle J. Chen**

Date: **May 21, 2015**

Dear Researcher:

On 05/21/2015, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: The Association between Body Image, Interpersonal Relationships, and Happiness.
Investigator: Cyrus Azimi
IRB Number: SBE-15-11284
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kanielle Chay" followed by a horizontal line.

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX F

Summary Explanation for Exempt Research

APPENDIX F

Summary Explanation for Exempt Research

Version 1.0 10-21-2009



EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

Title of Project: The Association between Body Image, Interpersonal Relationships, and Happiness.

Principal Investigator: Cyrus Azimi, Ph.D.

Co-investigator: Michelle Chen

Faculty Supervisor: Cyrus Azimi, Ph.D.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

- This study will strive to underscore the importance of body positivity by examining the correlations between self-reported levels of body image satisfaction, subjective well-being, and quality of interpersonal relations in a sample population of college students.
- If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be asked provide basic demographic information and to fill out three self-report surveys. These surveys will assess the quality of your interpersonal relationships, your level of body image satisfaction, and your overall level of subjective happiness.
- There is no time limit. It is estimated, however, that completing the surveys will take 30 – 45 minutes.
- The assessment procedures may illicit temporary increase in anxiety and/or distress in some individuals as a result of responding to certain questions. Participants have the option to terminate the procedure if they feel that the distress becomes unbearable. In the event that you feel you need to speak with a professional or would simply like more resources, please contact the UCF Counseling and Psychological Services at (407)-823-2811.

You must be **18 years of age but no older than 25 years of age** to take part in this research study.

Compensation or payment: 0.5 SONA Credits will be awarded in return for your participation.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, please contact: Michelle Chen, Undergraduate Student, College of Sciences at (954) 804-8104 or by email at michellechen@knights.ucf.edu. You can also contact Dr. Cyrus Azimi, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Psychology at (407) 823-2544 or by email at cyrus.azimi@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

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