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Relations Among Multiple Peer Influences, Body Dissatisfaction, Eating Disturbance, and Self-Esteem: A Comparison of Average Weight, At Risk of Overweight, and Overweight Adolescent Girls

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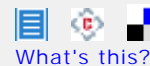
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Abstract


Objective The goal of this study was to evaluate peer-related influences on appearance, body dissatisfaction, eating disturbance, and self-esteem in average weight, at risk of overweight, and overweight adolescent girls. **Methods** Three hundred twenty-five adolescent girls from high schools in Florida were assessed. Ninety met criteria for being at risk of overweight or overweight. Logistic and multiple regression analyses were used to evaluate group differences on all variables and to assess the amount of variance accounted for by peer-influence variables in the prediction of body dissatisfaction, eating disturbance, and self-esteem. **Results** Overweight and at risk of overweight girls scored higher than average weight girls on body dissatisfaction, dieting, and a peer measure that assessed negative comments and attributions about appearance. They also scored lower than average weight girls on self-report measures that assessed conversations about appearance and anti-dieting advice. How influential friends were in determining one's body image was a unique

predictor of body dissatisfaction but only for the overweight and at risk of overweight group. **Conclusions** Possible implications for clinical intervention programs are discussed along with directions for future research.

Key words: adolescence; body image; peer influences; eating disturbance; weight status.

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