

Brief Introduction



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A deeper dive into the research on social media and...

Body image

Adolescent girls

Adolescent Mental Health Crisis CDC data from 2021

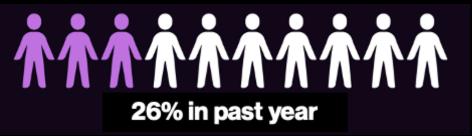
Female teens (sex)

Lesbian, gay, & bi teens



Persistent sadness/ hopelessness





Seriously considered suicide





Made a suicide attempt



12% in past year

www.sophiachoukasbradley.com; image created by author for Psychology Today Blog (Choukas-Bradley, 2022)

Brief Overview on Adolescent Development

(roughly ages 11-24)

Rapid period of physical (pubertal) and neural maturation

Period of identity exploration & development

Heightened importance of peers

Heightened susceptibility to mental health concerns



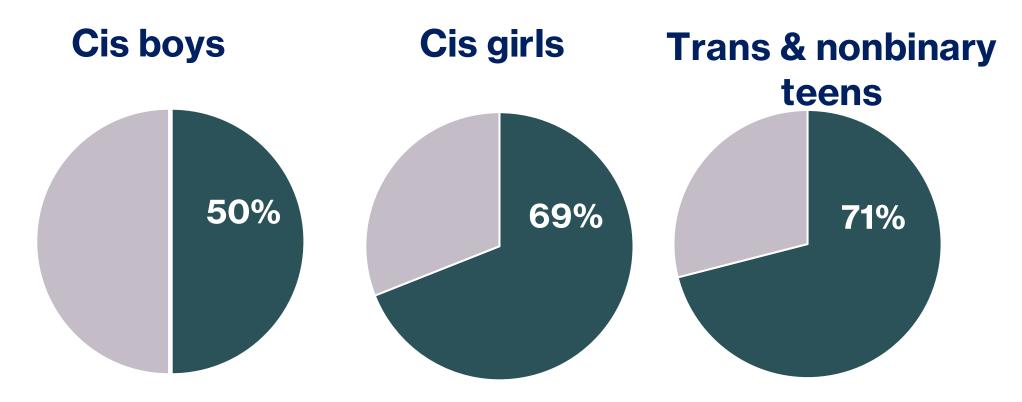
What is body image?

"body image noun

: a subjective picture of one's own physical appearance established both by self-observation and by noting the reactions of others'

Why focus on body image concerns in adolescence?

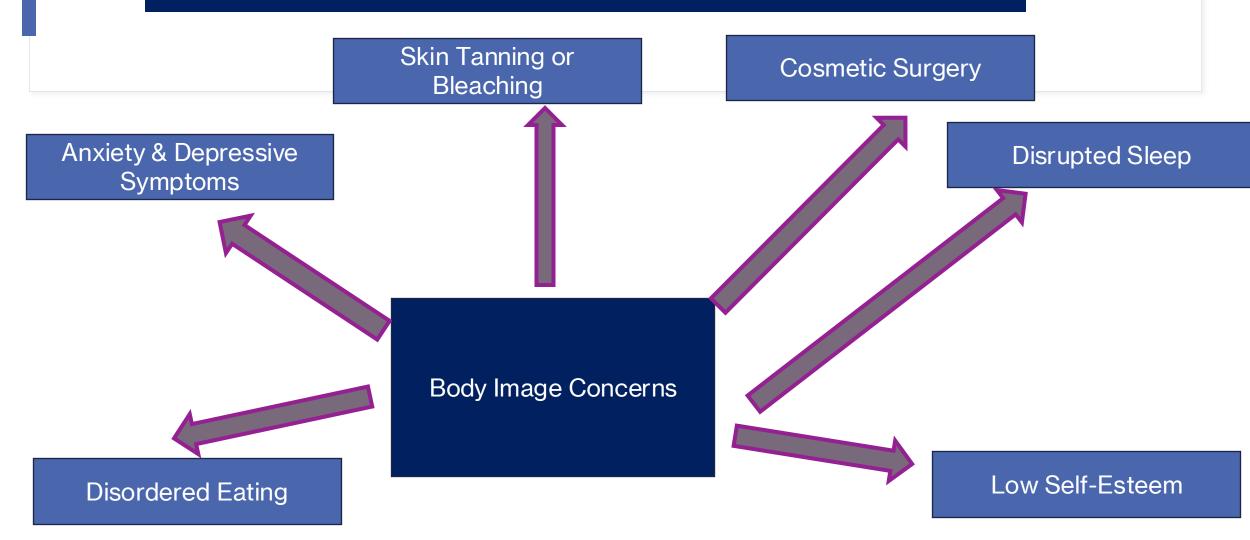
Body image concerns are very common.



"I worry about the way I look"

Why focus on body image concerns in adolescence?

Body image concerns predict multiple maladaptive outcomes.



Why focus on body image concerns in adolescence?

Mounting evidence that social media negatively affects adolescent girls' body image, contributing to the mental health crisis.

Choukas-Bradley et al., 2022

Why is adolescence a time of heightened body image concerns – especially for cis girls and trans youth?

Media influences

Biological changes

Social changes







Transformation Framework: Features of Social Media

Permanence



Asynchronicity



Cue Absence



Visualness



Quantifiability



Availability



Publicness



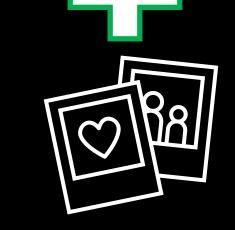
Algorithmic*

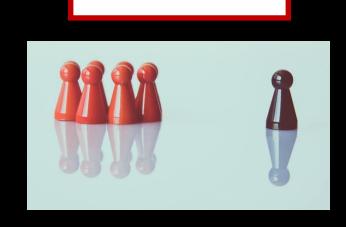


Benefits & drawbacks of adolescents' SM use

Choukas-Bradley, Kilic, Stout, & Roberts (2023), Advances in Psychiatry & Behavioral Health

Peer Relationships





Identity
Exploration &
Development





But what about for body image?

Clear evidence that the risks far outweigh the benefits.

A key point to keep in mind

Adolescent girls in the U.S. are taught that their physical appearance is more important than *anything else* about them.

Tripartite Influence Model of Body Image (Thompson et al., 1999)

Peers, family, & media

Social comparison

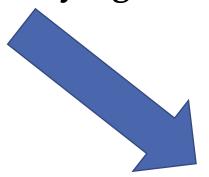
Internalization of beauty norms (e.g., "thin ideal")

Body image concerns (e.g., body dissatisfaction)

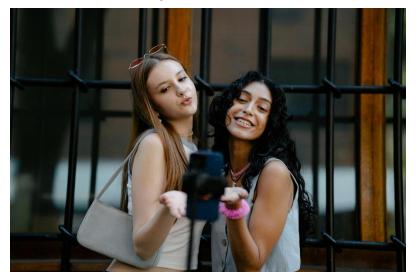
Objectification Theory

(Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)

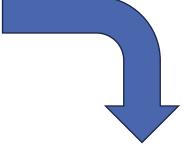
Sexually objectifying culture



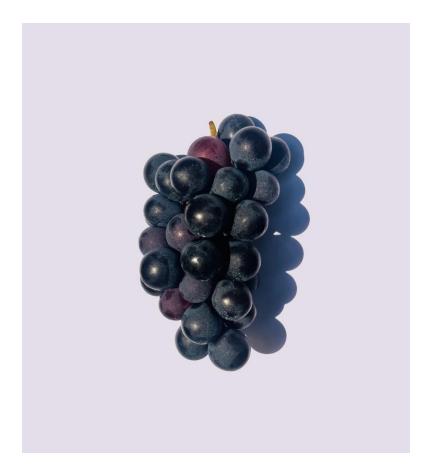
Self-objectification

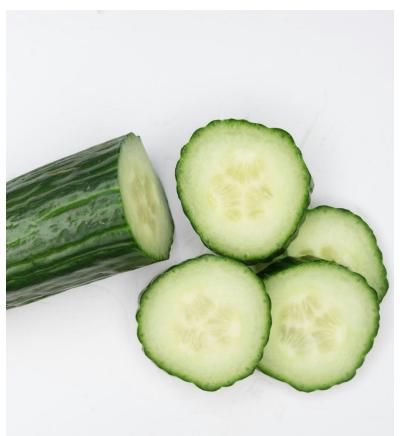






Problematic outcomes







Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954; see de Waal's 2012 TED Talk)

Although social comparison is a natural

process....



Among adolescents and young adults, most social comparisons are *upward social comparisons*

"I wish I looked like Cindy Crawford" - Cindy Crawford



"The Perfect Storm" Framework

Gendered
Sociocultural
Appearance
Pressures

Social Media Features

Body Image Concerns

Disordered Eating,
Depressive
Symptoms

Adolescent Developmental Factors

Choukas-Bradley, Roberts, Maheux, & Nesi (2022) Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review

Social media = intersection of peer & media influences



Is the "imaginary audience" no longer imaginary?

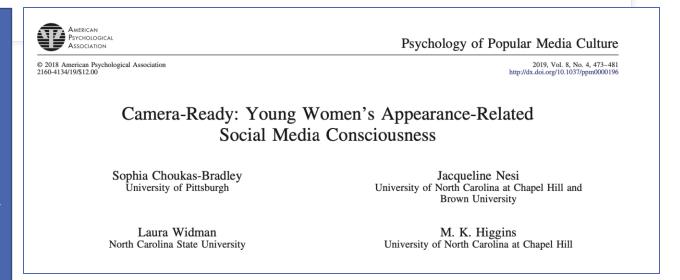
How does social media affect girls' body image?

- ► Increased focus on other people's appearance
 - Social comparison w/ idealized images
 - Changing beauty standards
- ► Increased focus on one's <u>own</u> appearance
 - Appearance-related social media consciousness



Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness (ASMC)

ASMC = the extent to which one's thoughts & behaviors reflect ongoing awareness of whether they might look attractive to a social media audience





Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness (ASMC) Scale Development Paper (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2020)

I zoom into social media pictures to see what specific parts of my body look like.

When people take pictures of me, I think about how I will look if the pictures are posted on social media.

Even when I'm alone, I imagine how my body would look in a social media picture.

ASMC is associated with increased risk for...

- Offline body image concerns (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2020; Maheux et al., 2024a)
- **Depressive symptoms** (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2020; Maheux et al., 2022; 2024b)

Among young women and men; within-person and between person; cross-sectionally & longitudinally; controlling for gender, race, time on social media, offline self-objectification

The future of social media beauty content?

- From digital editing tech —> AI avatars & deep fakes
- Ozempic

Working toward promoting digital thriving

Digital Well-Being Lessons 4 Lessons

Lesson 1

My Values & Tech

What are my values, and how do media and tech impact them?

GRADE

TIME

6–12 45 mins.



Lesson 2

Design Tricks

How is tech designed to hold our attention, and how can it impact our well-being?

GRADE

TIME

9–12 45 mins.

Video



Lesson 3

Thinking Traps

What are thinking traps, and how can they impact our well-being when we use tech?

GRADE

TIME

6-12

45 mins.

Video



Lesson 4

Tech Habit Challenge

How can I build positive habits around media and tech to support my well-being?

GRADE

TIME

9–12 45 mins.





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BEYOND THE LOOKING GLASS

Body Image & Sense of Self in the Era of Social Media By Sophia Choukas-Bradley

Forthcoming book in 2027: Flatiron Books (U.S.) & Penguin Life (U.K.)





Thank you!

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(You won't find me on social media.)