Negative Body Image among Young Adults in the United States
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Summary

In the United States, negative body image has become a large social issue across all age groups. Research shows that young adults are more vulnerable than other age groups, and can develop a negative body image at a young age. Cultural norms and beliefs have created standards of thin, muscular, and appearance ideals. These norms are represented through social media platforms, and can be expressed through attitudes and behaviors of individuals. Research has found that these ideals, media, and pressure from individuals has contributed to body dissatisfaction among young adults in the United States. This has led to serious consequences, such as eating disorders, an increase in anxiety and depression, and other unhealthy behaviors like overexercising. Young adults thrive when they have a healthy relationship with their body shape. To help young adults overcome negative body image, interventions such as education programs and heightened awareness can assist individuals in developing positive attitudes towards their appearance and body.

Key Terms

Body Image: Is how you view yourself in your mind and when you look at yourself in the mirror. This includes how you perceive your appearance and body shape.[1]

NEDA: Stands for the National Eating Disorders Association. It is the largest non profit for helping individuals with eating disorders.[2]

Disordered Eating: A mental and physical illness that comes from biological, physiological and sociocultural factors. There are many different types of eating disorders, such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating.[3]

Tripartite Influence Model: Asserts the idea that body dissatisfaction comes from three entities: media, peers, and family.[4]

Sociocultural Norms: Expectations, standards, or behaviors that are formed based on a society or culture's beliefs[5].

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[1] "Body Image." National Eating Disorders Association, March 1, 2022.
https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/body-image-0.
[2] "Our Work." National Eating Disorders Association, September 22, 2022.
https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/about-us/our-work.
[3] "What Are Eating Disorders?" National Eating Disorders Association, January 18, 2023.
https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/what-are-eating-disorders.
[4] (peer reviewed) Schaefer, Lauren M., Natasha L. Burke, Lisa M. Anderson, J. Kevin Thompson, Leslie J. Heinberg, Anna M. Bardone-Cone, Mary K. Neyland, et al. "Comparing Internalization of Appearance Ideals and Appearance-Related Pressures among Women from the United States, Italy, England, and Australia." *Eating and Weight Disorders - Studies on Anorexia, Bulimia and Obesity* 24, no. 5 (2018): 947–51.
https://doi.org/10.1007/s40519-018-0544-8.
[5] Sciences, Contributor(s): National Academies of. "Addressing the Social and Cultural Norms That Underlie the Acceptance of Violence: Proceedings of a Workshop-in Brief." Proceedings of a Workshop-in Brief |The National Academies Press, April 6, 2018.
https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/25075/addressing-the-social-and-cultural-norms-that-underlie-the-acceptance-of-violence.

Muscularity Oriented Disordered Eating: Any type of eating disorder that is used to create or achieve a certain muscular ideal[6].

Compulsive Exercise: When a person exercises too much, also known as exercise addiction.

The Body Positive: a Non Profit Organization that works to prevent and help victims of negative body image.[7]

Context

Q. What is Negative Body Image and Body Dissatisfaction?
A. Negative body image is when individuals think or feel negatively about their appearance or body shape. These perceptions are often not true, and if not addressed, can lead to unhealthy behaviors like eating disorders.[8]

Q. Who is most affected by Negative Body Image?
A. Negative Body Image has the greatest effect on young adolescents and young adults. Studies show that about 50% of girls and 30% of boys experience body dissatisfaction. These percentages increase with adulthood, with 60% of women and 40% of men disliking their body.[9]

Q. Where does Body Dissatisfaction originate from?
A. People and organizations have become more aware of negative body image and its negative effects. Body dissatisfaction or beauty ideals have been manifested in different ways depending on the culture and time period. For example, for women body image can route back to the 1950s when celebrities like Marilyn Monroe set a standard for beauty.[10]

Q. How do US young adults differ in Body Image than other Countries?
A. Negative Body Image can develop for different reasons, and ethnicity can have some influence. One source discusses that countries where there is more individualism and higher exposure to media may feel a greater pressure to meet a thin ideal.[11] Research

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[6] Lavender, Jason M, Tiffany A Brown, and Stuart B Murray. "Men, Muscles, and Eating Disorders: An Overview of Traditional and Muscularity-Oriented Disordered Eating." Current psychiatry reports. U.S. National Library of Medicine, June 2017. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5731454/#:~:text=Muscularity%2Doriented%20disordered%20eating%20refers,pursuit%20of%20the%20muscular%20ideal.

[7] "Our Work." The Body Positive, January 9, 2023. https://thebodypositive.org/our-work/.

[8] "Body Image." National Eating Disorders Association, March 1, 2022. https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/body-image-0.

[9] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4587797/

[10] Jacquelyn Ekern, MS. "Driven to Perfection: The Evolution of Body Image." Eating Disorder Hope, March 23, 2015. https://www.eatingdisorderhope.com/blog/driven-to-perfection-the-evolution-of-body-image#:~:text=In%20the%20Victorian%20Era%20and,reveal%20a%20%E2%80%9Ctoned%E2%80%9D%20look.

[11] "Body Image and Ethnic Background." Mental Health Foundation, 2023. https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/body-image-how-we-think-and-feel-about-our-bodies/body-image-and-ethnic-background.

has found that women in the US feel higher peer pressure to meet the thin ideal than other countries like Australia, Italy, and England. [12]

Contributing Factors

#1 Cultural Norms and Ideals

In many countries including the United States, there are ideals for body image and appearance. These ideals have been found to increase negative body image among young adults. The NEDA states that girls tend to feel pressure to meet a thin or beauty ideal, and boys are pressured to be lean and muscular.[13] Girls by age 6 begin to worry about their weight and shape, and later in their teens over 50% tend to develop eating disorders.[14] This ideal is an overarching factor that influences many of the other contributing factors to negative body image among US young adults. For example, there have been many studies done on the effect of culture and body ideals on young adults. One study done on young adults in the Pacific NorthWest and the Southeast found that the culture of where you live could affect a person's body image. They found that young men and women living in the Southeast tend to have more negative body image than those in the Pacific NorthWest. The type of culture in those locations was not specified in the study, but it was confirmed that those areas' cultures could be an influence on how young adults perceive their appearance and body image[15].

This study and others have shown that cultural pressures to meet body image ideals are rooted in sociocultural norms. Sociocultural norms influence members in society to think or believe ideas or beliefs[16]. For body image, social norms have created standards for beauty, appearance, and shape. Based on those standards, people begin to judge if they meet those ideals, and if they don't, it can be detrimental to their self esteem, mental health, and body image.[17] According to the Tripartite Influence Model, these cultural norms for body image dissatisfaction spread through peers, family and media.[18]

[12] Schaefer, Lauren M., Natasha L. Burke, Lisa M. Anderson, J. Kevin Thompson, Leslie J. Heinberg, Anna M. Bardone-Cone, Mary K. Higgins Neyland, et al. 2019. "Comparing Internalization of Appearance Ideals and Appearance-Related Pressures among Women from the United States, Italy, England, and Australia." *Eating and Weight Disorders* 24 (5): 947–51. doi:10.1007/s40519-018-0544-8.

[13] "Body Image." National Eating Disorders Association, March 1, 2022. https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/body-image-0.

[14] "Body Image." National Eating Disorders Association, March 1, 2022. https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/body-image-0.

[15] (peer reviewed) Paulk, Amber, Duane Alan Dowd, Ryan Zayac, Andrea Eklund, and Cory Kildare. 2014. "The Relationship between Culture, Geographic Region, and Gender on Body Image: A Comparison of College Students in the Southeast and Pacific Northwest Regions of the United States." *Sociological Spectrum* 34 (5): 442–52. doi:10.1080/02732173.2014.937653.

[16] Sciences, Contributor(s): National Academies of. "Addressing the Social and Cultural Norms That Underlie the Acceptance of Violence: Proceedings of a Workshop-in Brief." Proceedings of a Workshop-in Brief |The National Academies Press, April 6, 2018.

[17] Paulk, Amber, Duane Alan Dowd, Ryan Zayac, Andrea Eklund, and Cory Kildare. 2014. "The Relationship between Culture, Geographic Region, and Gender on Body Image: A Comparison of College Students in the Southeast and Pacific Northwest Regions of the United States." *Sociological Spectrum* 34 (5): 442–52. doi:10.1080/02732173.2014.937653.

[18] Schaefer, Lauren M., Natasha L. Burke, Lisa M. Anderson, J. Kevin Thompson, Leslie J. Heinberg, Anna M. Bardone-Cone, Mary K. Neyland, et al. "Comparing Internalization of Appearance Ideals and Appearance-Related

#2 Social Media Use

Social Media can increase feelings of body dissatisfaction. Social Media has been a popular tool for connecting with friends, family, and gathering information about the world. As of January 2023, there are about 4.76 billion users on social media, making up about half of the world's population.[19] The statistics for young adults using social media are also significant. Research shows that 53% of young adults use instagram and 49% of those users go on the site daily. Other popular social media accounts include pinterest and facebook.[20] Though there are benefits in using media for social connection, it also has increased levels of anxiety, depression, and negative body image among young adults. Cultural ideals are greatly magnified and influenced by social media, and platforms like instagram or facebook have become channels or gateways to exposing young adults to body image ideals.[21] These ideal pressures come in different ways and trigger young men and women differently. According to the NEDA, mass media has caused men to have an increase in body dissatisfaction in regards to being more muscular. Young women are pressured more in appearance and how thin they are.[22]

The reasons for how social media causes negative body image vary, but overall studies have found that appearance ideals and making social comparisons were involved in the effect of social media use on body image outcomes.[23] Research has been done across many different media platforms.[24] For example, Facebook use has an association with disordered eating and dissatisfaction among college women.[25] Other research has shown that young women exposed to photo-based activities on Instagram have lower body image. This dissatisfaction also comes from "fitspiration" instagram photos that are being compared to neutral photos.[26]

Pressures among Women from the United States, Italy, England, and Australia." *Eating and Weight Disorders - Studies on Anorexia, Bulimia and Obesity* 24, no. 5 (2018): 947–51. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40519-018-0544-8.

[19] "Global Social Media Statistics - DataReportal – Global Digital Insights." DataReportal. Accessed February 11, 2023. https://datareportal.com/social-media-users.

[20](peer reviewed) Sidani, Jaime E., Ariel Shensa, Beth Hoffman, Janel Hanmer, and Brian A. Primack. 2016. "The Association between Social Media Use and Eating Concerns among US Young Adults." *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics* 116 (9): 1465–72. doi:10.1016/j.jand.2016.03.021.

[21] Sidani, Jaime E., Ariel Shensa, Beth Hoffman, Janel Hanmer, and Brian A. Primack. 2016. "The Association between Social Media Use and Eating Concerns among US Young Adults." *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics* 116 (9): 1465–72. doi:10.1016/j.jand.2016.03.021.

[22] "Body Image." National Eating Disorders Association, March 1, 2022. https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/body-image-0.

[23](peer reviewed) Jung, Jaehee, David Barron, Young-A Lee, and Viren Swami. 2022. "Social Media Usage and Body Image: Examining the Mediating Roles of Internalization of Appearance Ideals and Social Comparisons in Young Women." *Computers in Human Behavior* 135 (October): N.PAG. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2022.107357.

[24] Sidani, Jaime E., Ariel Shensa, Beth Hoffman, Janel Hanmer, and Brian A. Primack. 2016. "The Association between Social Media Use and Eating Concerns among US Young Adults." *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics* 116 (9): 1465–72. doi:10.1016/j.jand.2016.03.021.

[25] Sidani, Jaime E., Ariel Shensa, Beth Hoffman, Janel Hanmer, and Brian A. Primack. 2016. "The Association between Social Media Use and Eating Concerns among US Young Adults." *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics* 116 (9): 1465–72. doi:10.1016/j.jand.2016.03.021.

[26] (peer reviewed) Baker, Nicole, Ginette Ferszt, and Juliana G. Breines. 2019. "A Qualitative Study Exploring Female College Students' Instagram Use and Body Image." *CyberPsychology, Behavior & Social Networking* 22 (4): 277–82. doi:10.1089/cyber.2018.0420.

#3 Bullying and Pressure from Peers

Bullying has also been identified as a major contributor to body dissatisfaction. The Tripartite Influencer Model confirms that our norms and beliefs can be influenced by our peers. Children that were victimized at a young age have been predicted to have negative body image during their adolescents and into their adulthood.[27] Other studies show children that were ridiculed for how heavy or thin they were growing up, would continue to have body image problems as well as anorexic, bulimic, or distorted eating patterns. One study on emerging adults that were victims of bullying during childhood reported feeling lower self esteem and comparing themselves to others.[28] Bullying not only increased negative body image, but also had an impact on relationships and trust issues.[29]

Bullying from peers is considered a major public health concern, but bullying within family units, however, has been found to lead to body image issues. There is much less research done on bullying within families. One study done on sibling pairs found that 78% were bullied by the other sibling and 85% of the siblings participated in bullying. Bullying can take many forms, including body shaming and pressures to change self appearance. Some parents and siblings have been found to make comments about being fat or watching weight. When this happens, victims of those negative comments have reported feeling lower self esteem and poor self image.[30]

Negative Consequences

#1 Eating Disorders

Eating disorders develop from many different types of biological, emotional, psychological, and social factors. Eating disorders come in different forms, such as anorexia or binge eating, and other specified feeding or eating disorders. These along with many other eating disorders affect each person differently based on the individual's current and past experiences. Negative body image is found to be a direct cause of eating disorders[31]. According to the NEDA, over 50% of girls and a third of boys participate in unhealthy weight control behaviors, which include skipping meals, vomiting, smoking cigarettes, and fasting[32]. These behaviors have been linked to thin idealizations and body dissatisfaction[33]. Research has found that eating disorders are prevalent in the college population across the United States.

[27](peer reviewed) Gattario, Kristina Holmqvist, Magnus Lindwall, and Ann Frisén. 2020. "Life after Childhood Bullying: Body Image Development and Disordered Eating in Adulthood." *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 44 (3): 246–55. doi:10.1177/0165025419877971.

[28](peer reviewed) Pabian, Sara, and Heidi Vandebosch. 2021. "Perceived Long-Term Outcomes of Early Traditional and Cyberbullying Victimization among Emerging Adults." *Journal of Youth Studies* 24 (1): 91–109. doi:10.1080/13676261.2019.1695764.

[29](peer reviewed) deLara, Ellen W. 2019. "Consequences of Childhood Bullying on Mental Health and Relationships for Young Adults." *Journal of Child & Family Studies* 28 (9): 2379–89. doi:10.1007/s10826-018-1197-y.

[30](peer reviewed) deLara, Ellen W. 2022. "Family Bullying in Childhood: Consequences for Young Adults." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37 (3/4): NP2206-NP2226. doi:10.1177/0886260520934450.

[31] "What Are Eating Disorders?" National Eating Disorders Association, January 18, 2023. https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/what-are-eating-disorders.

[32] "Body Image & Eating Disorders." National Eating Disorders Association, February 22, 2018. https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/body-image-eating-disorders.

[33] (peer reviewed) Martin, Shelby J., and Sarah E. Racine. 2017. "Personality Traits and Appearance-Ideal Internalization: Differential Associations with Body Dissatisfaction and Compulsive Exercise." *Eating Behaviors* 27 (December): 39–44. doi:10.1016/j.eatbeh.2017.11.001.

Epidemiological studies find that college women have higher percentages of eating disorders than men. For women, 11% to 17% of their population deal with eating disorders, with college men averaging around 4%. Another study found that 34% of undergraduate women believed they were overweight when others disagreed, and 26% of female undergraduates believed that they had lost control over their eating habits[34]. This however, does not excuse the fact that less attention should be given to males and their eating behaviors. Studies affirm that greater research needs to be done on this demographic of the young adult population[35]. Men and women can develop eating disorders for different reasons relating to body image or ideals. One study discovered that 22% of young men participated in muscularity-oriented disordered eating behaviors, which included eating types of food that would help them to gain weight or bulk up. Compared to this statistic, only 5% of women participated in similar disordered eating behaviors[36].

#2 Influence On Young Adults' Physical Exercise Habits and Behaviors

Negative body image has shown to influence physical activity among young adults in various ways. Research conflicts in this topic because studies have found that body dissatisfaction can lead to either decreased physical exercise, or compulsive exercising. The reasons for people's level of physical exercise and how they do it varies. The NEDA states that symptoms of compulsive physical activity include feeling intense anxiety or depression when not exercising, pushing too hard during an exercise, or using exercise as permission to eat[37]. A study done on young college men reported that one fifth of the male participants worried about their weight, and between 9% and 12% were unhappy with their body shape or felt fat. 34% of this sample were upset when they couldn't exercise as much as they desired. One third of the men showed concerning exercise behaviors, such as exercising when they were injured, over exercising, or doing physical activity for body shape and weight[38]. Another demographic of US young adults that are at risk for compulsive exercise are college athletes. Female college athletes can feel pressure to diet or stay thin, and male college athletes are found to focus on physical fitness and masculinity. These pressures have sometimes led athletes to unhealthy behaviors that include compulsive exercising[39].

Body image can cause compulsive exercise, but other studies have shown that it could also decrease physical activity among young adults. One source affirms that people who feel

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[34] Eisenberg, Daniel, Emily J. Nicklett, Kathryn Roeder, and Nina E. Kirz. "Eating Disorder Symptoms among College Students: Prevalence, Persistence, Correlates, and Treatment-Seeking." *Journal of American College Health* 59, no. 8 (September 27, 2011): 700–707. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2010.546461.

[35] (peer reviewed) Lipson, S. K., and K. R. Sonneville. 2017. "Eating Disorder Symptoms among Undergraduate and Graduate Students at 12 US Colleges and Universities." *Eating Behaviors* 24 (January): 81–88. doi:10.1016/j.eatbeh.2016.12.003.

[36] (peer reviewed) Nagata, Jason M., Stuart B. Murray, Domingo, Kirsten Bibbins, Andrea K. Garber, Deborah Mitchison, and Scott Griffiths. 2019. "Predictors of Muscularity‐oriented Disordered Eating Behaviors in U.S. Young Adults: A Prospective Cohort Study." *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 52 (12): 1380–88. doi:10.1002/eat.23094.

[37] "Compulsive Exercise." National Eating Disorders Association, February 22, 2018. https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/learn/general-information/compulsive-exercise.

[38] O'Dea, Jennifer A., and Suzanne Abraham. "Eating and Exercise Disorders in Young College Men." *Journal of American College Health* 50, no. 6 (March 24, 2010): 273–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448480209603445.

[39] (peer reviewed) Power, Ksenia, Sara Kovacs, Lois Butcher-Poffley, JingWei Wu, and David Sarwer. "Disordered eating and compulsive exercise in collegiate athletes: Applications for sport and research." *The Sport Journal* 24, no. 1 (2020).

self conscious or worried about their body shape tend to avoid exercising while other people with negative body image find less satisfaction from doing physical exercise[40]. Another study that focused on adolescents in America and internationally states that research has affirmed negative body image to be related to obesity and physical inactivity[41]. In this study, the physical activity and body dissatisfaction of adolescents was observed through revealing articles over the span of 10 years. Findings showed that adolescents with high body satisfaction engaged in greater physical activity, while those who had lower body satisfaction had lower levels of physical activity[42].

#3 Negative effects on Mental Health

  Mental health is a common area that is affected by negative body image. For young adults, they are more vulnerable to developing negative body image and dealing with mental illnesses[43]. Research shows that young boys and girls that deal with clinical negative body image are at a much higher risk of having depressive episodes[44]. Individuals that struggle with body dissatisfaction can be more at risk of not just depression but anxiety and low self esteem[45]. The NEDA also affirms that people with higher body dissatisfaction are at risk for depression, feeling isolated, low self esteem, and experiencing eating disorders[46]. Studies have shown that young adolescent males are at higher risk of developing depressive symptoms if they have concerns about their muscularity[47]. This negative consequence is also closely related to other consequences such as eating disorders, and can sometimes be a contributing factor to negative body image.

Best Practices - Practice

Spread Awareness and Prevention through Education

[40] "Body Image and Physical Activity." Body Image and Physical Activity | Association for Applied Sport Psychology. Accessed March 10, 2023. https://appliedsportpsych.org/resources/health-fitness-resources/body-image-and-physical-activity/#:~:text=Body%20image%20can%20also%20impact,have%20lower%20levels%20of%20enjoyment.

[41] Gualdi-Russo, Emanuela, Natascia Rinaldo, and Luciana Zaccagni. "Physical Activity and Body Image Perception in Adolescents: A Systematic Review." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 20 (2022): 13190.

[42] Gualdi-Russo, Emanuela, Natascia Rinaldo, and Luciana Zaccagni. "Physical Activity and Body Image Perception in Adolescents: A Systematic Review." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 20 (2022): 13190.

[43] "Reducing Social Media Use Significantly Improves Body Image in Teens, Young Adults." American Psychological Association. American Psychological Association, March 23, 2023. https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2023/02/social-media-body-image.

[44] McLean, Siân A., Rachel F. Rodgers, Amy Slater, Hannah K. Jarman, Chloe S. Gordon, and Susan J. Paxton. 2022. "Clinically Significant Body Dissatisfaction: Prevalence and Association with Depressive Symptoms in Adolescent Boys and Girls." *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 31 (12): 1921–32. doi:10.1007/s00787-021-01824-4.

[45] Martin, Shadai, Ciro Velasco-Cruz, and Lacey McCormack. 2022. "Eating Behaviors and Body Image Perception among College Students." *Health Behavior & Policy Review* 9 (5): 1052–62. doi:10.14485/HBPR.9.5.5.

[46] "Body Image & Eating Disorders." National Eating Disorders Association, February 22, 2018. https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/body-image-eating-disorders.

[47] Nagata, Jason M., Stuart B. Murray, Domingo, Kirsten Bibbins, Andrea K. Garber, Deborah Mitchison, and Scott Griffiths. 2019. "Predictors of Muscularity‐oriented Disordered Eating Behaviors in U.S. Young Adults: A Prospective Cohort Study." *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 52 (12): 1380–88. doi:10.1002/eat.23094.

There are a lot of ways to approach this social issue, but one effective way is to increase the education of positive body image among young adults. Negative body Image can be hard to identify because of its complexity and how it affects every person differently. Young adults in the United States also live in a culture where it's hard to escape thin and muscular ideals.[48] There are, however, many interventions that are seeking to decrease body dissatisfaction. Research has found that when young adolescents have a positive body image and have a healthy relationship with food, they have better mental and physical health. If they also are knowledgeable about how to nourish and take care of themselves, they have an increase in self esteem and confidence.[49] There are many organizations that provide resources and programs to help increase knowledge about maintaining a healthy body image. Organizations like NEDA are making efforts to increase awareness and education for positive body image. They are also seeking to combat negative body dissatisfaction and the unhealthy habits that follow it. For example, NEDA helped create a prevention program called "The Body Project". This program is a group based forum designed to help girls in college and highschool overcome body ideals and appearances and prevent eating disorders. The Body Project structures its program through one to two day trainings, workshops, and alternative versions for those that are not college or highschool girls. NEDA, however, isn't the only organization using education to overcome negative body image. A nonprofit organization called "The Body Positive" created a model to help Americans develop positive relationships with their body and increase self compassion. The organization educates individuals on this model through providing professional training and courses. Within this program, people will learn steps and skills that will help them to improve their body perception.[50]

Impact

It's difficult to measure the impact of this practice because of the diverse organizations and programs working on this issue within the United States. Prevention programs like the Body Project and The Body Positive Model have increased knowledge and reduced risk factors for unhealthy behaviors like eating disorders.[51] Many programs have similar objectives and goals for how they want to overcome negative body image, including spreading awareness and education. Those that have had some success not only tried to help individuals, but also seek to change the environment including the behaviors of teachers, peers, and media literacy.[52] These programs sometimes focus on the outputs of their interventions, making it hard to evaluate the true impact of education and heightened awareness. For example, NEDA's 2019 annual report gives information on the number of contacts reached through their helpline, number of body image walks, and how many people have visited their website. Specific programs like the Body Project have shown to decrease body dissatisfaction. More information, however, could be given on their specific impact and outcomes from their outputs for reducing negative body

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[48] "Athletes and Eating Disorders." Center for Change. Center for Change, April 11, 2022. https://centerforchange.com/programs/athletes-ed/.
[49] Martin, Shadai, Ciro Velasco-Cruz, and Lacey McCormack. 2022. "Eating Behaviors and Body Image Perception among College Students." *Health Behavior & Policy Review* 9 (5): 1052–62. doi:10.14485/HBPR.9.5.5.
[50] "Our Work." The Body Positive, January 9, 2023. https://thebodypositive.org/our-work/.
[51] "Prevention." National Eating Disorders Association, February 22, 2018. https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/learn/general-information/prevention.
[52] "Prevention." National Eating Disorders Association, February 22, 2018. https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/learn/general-information/prevention.

image.[53] For example, the Body Positive organization presents findings from research studies conducted by the Cornell and Stanford Universities that discuss how their programs increase body appreciation and reduce eating disorder symptoms.[54] Studies like this are performed on programs like the Body Positive Organization to test their interventions, outcomes, and impact[55].

Gaps

Overall, negative body image is still a large issue in the United States. With increased education and awareness, organizations and programs will be able to successfully reduce body ideals and dissatisfaction among young adults in the nation. Because education and awareness is demonstrated through different organizations, methods, and techniques, it's difficult to measure the full impact and if certain outputs are actually effective. NEDA states that prevention programs have found success, but larger, more universal preventions are harder to gather research on due policies and focusing on normative changes. There is also little knowledge and studies done on programs that work with children, males, and ethnic groups.[56] Organizations should continue not to only measure their outputs, but present specific impacts that come from their programs. These organizations could also share what hasn't worked for decreasing negative body image. This can help future initiatives seeking to improve body image among young adults and other targeted populations in the United States. Some resources and programs educate individuals to lessen their exposure to environments that provoke thin and muscular ideals such as social media. Cultural influences like social media could also improve their content and be more sensitive to those struggling with body dissatisfaction[57] This could help combat the obstacles that young adults face when overcoming cultural ideals for body shape and appearance. A study done on interventions for body image evaluated the effectiveness of specific change techniques. It found that interventions for reducing body dissatisfaction are potentially more effective among the young adult population because they are the most at risk.This is also the time in life when most individuals begin to develop a negative body image. The study also affirmed that there is a need for more effective and better quality interventions for cultivating healthier body image.[58]

Key Takeaways
- Social Media Use, social norms, and bullying from peers are major contributors to body image issues.

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[53] "Neda Annual Report 2019: Work." National Eating Disorders Association. Accessed March 31, 2023. https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/annualreport/2019/work.html.

[54] "The Body Positive." thebodypositive.org. Accessed March 31, 2023. https://thebodypositive.org/.

[55] Jones, Megan, Andrea E Kass, Mickey Trockel, Alan I Glass, Denise E Wilfley, and C Barr Taylor. "A Population-Wide Screening and Tailored Intervention Platform for Eating Disorders on College Campuses: The Healthy Body Image Program." Journal of American college health : J of ACH. U.S. National Library of Medicine, July 2014. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4031301/.

[56] https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/learn/general-information/prevention

[57] Goldfield , Gary. "Reducing Social Media Use Significantly Improves Body Image in Teens, Young Adults." American Psychological Association. American Psychological Association, February 23, 2023. https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2023/02/social-media-body-image.

[58] Alleva, Jessica M, Paschal Sheeran, Thomas L Webb, Carolien Martijn, and Eleanor Miles. "A Meta-Analytic Review of Stand-Alone Interventions to Improve Body Image." PloS one. U.S. National Library of Medicine, September 29, 2015. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4587797/.

- Young Adults are the most vulnerable to developing negative body image, and can start developing negative thoughts and attitudes at a young age.
- Negative Body Image can lead to unhealthy behaviors like disordered eating, compulsive exercise, and mental health issues.
- More research can be done on prevention for negative body image.
- Social media, communities, and prevention programs should continue to work on eliminating thin ideals and helping young adolescents develop healthy relationships with their appearance and body shape.
- Young Adults in the United States will be happier as they accept their bodies and take care of it in healthy ways.