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## Body Image and Children's Mental Health Related Behaviors: Results from the Healthy Passages Study

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## ▶ Abstract

**Objective** This study examined the relationship between body image discrepancy (BID) scores for actual versus ideal body image for children and indicators of child mental health. **Methods** Data were collected from 650 5th graders and their parents who participated in the Healthy Passages Phase I study. Participants were recruited through schools in Alabama, California, and Texas. Measures included the Collins Body Image to produce child- and parent-reported child BID scores, respectively, body mass index (BMI) for child and parent, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), and the Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children (PANAS-C). **Results** After controlling for potential confounders, children's internalizing problems as rated by parents and negative affect as rated by children were significantly associated with discrepancies based on child- and parent-reported child BID scores, respectively. **Conclusions** Overall, higher child- and parent-reported child BID scores were significantly associated with more

internalizing problems and negative affect among children. There were some inconsistencies in the associations between other mental health behaviors and child BID scores contingent on parent or child ratings. Early intervention may be indicated to prevent possible adverse consequences, especially for internalizing problems, from the effects of child- and parent-reported child BID scores on adolescent and adult mental health and well-being.

**Key words:** body image; children; mental health.

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