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Physical or Visual: How do Girls Experience their Bodies during Sports and Non-Sport Activities?



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Outline



- Why body image?
 - ✦ What is it? Why is it important to adolescents?

- Sports and body image

- Body experiences in sport
 - ✦ The current study
 - Gender differences
 - Contextual differences
 - Sport type differences
 - Relation to body image and sport enjoyment

- Conclusions

Body Image and Adolescents



Why is this an important topic to discuss?

- **Body dissatisfaction increases during middle adolescence** (Bucchianeri et al., 2013)
- **Body image is one of the top 3 greatest concerns held by young people in Australia** (Mission Australia, 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014).
- **Females consistently report greater body dissatisfaction than their male peers** (Barker & Galambos, 2003; Cash, Fleming, Alindogan, Steadman & Whitehead, 2002; Gadbois & Bowker, 2007).
- **This gender distinction begins as early as 8 years old**

Promoting Positive Body Image: Balancing function and form



Function
“What I can DO”



Aesthetics
“How I LOOK”

Body Image & Sport



- **Body perceptions impact girls sports participation** (Dovey, Reeder & Chalmers, 1998; Dwyer et al., 2006; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010)
- **Sports participants report a more functional orientated body image** (Abbott & Barber, 2011)
- **A focus on body function has been associated with positive body evaluations, greater body appreciation and intuitive eating** (Abbott & Barber, 2010; Avalos & Tylka, 2006; Franzoi, 1995; Frisén & Holmqvist 2010; Greenleaf, Boyer & Petrie, 2009).
- **Sport types can impact body image differently** (Parson & Betz, 2001; Smolak, Murnen & Ruble, 2000; Swami, Steadman & Tovée, 2009; Tiggemann & Slater, 2001; Varnes et al., 2013)

Experiential Learning & the Body



Why might sports influence body image?

- Sports offer girls the opportunity to experience the body as an instrumental entity.
- Physical activity and sports offer girls an opportunity to experience freedom of movement and invest in the instrumental qualities and potential of their bodies.
(Kitchen, 2006)
- But this is rarely measured quantitatively in adolescents.

The Current Study



Aim: To explore the experiences girls have with their bodies during sports and how these experiences impact on body image and sport enjoyment.

- Experiences of physical competence
- Experiences of body objectification
- Sport and non-sport contexts
- Sport types; aesthetic and non-aesthetic

Participants & Method



Participants:

- Youth Activity Participation Study of Western Australia (YAPS-WA), wave 2
- 1837 Adolescents aged 13-18 years ($M= 14.6$, $SD= 1.01$; 55% female)
- 34 high schools
 - Metropolitan, rural and remote areas

Method

- Self-report survey
- Administered via laptop
- Extracurricular Activity (ECA) participation
 - sports, non-sports
- Experiences of the body, body image, and sport enjoyment



Measures: Body Experiences & Sport Enjoyment



- Experiences of Body Objectification (3 items, $\alpha = .69 - .81$):
 - Where the body is experienced as a visual object
 - Modelled on the Youth Experience Survey (YES) 2.0
 - 4-point scale (1= not at all, 4= yes, definitely)

e.g. *“People have said things about how my body looks”*
- Experiences of Physical Competence (3 items, $\alpha = .72 - .87$)
 - Where the body is experienced as functional or physically skilled/competent

e.g. *“I have improved my physical skills”*
- Sport Enjoyment (1 item)
 - 7-point likert scale; 1 = a little, 7 = a lot
 - *“How much do you enjoy participating in this sporting activity?”*

Measures: Body Image



Embodied Image Scale (EIS; Abbott & Barber 2010)

- Functional Body Image
 - 2 subscales (5-point likert scale 1 = not at all true for me, 5 = very true for me)
 - ✦ Functional values (3 items; $\alpha = .70$)
 - ✦ Functional satisfaction (3 items; $\alpha = .89$)
- Aesthetic Body Image
 - 2 subscales
 - ✦ Aesthetic values (3 items; $\alpha = .80$)
 - ✦ Aesthetic satisfaction (3 items; $\alpha = .91$)

Measures: Sport Types



- **Aesthetic sports** – success may be partly dependent on the form of the body, or how good it looks. Not based on skill alone.

- For example:

gymnastics; dance; cheerleading



- **Non-aesthetic sports** – success is not dependent on the form of the body, but on competence and skill, or how well it performs.

- For example:

basketball, netball, soccer

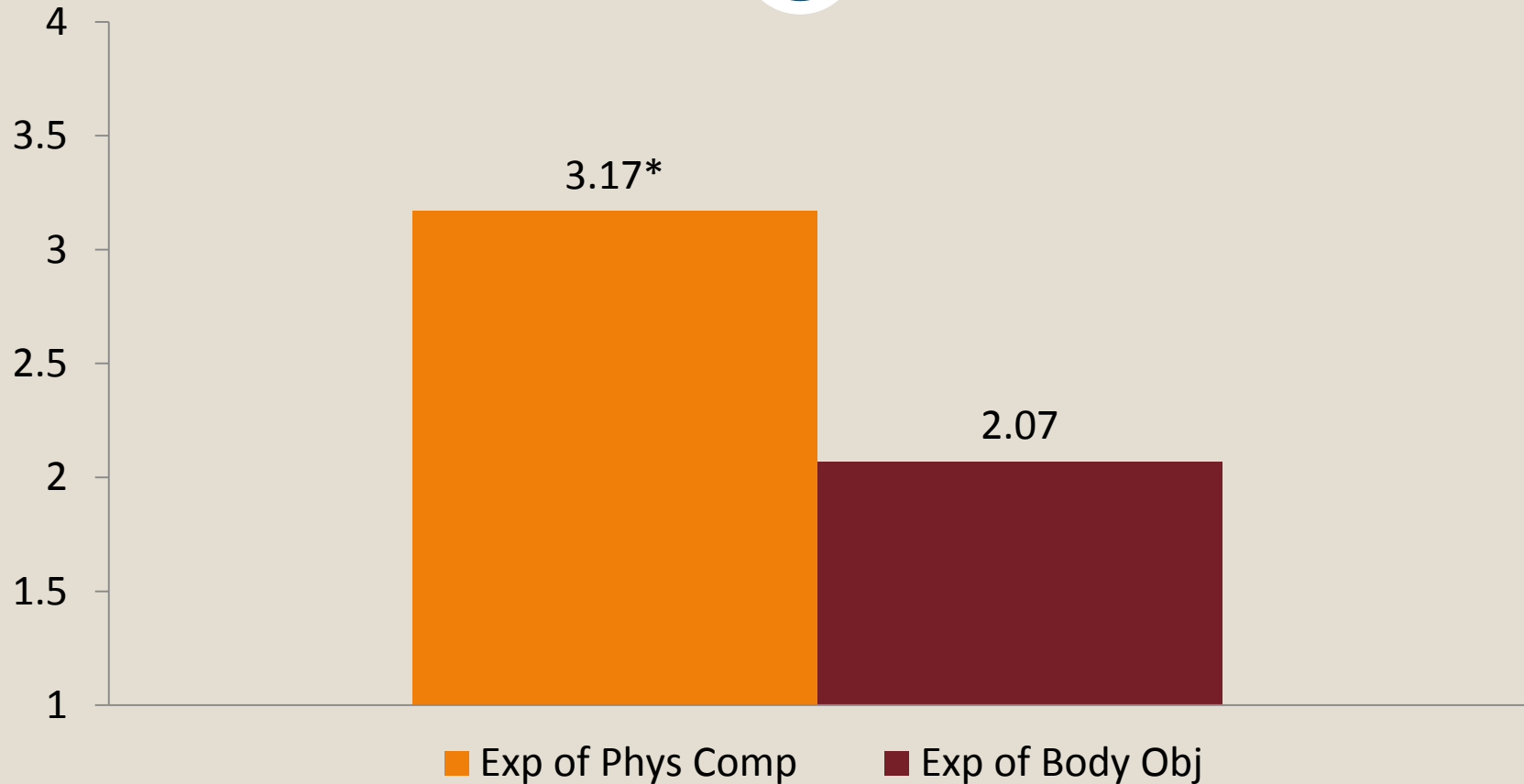


Analyses



- **Experiences of physical competence vs. Body Objectification**
 - Which experiences are more prevalent during ECA's?
- **Girls' Body experiences by context**
 - Do experiences differ by context?
 - Between person (sport only vs. non-sport only; aesthetic vs. non-aesthetic)
 - Within person (dance vs. non-aesthetic sports)
- **Girls' Body experiences, body image and sport enjoyment**
 - Do experiences predict body image and sport enjoyment?

Results: Body Experiences



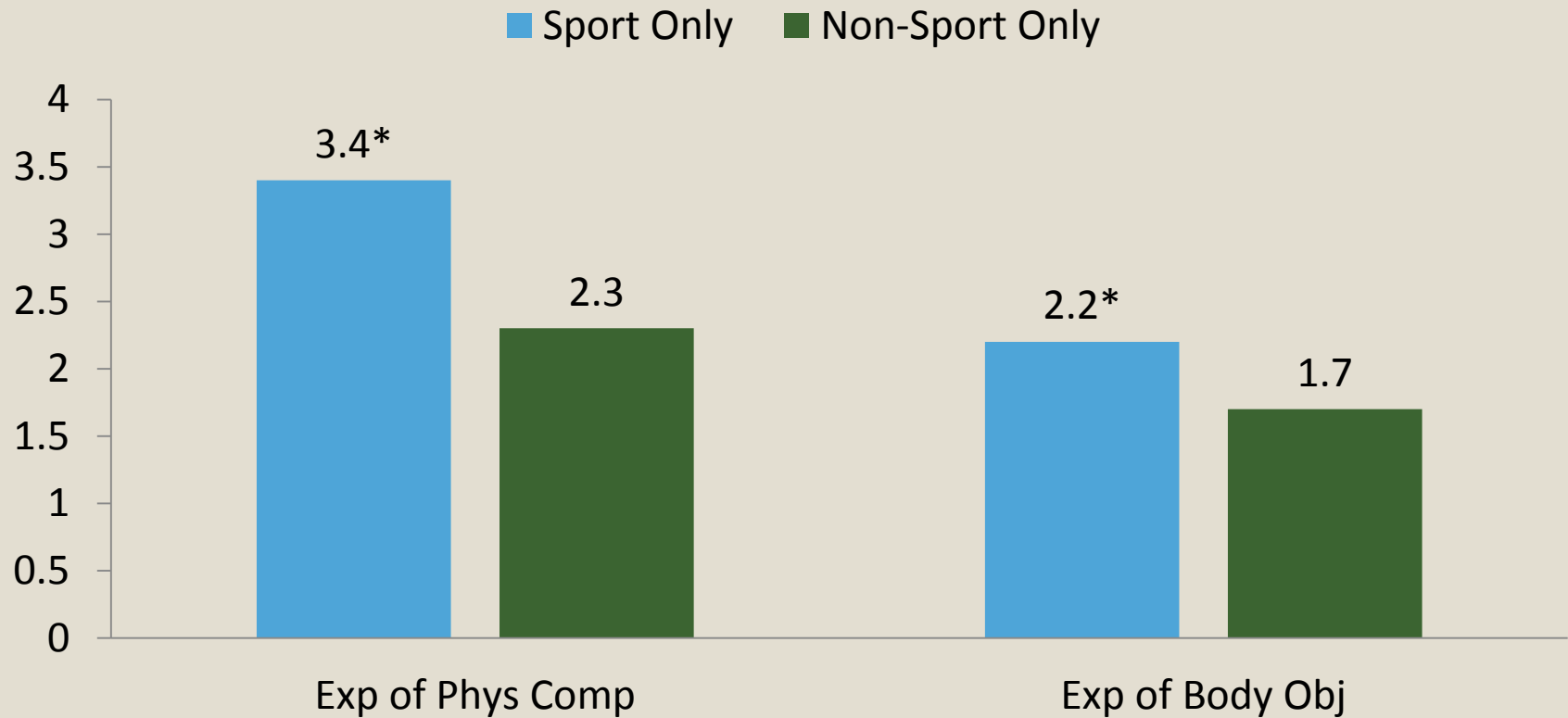
$N = 518;$

* $t(517) = 55.54, p < .001$

Results: Body Experiences by Context



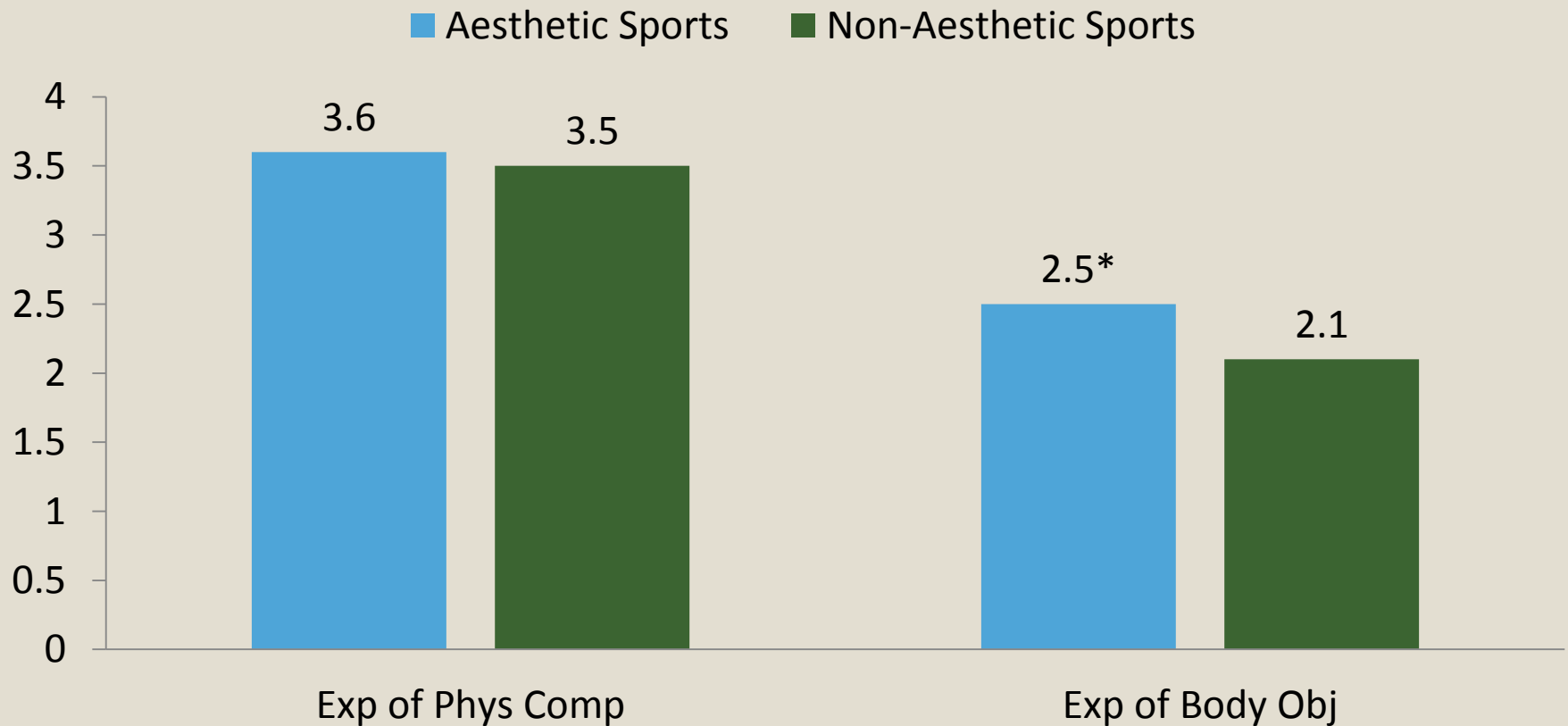
Between-Person: Sports vs. Non-Sports



Results: Body Experiences by Context



Between-Person: Aesthetic vs. Non-Aesthetic Sports



N = 672

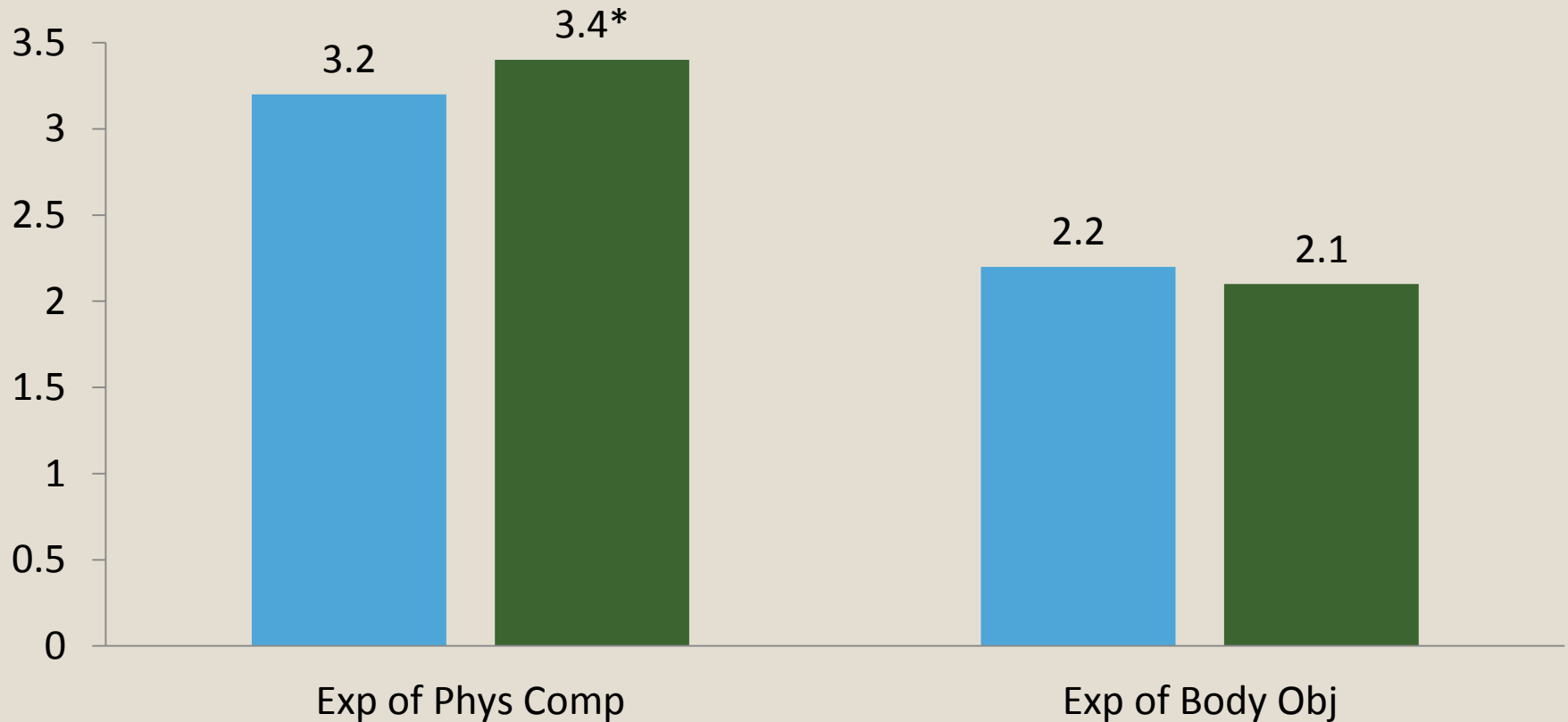
BMI controlled; * Mean significantly higher at $p < .001$ alpha level

Within-Person Results:



Dance vs Non-Aesthetic Sports

■ Dance ■ Non-Aesthetic Sport



N = 72

BMI controlled , * Mean significantly higher at $p < .05$ alpha level

Body Experiences and Aesthetic Body Image



		Aesthetic Values <i>N</i> = 684			Aesthetic Satisfaction <i>N</i> = 685		
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Model 1							
	Constant	2.72	0.20		4.36	0.20	
	BMI	0.02	0.01	0.07	-0.06	0.01	-0.23*
Model 2							
	Constant	1.95	0.27		3.24	0.31	
	BMI	0.01	0.01	0.02	-0.05	0.01	-0.19**
	Sport Exp of Phys Comp	-0.09	0.06	-0.05	0.37	0.06	0.22**
	Sport Exp of Body Obj	0.63	0.04	0.54*	-0.17	0.04	-0.15**

Aesthetic Values R^2 for Step 1 = 0.004, ΔR^2 for model 2 = 0.28, Aesthetic Satisfaction = R^2 for Step 1 = 0.05, ΔR^2 for model 2 = 0.06; ***F* change sig at .001 alpha level

Body Experiences and Functional Body Image



		Functional Values <i>N</i> = 684			Functional Satisfaction <i>N</i> = 684		
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Step 1							
	Constant	3.71	0.17		4.47	0.18	
	BMI	-0.01	0.01	-0.07	-0.04	0.01	-0.18*
Step 2							
	Constant	1.70	0.25		2.15	0.26	
	BMI	-0.01	0.01	-0.05	-0.03	0.01	-0.13**
	Sport Exp of Phys Comp	0.45	0.05	0.31**	0.65	0.05	0.42**
	Sport Exp of Body Obj	0.18	0.03	0.18**	-0.08	0.04	-0.07*

Functional Values R^2 for Step 1 = 0.004, ΔR^2 for model 2 = 0.14; Functional Satisfaction = R^2 for Step 1 = 0.03, ΔR^2 for model 2 = 0.17; *F* change sig at * .05, **.001 alpha level

Body Experiences and Sport Enjoyment



		Sport Enjoyment N = 653		
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>
Step 1	Constant	6.85	0.29	
	BMI	-0.03	0.01	-0.09*
Step 2	Constant	4.32	0.42	
	BMI	-0.01	0.01	-0.04
	Sport Exp of Phys Comp	-0.19	0.06	-0.13**
	Sport Exp of Body Obj	0.75	0.08	0.34***

R^2 for Step 1 = 0.008, ΔR^2 for model 2 = 0.12; F change sig at * .05, **.01, ***.001 alpha level

What does it all mean?



- In both types of leisure pursuits, girls experienced the physical competence of their bodies more often than they reported feeling aesthetically objectified.
 - But objectification was not absent.
- Body experiences differ across sport types and by analyses
- Body experiences during sport were significantly related to girls' body image and their sport enjoyment

Why more objectifying experiences in sports?



Advice



- Coaches –

- Mindfulness about function and form balance
- Provide opportunities for girls to experience physical competence
- Acknowledgment of uniform differences – are they necessary
- Be careful of compliments/criticisms around appearance

- Parents –

- Advocate sports participation
- Focus on physical competence
- Sport selection
- Mindfulness of commentary

- Wider society –

- Sport commentary/media
- Uniform design



Food for thought



“My coach told me I ran like a girl....”

I said if he ran a little faster, he
could too”

Mia Hamm

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