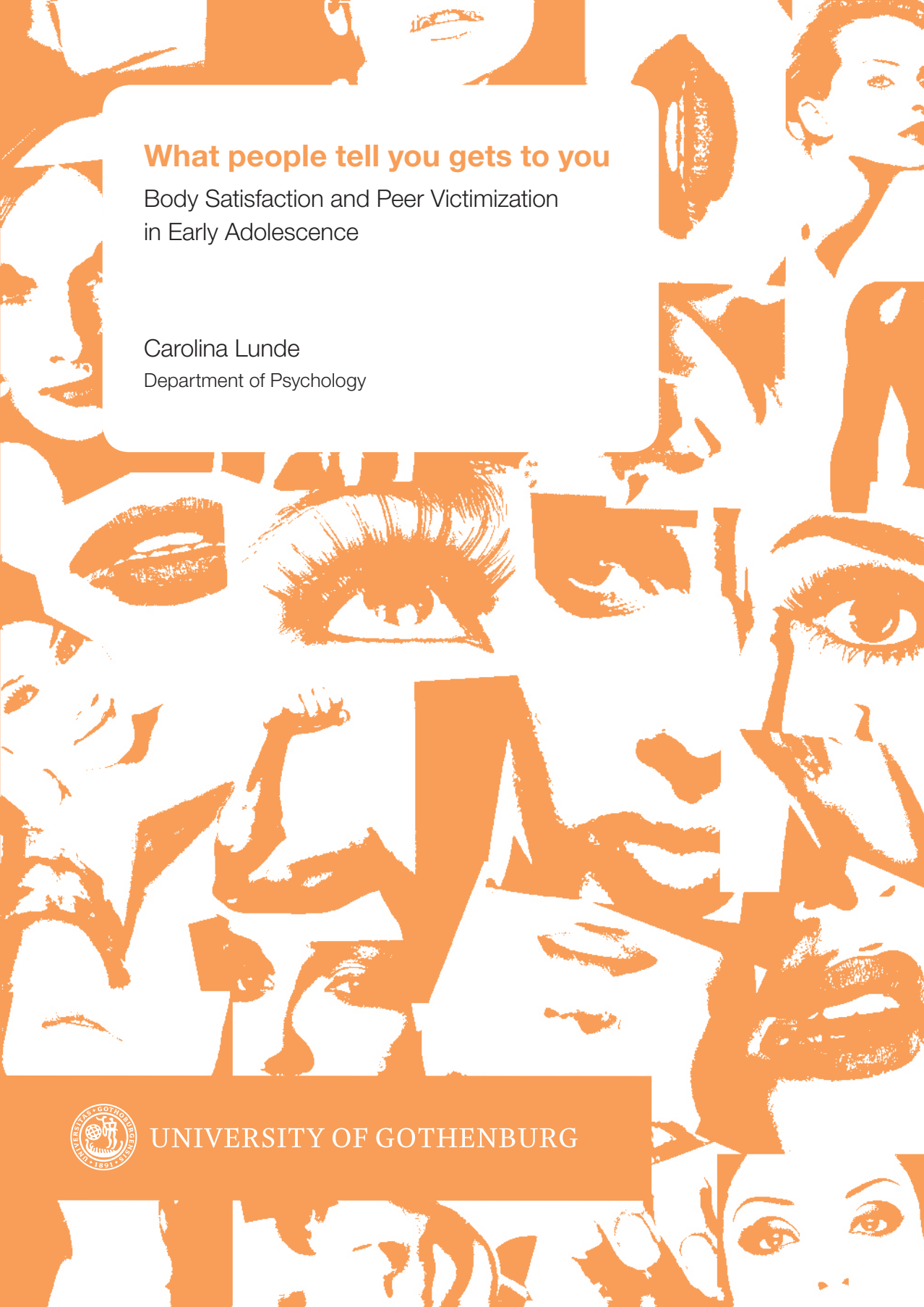
What people tell you gets to you

Body Satisfaction and Peer Victimization in Early Adolescence

Carolina Lunde
Department of Psychology



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

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A little baby
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No one could save me
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They would tease
They would taunt me
Haunt me

"You're such a pretty boy"
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"You're such a pretty boy"
"You're such a pretty boy"

"Flight Attendant" (Rouse, 2003, track 8)

Abstract

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Satisfaction with one's appearance and peer relationships, respectively, are salient components of adolescents' everyday lives. Difficulties in either of these domains may be detrimental to individuals' psychological well-being. Research within the body image field indicates that physical appearance is a recurring theme when children tease each other, and that such experiences may result in body dissatisfaction. For some early adolescents, peer victimization is so frequently experienced that it is referred to as bullying. The research presented in this dissertation attempts to disentangle the relationships between early adolescents' body dissatisfaction and experiences of peer victimization in terms of type and frequency. As more qualitative studies have been requested to move the body image field forward, an additional goal was to provide an in-depth approach to body dissatisfaction. In **Study I**, the associations of a range of peer victimization experiences and 10-year-olds' (*N*=960) body satisfaction were evaluated. Boys and girls who experienced that they had been socially excluded from their peer group were more dissatisfied with their appearance. Bullied girls also attributed more negative evaluations of their appearance to other people. In **Study II**, peer victimization experiences were evaluated in relation to participants' (*N*=960) body composition (i.e., weight and height). Results indicated that whereas overweight boys mainly reported having been frequently subjected to appearance related teasing, overweight girls reported that not only were they subject to frequent appearance related teasing but also to frequent bullying. In **Study III**, the twofold objective was to examine the developmental trajectories of adolescent's body satisfaction, as well as the long-term associations between body satisfaction and peer victimization. Between age 10 and 13, both girls and boys (*N*=874) became significantly more dissatisfied with their appearance. The long-term effects of peer victimization experiences on participants' body satisfaction varied by gender: A higher frequency of peer victimization prospectively predicted girls' more negative weight-evaluations. For boys, frequent appearance related teasing predicted more negative beliefs about how other people view their appearance. **Study IV** used a qualitative design, aiming at providing an in-depth approach to the "continuum" of body dissatisfaction. Thirty 14-year-olds, who had reported stability in terms of a low level of body satisfaction at age 10 and 13, were interviewed. The qualitative analysis (based on an IPA-approach) resulted in four subgroups of participants. These subgroups were labeled Severely Troubled, Non-Critical, Reflective, and Naïve. Participants' body satisfaction concerns appeared to interplay with subjective standpoints and perceptions of sociocultural influences on body dissatisfaction. Importantly, the most dissatisfied participants (Severely Troubled) reported a history of peer victimization experiences, along with having received very critical appearance commentary from their parents. To summarize, this dissertation demonstrates that young adolescents who repeatedly experience their peer interactions as problematic also seem to battle unfavorable attitudes and beliefs about their appearance.

Keywords: Body Satisfaction; Social Relations; Peer Victimization; Early Adolescence

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Populärvetenskaplig svensk sammanfattning

Begreppet kroppsuppfattning inbegriper de tankar, känslor och åsikter individer hyser gentemot sin kropp och sitt utseende. Kroppsuppfattningen är en central del av självbilden – vilket bland annat manifesteras i att individer med en negativ kroppsuppfattning ofta har en negativ självbild överlag. I de tidiga ungdomsåren (som i denna avhandling definieras som åren mellan 10 och 14 år) står individen i begrepp att möta den rad av omvälvande fysiska, psykologiska och sociala förändringar som pubertet och tonår medför. Inte minst i förhållande till det egna utseendet kan de här förändringarna leda till en ökad självmedvetenhet, då kroppens utseende kommer att förändras dramatiskt. Att komma tillrätta med detta nya fysiska jag blir till en viktig, men inte okomplicerad uppgift. Ett annat viktigt psykologiskt och socialt sammanhang under denna tid utgör relationen till jämnåriga. Alltmer tid spenderas ihop med kamrater, och i bästa fall utgör ungdomars jämnåriga ett viktigt emotionellt stöd.

För en del unga flickor och pojkar är relationen till jämnåriga dock problematisk. Under tidiga skolår är mobbning ett vanligt förekommande problem, uppskattningsvis 9% av svenska skolbarn uppger att de regelbundet blir utsatta för de upprepade negativa handlingar som mobbning definieras som. Mobbning kan ta sig flera uttryck, från mer direkta handlingar som retande och fysiskt våld till mer subtila handlingar som ryktesspridning och uteslutning. Forskning har visat att när personer erinrar sig vad de blev retade för som barn så minns de att utseende (t ex ansiktsdrag och vikt) var något som ofta stod i fokus. Forskning har också visat att unga personer som har blivit retade över sitt utseende i unga år riskerar att utveckla en kvarstående negativ syn på sin kropp. Ett problem med denna tidigare forskning är att den har varit retrospektiv, det vill säga att man har bett vuxna personer att minnas hur de hade det som barn. Ett annat problem är att den nästan uteslutande bygger på kvinnliga deltagares erfarenheter.

I denna doktorsavhandling presenteras fyra vetenskapliga studier som belyser ungdomars kroppsuppfattning på olika sätt, liksom sambanden mellan en negativ kroppsuppfattning och problematiska interaktioner med jämnåriga (engelska *peer victimization*). Problematiska interaktioner med jämnåriga har studerats dels i form av utsatthet för mobbning, och dels i form av mer specifika erfarenheter – till exempel att ha blivit retad över utseendet, att ha blivit utesluten ur

sociala sammanhang eller att ha blivit utsatt för fysiskt våld av jämnåriga. Samtliga studier utgår från data insamlat inom ramen för ett stort longitudinellt projekt.

I **Studie I** studerades sambanden mellan 960 10-åriga flickors och pojkars kroppsuppfattning och deras erfarenheter av problematiska interaktioner med jämnåriga. Resultaten visar att flickor och pojkar som upplevde att de upprepade gånger blivit uteslutna ur sociala sammanhang hade en mer negativ upplevelse av sin kropp och sitt utseende. De flickor som var utsatta för mobbning hade dessutom en påtagligt mer negativ syn av hur de trodde att andra värderar deras utseende.

I **Studie II** ställdes istället frågan om vissa ungdomar oftare än andra rapporterar att de är utsatta för negativa interaktioner med jämnåriga. Studien utgick från samma deltagare som de som deltog i Studie I. Resultaten visar att överviktiga ungdomar verkar vara särskilt utsatta. Dessutom fanns en viktig könsskillnad – medan överviktiga pojkar endast angav att de utsattes för retande kopplat till utseendet så uppgav överviktiga flickor oftare än andra flickor att de var utsatta för regelrätt mobbning.

Studie III syftade till att undersöka dels hur kroppsuppfattningen utvecklas under tidiga ungdomsår, och dels huruvida tidiga problematiska kamratrelationer hänger samman med utvecklingen av en negativ kroppsuppfattning. Deltagare var de 874 flickor och pojkar som deltagit i det longitudinella projektets två första mättillfällen (vid 10 och 13 år). Resultaten visade att både flickor och pojkar blev påtagligt mer missnöjda med sin kropp och sitt utseende mellan 10 och 13 år. För flickor är dessa resultat väl i linje med resultat som redovisats i internationell forskning. Vad gäller pojkars kroppsuppfattningsutveckling var resultaten något mer förvånande, då man tidigare antagit att pojkar snarare tenderar att bli mer nöjda med sitt utseende under tidiga tonår. Studie III visade också att en hög grad av negativa interaktioner med jämnåriga vid 10 års ålder hängde samman med betydande viktmissnöje bland flickor tre år senare. För pojkar som ofta blivit retade över sitt utseende som 10-åringar var det framförallt en negativ upplevelse av hur andra uppfattar ens utseende som var påtaglig vid uppföljningen.

Studie IV var till skillnad från de övriga studierna en kvalitativ ansats, och syftade till att fördjupa kunskapen kring vad som kan komma att forma en negativ kroppsuppfattning. Trettio av de mest missnöjda deltagarna, varav hälften flickor och hälften pojkar, från det longitudinella projektets två mättillfällen intervjuades individuellt. Utifrån den kvalitativa analysen fann vi fyra huvudmönster vad gäller deltagarnas individuella berättelser och erfarenheter, och

dessa huvudmönster sammanfattades i fyra undergrupperingar: extremt missnöjda, okritiska, naiva och reflekterande. I korta ordalag utmärktes de ”extremt missnöjda” deltagarna uteslutande av flickor som trots ett mycket kritiskt förhållningssätt till skönhetsideal i samhället var mycket negativa till sitt eget utseende. De hade brottats med bantning och ätstörningsproblematik, liksom en negativ hemmiljö. Samtliga vittnade om problematiska erfarenheter i relation till jämnåriga. De ”okritiska” deltagarna utmärkte sig framförallt genom ett oproblematiserande förhållningssätt gentemot skönhetsideal, något som kan indikera att de internaliserat rådande normer om vad som är attraktivt (t ex extrem smalhet). De deltagare som kom att kallas ”naiva” var ofta pojkar som föreföll oförstående och ovetandes om skönhetsideal och som talade om kroppen i termer av funktion snarare än utseende (t ex att ha starka ben). De ”reflekterande” deltagarna var liksom de extremt missnöjda medvetna och kritiska mot rådande skönhetsideal, men föreföll inte särskilt missnöjda med sin kropp och sitt utseende. Många av dessa deltagare formulerade betydelsen av att inte låta ens utseende avgöra ens egenvärde.

Denna doktorsavhandling visar sammanfattningsvis att de tidiga ungdomsåren är en tid då barn riskerar bli mer missnöjda med sitt utseende. De barn och ungdomar som brottas med problematiska relationer till sina jämnåriga brottas också i högre utsträckning än andra barn med en negativ självbild kopplat till kropp och utseende. Överviktiga barn verkar vara särskilt utsatta, både vad gäller en negativ kroppsuppfattning liksom att uppleva sig vara utsatta för mobbning. Givet de negativa konsekvenser som en negativ kroppsuppfattning kan medföra, såsom till exempel ätstörningsproblematik, är det viktigt att uppmärksamma tidiga indikationer på negativ kroppsuppfattning. Barn som utsätts för mobbning eller på andra sätt har problematiska interaktioner med sina jämnåriga riskerar att vara särskilt negativt inställda mot sin kropp och sitt utseende.

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Carolina Lunde

Gothenburg, January 2009

List of Publications

This thesis consists of a summary and the following four papers, referred to in the text by their Roman numerals:

I. Lunde, C., Frisén, A., & Hwang, C. P. (2006). Is peer victimization related to body esteem in 10-year-old girls and boys? *Body Image, 3*, pp. 25-33.

II. Frisén, A., Lunde, C., & Hwang, C. P. (in press). Peer victimization and its relationships with perceptions of body composition. *Educational Studies, 35*.

III. Lunde, C., Frisén, A., & Hwang, C. P. (2007). Ten-year-old girls' and boys' body composition and peer victimization experiences: Prospective associations with body satisfaction. *Body Image, 4*, pp. 11-28.

IV. Lunde, C., Frisén, A., & Hwang, C. P. (2009). *"Nobody loves you when you are fat and chubby". Interviews on the continuum of body dissatisfaction*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

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Introduction

Our social interactions and interpersonal experiences shape the attitudes and beliefs we hold about ourselves, as if they were a looking glass in which we are mirrored. Crucial to our self-attitudes is our physical persona. In turn, our physical persona may interplay with social interactions. Research has shown consistently that people respond to how other people look, by acting friendlier in a personal encounter with someone that looks reliable, by prescribing positive personal characteristics to those who are deemed attractive and negative qualities to those possessing some undesirable feature of their appearance. But what is reflected back through social feedback is not a one-way street. The attitudes and beliefs we hold about ourselves may also shape our social encounters. Feeling self-conscious and disparaging towards oneself may make it difficult to favorably portray one's unique features. A hesitant demeanor may even invite maltreatment by domineering others.

In its broadest sense, this thesis revolves around two things. The first is the development of self-perceptions related to adolescents' physical selves, or their body image. The second is the relation between those self-perceptions and unsatisfactory social relationships. Peers are very important persons during the teenage years. When peer relations are fulfilling, they enhance prosocial behaviors, support identity development, and help cushion against negative happenings in individuals' lives. However, it has been noted that the nicest children begin to behave in the most awful ways during middle school. Many of us can recall vivid memories from when a classmate was teased and belittled, shunned and socially excluded – maybe even physically abused – over and over again.

Body dissatisfaction, meaning discontent with one's appearance, is a common ingredient in young people's lives. Not only is it common, in its more severe forms it predates serious psychological conditions such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Elevated levels of body dissatisfaction are also strongly related to a reduction in self-esteem, depression, and exercise addiction. Empirical research has identified a variety of risk factors potentially increasing the likelihood of body dissatisfaction, for example simply being female, having some kind of physical malformation, suffering from obesity, or having internalized the thin-ideal so that it represents one's own standard of beauty. Another risk factor is having been subjected to appearance-related teasing early on in life. In turn,

frequent teasing is more likely to be experienced during the school years, and the worst perpetrators are peers.

Numerous studies with the objective of increasing our understanding of body satisfaction have been performed during the last two decades. Still, knowledge about the developmental trajectories of body satisfaction is limited. Even less is known about whether experiences of peer maltreatment, other than appearance-related teasing, are associated with adolescents' body image concerns. If social interactions are the looking glass through which the self is viewed, unfavorable interactions with significant others may be closely tied to unfavorable self-evaluations. These are the core issues of the research presented in this thesis.

The thesis is organized as follows. I will begin with an outline on the nature of the adolescent years, describing the major developmental transitions facing adolescents. I will especially focus on features in these transitions that may be of importance for social relationships, self-attitudes, and self-understanding. Second, I will present conceptual ideas and relevant empirical evidence revolving around body image, or more specifically, the evaluative aspects of body image during the early adolescent years. Third, I will attend to some of the issues in peer victimization research of immediate interest in view of the present research. In the final section I will summarize the empirical research presented in this thesis, followed by a general discussion of its findings.

Adolescence

Adolescere (*latin*) means "to grow up" and is defined as the second decade of life, normatively translated into age 10 to the early 20s. The first adolescent phase, early adolescence, often refers to the years between 10 and 14 (Steinberg, 1999). The first scientific study of the adolescent years posited it as a period of universal and inevitable "Sturm und Drang" (storm and stress) (Hall, 1904, cited in Steinberg, 1999), whereby humans were perceived as "evolving from savages into civilized beings". Compared to Hall's view on adolescent development, contemporary views are less dramatic. Some 10 years ago, Dornbusch, Petersen and Hetherington (1991) concluded that the research at that time dispelled many myths about this age group and they made a plea for the de-dramatization of adolescence. Somewhat later, Arnett (1999), however, argued for what he called a modified storm-and-stress view – one that accounts for individual differences and cultural variations. In his view, longitudinal research does support storm-and-stress being more likely during adolescence than at other ages. Although most teenagers meet the challenges of this period without developing significant difficulties (Steinberg & Sheffield Morris, 2001), Costello and Angold (1995) report that the overall rate of psychological disturbances rises slightly with adolescents more often struggling with for example depression and eating disorders.

Developmental Transitions

Adolescence is a dynamic period, a period characterized by great transitions both in number and magnitude. The child is en route to becoming an adult, facing changes within him or herself as well as changes in relation to social structures. There is general consensus that adolescence encompasses three fundamental transitions (Steinberg, 1999). These include (1) biological transitions, (2) cognitive transitions, and (3) social transitions.

Puberty

In a strict biological sense, puberty refers to the universal period in life when individuals become capable of sexual reproduction. More generally speaking, puberty encompasses all the physical changes that occur as an individual passes from childhood into adulthood. Marshall (1978) has described the five chief manifestations of puberty:

1. *The growth spurt*, resulting in dramatic increases in both height and weight
2. *Development of primary sex characteristics*, including further development of the gonads (testes in males, ovaries in females)
3. *Development in secondary sex characteristics*, involving changes in the genitals and breasts, growth of pubic, facial, and body hair, and the further development in the sex organs
4. *Changes in body composition,* specifically, in the quantity and distribution of fat and muscles
5. *Changes in the circulatory and respiratory systems*, leading to increased strength and tolerance for exercise

Steinberg (1999) argues that it is misleading even to talk about "average" ages in pubertal timing and maturational rates as inter-individual variations are so great. However, there are some gender differences that are fairly stable. Girls usually enter puberty 18 months earlier than do boys (Brooks-Gunn & Reiter, 1990), and the growth spurt is placed earlier in the sequence of bodily changes for girls (Coleman & Hendry, 2002). As a consequence, early adolescent girls are generally taller than boys, with boys catching up from age 14 and onwards (Steinberg, 1999). The height spurt is accompanied by increases in weight, resulting from an increase of both muscle and fat (Steinberg, 1999). Girls gain more in weight than boys, and at a faster rate. Consequently, girls emerge from puberty with a muscle-to-fat ratio of about 5:4 and a clear gain of body fat (Alsaker, 1996). Boys finish puberty with a comparable ratio of about 3:1. Before puberty, body differences between girls and boys are almost entirely restricted to genitalia. Whereas auxiliary hair growth and skin changes occur in both girls and boys, breast development, voice change, and growth of facial hair are gender specific.

Importantly, puberty is characterized by inter- and intra-individual asynchronies rather than by uniformity (Alsaker, 1996). These asynchronies include different parts of the body growing at different paces, sometimes resulting in

adolescents' appearance being temporarily out of proportion. The asynchronies also include the timing of puberty, that is, an individual's relative development in relation to the expected pubertal maturation at a certain age (early, on time, or late) (Alsaker, 1996). Pubertal timing is largely inherited, but environmental factors also influences puberty onset. The most conspicuous evidence for environmental influence comes from *the secular trend* observed since 1850 whereby mean age of menarche has declined from 17 to about 12-13 years of age (Ge, Natsuaki, Neiderhiser, & Reiss, 2007). This trend is largely attributable to improved health and nutrition, but research also indicates potential roles of family environment and other psychosocial factors on pubertal timing (Belsky, et al., 2007; Ge, et al., 2007). Because of the importance of social comparison during early adolescence, pubertal timing is generally considered a more crucial aspect of pubertal development than pubertal maturation in itself (Williams & Currie, 2000).

Cognitive Development

Adolescence is associated with major new developments in cognitive abilities. Improvements in cognitive processing speed and intellectual functioning become evident in late childhood and adolescence, with the most dramatic improvements occurring in executive functions, including abstract thought, organization, decision making and planning, and response inhibition (Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). These cognitive alterations enable the young person to reason about the future, facilitate progress towards maturity in relationships, and contribute to the development of communication skills (Coleman & Hendry, 2002; Yurgelun-Todd, 2007).

Piaget (Piaget, 1952), with his pioneering work on stages of cognitive development, was among the first to draw attention to the intellectual development following puberty. He was primarily interested in how knowledge is acquired and develops (Carpendale, 1997), and viewed adolescence as the time period representing the final formal-operational stage of intellectual development. Preceding the formal-operational stage is the concrete-operational one (age 7-11). During this stage, the child's thought is "relational" and he or she gradually masters notions of classification, relation, and quantities (Coleman & Hendry, 2002). These skills enable the child to formulate hypotheses and explanations of concrete events, but the child is still unable to differentiate between what is perceptually given and what is mentally constructed. Entering the formal-operational stage, the adolescent becomes able to reason in a more abstract fashion than hitherto. He or she becomes able to construct contrary-to-fact proposi-

tions, shifting thought from the real to the possible. In other words, he or she can imagine alternative outcomes to a problem, and test the possibilities systematically (Durkin, 1995). Since Piaget formulated his theory half a decade ago his ideas have received a range of criticism. Major criticisms revolve around the distinctiveness of the stages, and Piaget's overly optimistic view of the formal operational stage. It seems as if not all adolescents reach this stage of cognitive development, and at age 16 only a minority reaches the most advanced level of formal thought (Coleman & Hendry, 2002). Piaget has also been criticized for being only concerned with "cold cognition", ignoring factors pertaining to the influence of social factors on development (Carpendale, 1997, p. 46). In the context of the present thesis, two additional perspectives relating to early adolescents' social-cognitive development are important to consider – the notion of adolescent egocentrism, and the development of perspective-taking capabilities.

Adolescent Egocentrism

"Everybody, I mean everybody else is looking at me like they think I am totally weird!"
Harter (1999, p. 68)

Oft-cited in textbooks on developmental psychology is the adolescent egocentrism perspective (Elkind, 1967, cited in Durkin, 1995). In brief, the concept delineates two distinct but related ideation patterns, the imaginary audience and the personal fable. Imaginary audience refers to adolescents' tendency to (erroneously) believe that others are always watching and evaluating them – as if they were always on stage; the personal fable refers to the belief that the self is unique, invulnerable, and omnipotent (Vartanian, 2000) and has been linked to risk-taking behaviors. Evidencing the notion of an imaginary audience, Elkind referred to adolescents' extreme preoccupation and concern with appearance. He meant that adolescents believe that their appearance and behaviors are of as much concern to others as they are to themselves. Consequently, they frequently anticipate others' real or fantasized reactions to them which lead them to continually construct and react to an imaginary audience. With continued intellectual development and social interactions, adolescent egocentrism is overcome. Referring to a set of studies from the 80s to the early 90s, Durkin (1995) concludes that adolescent egocentrism peaks in early adolescence. In more contemporary textbooks pertaining to adolescents' development, the imaginary audience and personal fable are discussed in relation to a number of issues, for ex-

ample self-consciousness, cognition of other people's views, and peer conformity.

Perspective-Taking

Social perspective-taking refers to an ability or tendency to understand another's thought (cognitive perspective-taking) or emotion (emotional perspective-taking). In 1977/1980, Selman proposed a stage theory of the development of social cognition (Selman 1977; Selman 1980, cited in Coleman & Hendry, 2002). He identified four overlapping developmental levels of social perspective-taking, starting from childhood and continuing throughout middle adolescence. In the first stage (age 5-9), children begin to realize that other people can have perspectives different from their own. In the second stage (age 7-11), children have acquired the ability to take others' perspectives into account, enabling self-reflective thinking and reciprocal perspective taking. With the final two stages, more sophisticated perspective-taking skills emerge: By stage 3 (age 10-15), adolescents are capable of more generalized third-person perspective-taking, and by the fourth and final stage (15+) adolescents may coordinate perspectives of society with perspectives of individuals and groups.

Perspective taking is viewed as a cognitive mechanism that underlies everyday social interaction (Vartanian, 2000), and the ability to take another's perspective is crucial for successful social communication. Perspective taking skills are believed to foster empathy and sympathy, and are linked to moral reasoning, both of which are viewed as enhancing prosocial behavior (Eisenberg, Losoya, & Guthrie, 1997).

Social Transitions

The final developmental transition to be reviewed includes changes in adolescent's social worlds. Although there are no formal rites of passage to mark the transition to adulthood in Western societies, a change in social status is a fundamental feature of adolescence (Steinberg, 1999). This shift produces both new demands and new opportunities for social and emotional growth. The teenage years have been described as a second individuation process (Wrangsjö, 2006) and as individuals emancipate themselves from their parents, more and more time is spent with peers. It is during this time adolescents truly can be said to participate in a separate social world of their peers (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003) with peers playing a salient role in the socialization experience.

Relationships with Family

The familiar notion of a "generation gap" reflects a common sense belief of frequent intergenerational conflict over fundamental values, norms and ideas between adolescents and their parents. This belief appears to be mythical – adolescents appear to get on quite well with their parents (Durkin, 1995) and rely on them for guidance and support in critical issues (Coleman & Hendry, 2002). When conflicts do occur, Carlo and colleagues (1999) suggest that they may result from a renegotiation of family-roles and relationships due to the rapid maturational changes on the part of the adolescent.

A salient developmental task confronting adolescents is establishing oneself as an autonomous being (Erikson, 1968), and stress within the family often revolves around issues of autonomy versus control. While adolescents question their parents' authority and push for more decision-making power, their parents' response to their child's emerging sexuality and increased involvement with peers may be to become more concerned about their safety and to provide less opportunities for independent decision making (Gutman & Eccles, 2007). Emotional closeness and time spent with parents decrease during adolescence (Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996), and although adolescents strive for more independence, they also require emotional closeness and open communication with their parents (Gutman & Eccles, 2007). Steinberg (1999) posits that the development of adolescent autonomy benefits from families that permit individuality against a back-drop of close family ties. Indeed, Scaramella, Conger and Simons (1999) showed that parental involvement and warmth predict lower rates of delinquent behavior and fewer depressive symptoms during adolescence.

Relationships with Peers

When adolescents are asked to list people who are most important to them, nearly half the people they mention are age-mates (Brown, 1990). Indeed, peer relationships become of paramount psychosocial importance in adolescence; some would even argue that peer influences on psychological development overshadow those of parents (Harris, 1995). Steinberg and Monahan (2007), offer two mutually compatible explanations for the increased significance of peer influences. The first one focuses on the social context, and stresses the changing nature of the peer crowd to becoming an important reference group that defines the social landscape of early and middle adolescence. The second explanation they offer focuses more on the individual level. Adolescents' susceptibility to peer pressure and need to fit in may be an emotional "way station" between becoming emotionally autonomous from parents and a subjective sense

of self-reliance. In this view, peers can fill the emotional void that some adolescents experience when separating from their parents at a time in their life when they are perhaps not yet ready for such independence.

Peer Acceptance. Many researchers have stressed the need of being accepted by one's peers for emotional well-being. Peer acceptance-research (also known as sociometric status-research) focuses on the degree to which children and adolescents are liked or disliked by the peer group. The most common procedure for measuring sociometric status is to let children nominate those children whom they "most like" and those children whom they "most dislike", typically in their class (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003). Research adopting this procedure has generated sociometric categories: popular children, controversial children, neglected children, and rejected children. In short, popular children are those who receive nominations of being liked, and are frequently described as possessing a range of pro-social behaviors. Controversial children are those who receive nominations as both liked and disliked. While they are perceived as sociable and leaders, they are also perceived as more aggressive and more arrogant. Neglected children are neither liked nor disliked by their peers, and are characterized as shy or withdrawn, and lacking in prosocial behavior. Finally, rejected children are those who receive many peer nominations of being disliked. Since rejected children are at the greatest risk for negative developmental outcomes, this group has received the most conceptual and empirical attention. There is a robust link between rejected status and aggression, with rejected boys engaging in higher frequencies of aggression, more hostile and unprovoked aggression, and rejected girls engaging in more relational aggression. Not all rejected children are however aggressive, but considerably less is known about non-aggressive rejected children (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003). These children have been described as shy and withdrawn, but these behaviors may not differentiate them from their non-rejected peers. Rejected children are also more likely to be described as socially awkward (Bierman, Smoot, & Aumiller, 1993) as well as being teased over non-normative or unusual behavior (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003).

Development of Self-Understanding

Put simply the construct "self-concept" is used to refer to the overall idea of a sense of self (Coleman & Hendry, 2002), and it is often considered a hierarchical construct (Harter, 1999). One model that illustrates its hierarchical structure is that of Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976, cited in Byrne & Shavelson, 1996). According to the model, self-concept is viewed as a core construct with subordinated specific domains. Shavelson and colleagues (1976) further divided these domains into an academic and a non-academic component, with the non-academic covering social, emotional and physical aspects of the self-concept. While the social self-concept includes relations to peers and significant others; the physical self-concept includes physical ability and appearance.

Self-Concept Development during Early Adolescence

A number of alterations in young person's self-concept occur throughout the adolescent years. First, the self becomes increasingly differentiated (Harter, 1999). Whereas a younger child describes him or herself simply as friendly or sad, an adolescent masters not only situation-specific notions of the self (e.g., I am friendly in such and such conditions, or sad under certain circumstances) but is also able to see the self from different points of view (e.g., the view-point of parents or peers).

Second, Harter has demonstrated that in early adolescence a differentiation of self-worth across relational contexts begins. That is, a vast majority of early adolescents differ in how much they like themselves as a function of the relational context at hand. Hypothesizing that significant others' opinions are incorporated into one's sense of worth, Harter noted that validation from significant others will have the greatest impact on self-worth when adolescents' find themselves in the context of those significant others. Along with marked increases in introspection, this has been offered as an explanation for young people's sometimes "morbid" (Rosenberg, 1989) preoccupation with what others think of them.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem or self-worth, these terms are used interchangeably, refer to judgments of self-attributes that range from favorable to unfavorable (Harter, 1999). Self-esteem has received vast research interest: whereas the positive facets of self-esteem relate to psychological adjustment in general, low-self esteem is

clinically linked to depression, suicidal thought, eating disorders, and difficulties in forming and sustaining relationships (Emler, 2001). Emler concludes that those with low self-esteem treat themselves badly, and may invite bad treatment by others.

Starting in middle childhood, individuals gain the cognitive capacity to make global judgments of their self-worth, as well as domain-specific judgments (Harter, 1999). Individuals typically evaluate the self differently in different domains, and some domain-specific evaluations appear to affect global self-evaluations more profoundly. Although this effect may be a function of the subjective saliency placed on a domain (whether an individual deems, say, scholastic competence to be important for him or herself), one domain has repeatedly emerged as one of the most potent predictors of global self-worth: the domain related to physical appearance. In Shapka and Keating's study (2005), to name one, high school students' perceptions of physical appearance was the self-domain most closely tied to general self-worth, and this pattern was stable over time. Concerning this pattern there is remarkable consensus among researchers (see e.g., Harter, 1999): perceptions of one's physical attractiveness contribute heavily to one's overall sense of worth as a person. These perceptions, along with the thoughts and feelings they evoke, can be summarized into one psychological construct – *body image*.

Body Image

Scientific study of the body has turned from a naturalistic approach to the body as a biological given, to a redefinition of the body as a historical and sociocultural phenomenon (Reischer & Koo, 2004). The prominence of the body in popular culture has generated intense academic interest and activity in the last few decades, and within psychology, scientific inquiry revolves around the construct body image. The 1990s constituted a pivotal era for body image research (Pruzinsky & Cash, 2002). As an example, a database search on PsycInfo (December 1, 2008) combining the title search terms "body image", "body satisfaction" or "body dissatisfaction" resulted in 526 journal articles from the 1960s until 1989. Between the 1990s and until today, the number of journal articles has almost trebled (1422 hits). At the core of the psychological study of people's body experience is a presumption that body image is a fundamental construct for understanding human functioning. Having said that, I will attempt to disentangle the key terminology accompanying the body image construct. I will then present a framework that may provide useful insights into body image development in contemporary society, the sociocultural framework.

Body Image-Terminology

Several definitions of body image have been offered, from "the internal representation of your own outer appearance (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999), "physical appearance viewed from the inside" (Cash, 1990), to "people's feelings, thoughts, and opinions toward their body and appearance" (Grogan, 1999). Other than defining the construct in various ways, scholars agree that there is no such entity as "The Body Image" (Fisher, 1990) but body image is a multidimensional phenomenon. The construct includes at least perceptual, cognitive, behavioral, evaluative, and affective features (Smolak, 2004). Importantly, these features overlap.

The perceptual component has traditionally been viewed as the estimation of body size, for instance what a person perceives when gazing into the mirror. The cognitive component refers to the beliefs, thoughts, and attributions individuals hold about their own appearance, as well as to physical appearance generally. Avoidance of situations that trigger body scrutiny is an example of the

behavioral facet of body image. For instance, an adolescent boy who believes he has gained weight is convinced that others will think less of him and find him less attractive because of it. As a consequence, he will repeatedly skip PE-classes as he feels too uncomfortable undressing in public. Now the overlap between body image features becomes apparent – it is the feelings of anxiety and shame toward the body that causes the adolescent boy to engage in avoidant behavior. When one is distressed and upset about one's appearance, it is in the affective body image vein (Thompson et al, 1999).

Body image concerns, body dissatisfaction, negative body image, and dissatisfaction with physical appearance are all concepts signifying discontent with some aspect of one's physical appearance, or with appearance overall (Cash, 2002). Global ratings of how satisfied one is with one's body are often referred to as *body-esteem*, and may be viewed as self-esteem associated with one's appearance (Mendelson, White & Mendelson, 1996). In this thesis, the overarching term *body satisfaction* is used to denote the entire range of adolescents' overall appearance-evaluations, whether on the negative or positive end. I will use the term body dissatisfaction when I wish to refer to predominantly negative appearance-evaluations.

Socio-Cultural Theory

Pruzinsky and Cash (2002) argue that the body image field is marked by divergent theoretical positions and lines of research that are seldom integrated. Among the most established perspectives in explaining body dissatisfaction is socio-cultural theory (Thompson, et al, 1999), with the most commonly implicated sociocultural influences being the mass media, parents and peers. The basic principle of the socio-cultural perspective is that cultural values influence individual values and behavior (Jackson, 2002). Bound in Western culture is appraisal of physical attractiveness, and this appraisal influence how members of the culture think and behave toward people who vary in attractiveness. The following section starts with a general overview of what has been called "the appearance culture", followed by a presentation of the line of thinking about media-, parent- and peer-influences on body image within this theoretical framework.

The Appearance Culture

Many argue that what is responsible for the pervasiveness of body dissatisfaction in Western society is the "appearance culture" (Carlson Jones, 2004), which refers to the creation of a culture that values, reinforces and models cultural ideals of beauty (Thompson et al., 1999). Some 30 years ago, Dion, Berscheid and Walster (1972) coined the phrase "What is beautiful is good" as a reference to the tendency to link physical attractiveness with positive personal characteristics. Whereas the core of physical-attractiveness biases remain poorly understood, they may be viewed in light of *social expectancy theory* (Jackson, 2002). This approach offers the following hypotheses to explain sociocultural processes in relation to attitudes toward physical attractiveness: (1) There is consensual agreement within cultures about who is attractive and who is not; (2) there are consensual expectations within cultures about attractive and unattractive others; (3) people behave differently toward attractive and unattractive others; (4) people's differential behavior toward attractive and unattractive others results in differences in how they respond; and (5) these behavioral differences result in differences in the self-concepts of attractive and unattractive others. The social expectancy framework outlined by Jackson raises the question: What is considered physically attractive in our Westernized culture?

Views on attractiveness include universal features, such as what is considered an attractive face, and culturally-bound features. As posited by social expectancy theory, there is considerable agreement on what is attractive in Western society, in stark contrast to the popular maxim that "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder". Perhaps most prominent is the idealization of slenderness – thinness has become almost synonymous with beauty (Thompson et al., 1999). Biological arguments stress the importance of slenderness for health-reasons (Grogan, 1999), and some view thinness as an insurance against lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular-disease, adult-onset diabetes, and obesity.

Indeed, obesity is relentlessly stigmatized in a society referring to the increasing incidence of overweight and obesity among its members as a "fat epidemic" (Schwartz & Brownell, 2004). Medias' frequent exposure of this epidemic has in fact been equaled with the media frenzy connected with the HIV/AIDS-reporting in the 1980s (Gilman, 2008). Several negative, personal characteristics are attributed to overweight individuals. People tend to perceive obese individuals as lazy, unpopular, unhappy, sloppy, less confident, less self-disciplined, unattractive, and less intelligent (Tiggemann & Anesbury, 2000). These unfavorable attitudes are likely to form early on in life, as demonstrated in a study by Cramer & Steinwert (1998). When presented with different fictive

story tasks, 3-year-olds demonstrated negative stereotyping against overweight targets. The children consistently viewed an overweight character as being the mean one in the story-lines, as possessing unfavorable characteristics, and as an undesirable playmate.

Beauty ideals are gendered. Both male and female attractiveness standards espouse slenderness and denigrate overweight. But whereas women want to be thin and toned, men want to be lean and muscular (Smolak & Stein, 2006). Male standards of beauty are hence characterized by a muscular, mesomorphic shape with average build and well-defined muscles on arms, chest, and shoulders (Grogan, 1999). Grogan cites research (p. 58) demonstrating that people prescribe typically masculine traits to boys with mesomorphic body shapes (e.g., daring, active, a fighter), but not to boys who are ectomorphic (thin) or endomorphic (fat). Extreme male muscularity, however, is seen as unnatural or even repulsive.

Mass Media

Media images are central elements of the appearance-culture, and have hence been identified as powerful forces that convey and shape current beauty standards. Blaming the media for reproducing and extolling representations of unrealistic bodies has become a popular truism (Wykes & Gunter, 2005). Being a relatively modern phenomenon, the rise of mass media does seem to parallel the escalation of a "thin fascism" (p. 14) but whether they are causal of any phenomena or merely reflect sociocultural issues is not clear. What is clear, however, is that mass media is a salient component in everyday life and the vast majority of people are exposed to print, visual and electronic media on a daily basis, for example by reading newspapers and magazines, surfing the Internet, or by watching TV.

Media images overflow with beautiful people. In the US, it has been estimated that children view around 20,000 TV commercials a year (Lewis & Hill, 1998). Advertising frequently represents female and male bodies as an erotic encouragement to purchase whatever product is being offered (Ogden, 2003). It has been reported that approximately 25% of elementary school girls read teen magazines twice a week. The typical woman that faces them in the glossies is young, white, slender, with flawless complexion, and often blonde and long-haired (Wykes & Gunter, 2005). During the last 5 years or so, Swedish TV has introduced domestic versions of overseas reality-shows that explicitly put the body on display – such as *You are what you eat*, *How to look good naked* and *Extreme Makeover*. Fundamental to all of these shows is the notion that there is

a "truer" and better self within the person subject to transformation (Johansson, 2006), a self that is suppressed by some bodily flaw (e.g., overweight) that needs to be disciplined for the real self to step forth. The lesson is that the body is plastic, capable of change and improvement, and that the individual is responsible for taking whatever measures needed to change it (see e.g., Giddens, 1991; Johansson, 2006).

Here it seems pertinent to acknowledge a stumbling block in research on media influences on human attitudes and behavior: Do people simply respond to whatever external information they are exposed to? Dated theories of mass media influences on humans' attitudes and behaviors inferred that people were merely passive recipients of media messages, internalizing them as if they were "magic bullets" (Lowery & Defleur, 1994). More recent perspectives, for example the uses-and-gratification approach (Lull, 2000), view media consumption as a process whereby individuals seek out media content that fill a subjective need. In line with the latter perspective, a report by the British Medical Association (2000) states that "the media do not brainwash people, but receive different levels of attention and interpretation by individuals with different motivations, personalities, immediate situations and sociocultural contexts, who bring different information processing strategies to task" (p. 28). In conjunction with a comprehensive review by Levine and Smolak (1996), BMA concludes that there is a great deal of theorizing and media criticism available, but far too little empirical evidence.

Barbie, G.I. Joe, and Body Satisfaction. For young children, fantasy and play are crucial parts of the socialization experience in which they internalize ideals and values. Barbie is seen as a cultural icon of female beauty (Dittmar, Halliwell, & Ive, 2006). It is the best-selling fashion doll in every major global market; with one Barbie sold every half-second. In the US, 3- to 10-year-old girls own eight Barbies on average, and only 1% own none. If Barbie was to be transformed into a flesh-and-blood woman, she would be between 1.88m to 2.26m tall, her waist would be 39% narrower than that of an anorexic patient, and her low body weight would leave her amenorrheic. In one of the few experimental studies there is, Dittmar and colleagues (2006) tested whether exposure to Barbie-dolls would negatively affect girls' body image. Three age-groups of girls (5½ to 6½ year-olds, 6½ to 7½year olds, and 7½ to 8½ year-olds) were exposed either to a Barbie-doll condition, a European size 44-doll (US size16) condition, or a no-doll condition. Girls in the Barbie-doll condition showed significantly lowered body-esteem levels, and desired a thinner body. This effect was evident among the youngest girls, but most pronounced among

those who were between age 6½ and 7½. Among the oldest girls, the Barbie-doll condition ceased to affect body image. The authors argue that there may be a sensitive phase when young girls use Barbie dolls as aspirational role models, which ends at age 7 or 8 because they by then have internalized the thin beauty ideal and their thin-aspirations are expressions of that internalized standard rather than a response to environmental stimuli. The damage by Barbie, they argue, has already been done.

Although Ken (Barbie's male equivalent) also seems to have been put under the knife to fit with contemporary attractiveness standards (Ogden, 2003), young boys may prefer action toys over Ken as playmates. Examining the bodily evolution of G.I. Joe (a popular US action toy), Pope, Phillips and Olivardia (2000) noted that if the G.I. Joe introduced in the 1990s was a flesh-and-blood man he would have a 140cm chest (55inch) and a 69cm bicep (27inch). His bicep would then be almost as big as his waist – and bigger than that of most competition body builders. However, whether G.I. Joe and his equals would have similar effects on young boys' body satisfaction as Barbie on young girls' has not been put to empirical test.

Parents

In the sociocultural perspective, parents are seen as potent influences on their children's body satisfaction by both direct and indirect parental behaviors. Parents may choose what clothes they believe to be more flattering for their child's body shape, they may interfere with the amount and types of food their child is allowed to have in an attempt for the child not to gain weight, and they may comment on their child's appearance. While parents of young children are generally pleased with their children's appearance (Smolak, 2002), they may become increasingly likely to criticize their children's appearance as they grow older (Striegel-Moore & Kearny-Cooke, 1994).

Parents may also signal that weight and appearance is important by more indirect behaviors. Parents that voice critical judgments about their own appearance, diet, or exercise solely for appearance-purposes may teach children to focus on and be unhappy with their appearance (Smolak, 2002). In a study of obesity proneness in children, Costanzo and Woody (1985) showed that parents who reported higher levels of weight concerns and dieting had children who reported similar concerns. However, Levine and Smolak (2002) have noted that the evidence on parental modeling as a key source of influence for adolescents' body image is too inconsistent. Haines and colleagues (2008) argue that this inconsistency may depend on whether parental behaviors are assessed by child

or parent report. To address this problem, they compared parent and child reports of parental direct and indirect influences on the children's weight concerns. They found that indirect parental modeling did seem to affect children's body satisfaction: child perceptions of parental dieting and parental comments on their own weight were significantly associated with child increases in body dissatisfaction, weight concerns, and dieting.

Peers

Peer experiences represent an important social context for the development of body satisfaction. Possible peer influences on body satisfaction include social comparisons, appearance discussions, role modeling, and appearance commentary. Carlson Jones, Vigfusdottir & Lee (2004) claims that in their everyday interactions adolescents engage in "appearance training". Conversations about clothes, looks, and attractiveness provide a context for attending to, constructing and interpreting information relevant to appearance concerns. These appearance-conversations may be more conspicuous among girls, with significant numbers of girls discussing weight, shape and dieting with their friends (Levine & Smolak, 2002). Nichter (2000) has coined the term "fat talk" to represent girls' seemingly ritualistic conversations about being too fat. In a study by Carlson Jones and Crawford (2006), the researchers demonstrated that conversations about thinness and dieting are more frequently a part of heavier girls' lives. Interestingly, they also reported that the adolescent boys in their study perceived more appearance pressures from peers than did girls, and boys appeared to talk about muscle building at a greater rate than girls talked about dieting. Thus, appearance conversations are not restricted only to include girls who voice concerns about being fat.

Body Satisfaction in Adolescence

With the rapid bodily development resulting from puberty surfaces the sometimes difficult task of accepting one's changing body. Scholars, for example Erikson (1968) and Havighurst (1972) have stressed that this is an important developmental task facing adolescents. Not surprisingly, this is not done overnight which is why body dissatisfaction is presumed to increase during the early teenage years.

Prevalence of Body Dissatisfaction

Body dissatisfaction is a prevalent reality for many adolescents. In a study by Thomas, Ricciardelli and Williams (2000), for example, 46% of girls and 26% of boys had frequent thoughts of being thinner. In a Norwegian study of 4952 11-15-year old adolescents, Borresen and Rosenvinge (2003) found that 22% of the 11-year-olds, 30% of the 13 year-olds, and 32% of the 15-year-olds reported body dissatisfaction. However, it may be important to note that it is hard to estimate prevalence rates of body dissatisfaction. Part of the problem is that studies uses a range of measures of body dissatisfaction, there is a lack of consensus in defining when body dissatisfaction becomes a problem, and large-scale standardization studies and epidemiological data are missing (Smolak, 2004).

Gender Differences. Research consistently finds that female populations display more body dissatisfaction, at least when it comes to weight concerns, than do their male counterparts. Early adolescents are not an exception. The general consensus is that these gender differences emerge somewhere between the ages of 8 and 10 (Gardner, Sorter, & Friedman, 1997; Thelen, Powell, Lawrence, & Kuhnert, 1992). This emergence may originate from methodological issues, with children younger than 8 having a hard time understanding and completing body-evaluation measures, or it may be due to sociocultural messages about ideal body size not yet having been internalized prior to this age (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001). Other gender differences involve girls being more likely than boys to judge themselves as too fat when they are actually average-weight, or even under-weight (Grogan, 1999). Girls' body shape perceptions are therefore less likely to be logically related to actual size, whereas a boy judging himself as overweight more often is. Girls also tend to have a more differentiated body image than do boys. That is, when asked to name what they are unhappy or happy with, they often consider many more different parts and aspects of the body.

It is important to note that there is a paucity of studies on adolescent boys' body satisfaction, largely due to the fact that until the late 1980s body image has been considered a female problem (Cohane & Pope, 2001). Cohane and Pope reviewed the literature (17 studies) on body image in boys under age 18. The common view is that body dissatisfaction among boys revolves around increasing their muscle size. While Cohane and Pope agreed that studies consistently demonstrate boys' focus on getting bigger, they noted that most studies failed to distinguish between "bigness" in terms of muscles or in terms of body fat.

Age Differences. There is a general presumption that, in the beginning of adolescence, body dissatisfaction becomes more pronounced. Another presump-

tion is that the developmental course will be moderated by gender. To be specific, girls are supposed to show a steeper decline than do boys, and boys are supposed to display a faster recovery (Smolak, 2004). However, the understanding of developmental trajectories in body satisfaction during early adolescence is limited by the fact that, until recently, most research relied on cross-sectional data (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001; Smolak, 2004). Flannery-Schroeder and Chrisler (1996), for example, evaluated grade differences for a combined sample of boys and girls in the 1st (6- to 7-year-olds), 3rd (8- to 9-year-olds) and 5th (10- to 11-year-olds) grades. Thirteen percent of the first graders, 20.6% of the 3rd graders, and 52% of the 5th graders reported being dissatisfied with the way they looked.

Developmental trajectories relating to girls' and boys' body satisfaction have been reported in but a few studies (e.g., Bearman, Presnell, Martinez, & Stice, 2006; Carlson Jones, 2004; Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Paxton, 2006; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2002; Presnell, Bearman, & Stice, 2004; Rosenblum & Lewis, 1999). Bearman and colleagues (2006) assessed 247 girls and 181 boys on three occasions separated by 1-year-intervals (mean age 13.57 years at baseline). They reported significant increases in body dissatisfaction for girls, but significant decreases in boys' body dissatisfaction. While Rosenblum and Lewis (1999) found that girls' body satisfaction decreased from ages 12 to 18, Carlson Jones (2004) reported that girls' body satisfaction was stable over a 1-year-period in two age-groups (12.5 and 15.5 years at baseline). Both Rosenblum and Lewis (1999) and Carlson Jones (2004) found that boys' body satisfaction improved over time. Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer & Paxton (2006) examined five-year change in body satisfaction in a large middle and high school sample, aged 14.9 years at baseline. Significant negative mean change scores were reported during the study's five-year course, with the largest decrease among participants transitioning from middle school to high school. As expected, males reported markedly higher body satisfaction to begin with. In contrast to the above studies, Eisenberg and colleagues found that both male and female participants showed a notable drop in body satisfaction over the course of the study. In sum, because longitudinal research has been scarce, and because findings are inconsistent, we do not yet have a sufficient understanding of the developmental trajectories of body satisfaction during different ages, nor as a function of gender. It is therefore crucial to conduct research that aims at mapping developmental trends further.

Scandinavia. Only a handful studies have been carried out to examine Scandinavian adolescents' body image (Borresen & Rosenvinge, 2003; Erling &

Hwang, 2004a; Friestad & Rise, 2004; Halvarsson, Lunner, Westerberg, Anteson, & Sjöden, 2002; Holsen, Kraft, & Roysamb, 2001; Ivarsson, Svalander, Litlere, & Nevonen, 2006; Johansson, Lundh, & Andersson, 2005; Koskelainen, Sourander, & Helenius, 2001; Lau & Alsaker, 2000; Storvoll, Strandbu, & Wichstrom, 2005; Waaddegaard & Petersen, 2002). The most active sites of research, judging the number of journal publications, are Norway and Sweden. Generally, findings from these studies do seem to mirror findings from other Western settings. Friestad and Rise (2004), for example, reported that 25% of the Norwegian girls in their study had dieted several times over the past year, while the corresponding figure for boys was only about 5%. Storvoll, Strandbu and Wichström (2005) examined whether Norwegian adolescents' body image had changed over a 10-year period. Between the years 1992 to 2002 they found that the proportion of adolescents with "very negative" body image had increased. The authors speculated whether this increase mirror concurrent increases in body mass index (BMI) in the same period. In a Swedish study, Ivarsson, Svalander and Nevonen (2006) reported that 14-year-old boys had more positive attitudes to their appearance and weight than did 14-year-old girls. For both girls and boys the lower their BMI, the more positively they evaluated their weight.

Qualitative Research

In order to obtain a more in-depth understanding of adolescents' body satisfaction, researchers have begun to request qualitative research within the field (Tiggemann, Gardner, & Slater, 2000). Indeed, studies approaching body satisfaction from a qualitative view-point have been scarce to date. I will review those that primarily pertain to body image and adolescents, but it should be noted that there are also some qualitative studies that will not be reviewed here as they revolved around slightly different issues (i.e., romantic interests or cross-cultural issues).

Most qualitative studies center on girls (Blowers, Loxton, Grady-Flesser, Occhipinti, & Dawe, 2003; Grogan & Wainwright, 1996; Mooney, Farley, & Strugnell, 2004; Tiggemann et al., 2000; Wertheim, Paxton, Schutz, & Muir, 1997), and a few have revolved around boys or young men (Adams, Turner, & Bucks, 2005; Grogan & Richards, 2002; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2006). In a study by McCabe, Ricciardelli and Ridge (2006), in-depth interviews were conducted with both boys and girls (approximately 16 years old). The study objective was to understand sources and nature of body-related messages. The researchers reported consistent gender differences in line with quantitative empirical evidence. For example, girls' negative internal dialogue focused on ap-

pearance and weight, whereas for boys it focused on muscles. Boys were less likely to engage in attractiveness-related social comparisons but when they did, comparisons focused on sport, fitness and body-size. In two studies focusing exclusively on girls, Wertheim and colleagues (1997) and Tiggemann, Gardner and Slater (2000) reported that girls experience media-portrayals as communicating a major pressure to be thin, as do family and peers. Juxtaposing these findings, Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2006) reported that 14-16-year old Australian boys do not believe mass media influence their body image. While some boys conceded their physical appearance to be more important than they like to admit, the general consensus was that body image was a "gay or feminine issue" therefore not talked about. Adams, Turner and Bucks (2005) examined the experience of body dissatisfaction in a sample of 14 volunteering men (ranging in age from 18 to 32). Several participants experienced that there is a growing emphasis in society on male appearance, and felt that appearance is critical in terms of acceptance. Expressions of dissatisfaction with one's own body were however frequently disallowed. In line with the Hargreaves and Tiggeman study above (2006), some of the men commented on finding it generally difficult to discuss appearance-issues.

Associates and Predictors of Body Dissatisfaction

Undoubtedly, the emergence of body dissatisfaction in the individual is a complex issue. There is a sizeable body of literature that has focused on examining factors correlated with and predictive of body dissatisfaction. In the following section I will briefly review those of relevance for the present research.

The Influence of Body Mass

Being above average weight or perceiving oneself as being overweight is strongly connected to body dissatisfaction. Body mass may therefore be considered as an indirect biological contributor to body dissatisfaction (Smolak & Levine, 2001). It is a biological contributor since body shape and weight have strong genetic basis, and indirect due to the widespread social stigma surrounding overweight and obesity. Hence, the adverse tie between body mass and body satisfaction works through social psychological mechanisms. Body mass, usually measured with the body mass index (BMI), has been the most consistent characteristic related to body dissatisfaction (e.g., Cattarin & Thompson, 1994; Gardner et al., 1997; Oliver & Thelen, 1996; Stice & Whitenton, 2002; Striegel-Moore et al, 2000) Importantly, whereas the relationship between girls' body mass and body satisfaction is assumed to be linear, it has been suggested that

the same relationship is curvilinear among boys (Konstanski, Fisher, & Gullone, 2004; McCreary, 2002). This means that boys who are either underweight or overweight tend to be more dissatisfied with their appearance.

Not surprisingly, body size perceptions may be unrelated to actual body size. These subjective perceptions are just as important for psychological outcomes as is actual size (Feingold, 1992). Females are more likely than males to perceive themselves as being too heavy even though they are average- or even underweight. In line with these findings, males' concerns about being fat are more closely tied to actually being overweight (Littleton & Ollendick, 2004).

Maturational Timing

Research findings on the role of maturational timing for the development of body dissatisfaction have been inconsistent (Shisslak, et al, 1998). The general notion is that pubertal weight gain increases girls' risk for body dissatisfaction, whereas boys' increases in weight during puberty may enhance body satisfaction as boys' weight gain represents more lean muscle mass. McCabe and Ricciardelli (2004) noted that early-maturing girls reported higher levels of body dissatisfaction than did girls whose pubertal development was delayed relative to peers. This may have to do with early-maturing girls being shorter and, in relation to their height, heavier than girls who develop on time or later (Biro et al., 2001). In a 10-year prospective study, Striegel-Moore and colleagues (2001) found that early-maturing girls were at risk for developing dieting and body image concerns. On the other hand, boys who mature earlier than other boys tend to be among the most body satisfied (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004).

Dieting

As adipose tissue increases for girls during puberty, girls may attempt to counteract the weight gain by restricting the amount and types of foods they eat. However, self-reported attempts to diet may have an opposite effect than the intended, and it has been reported that restricted caloric intake actually predicts weight gain (Stice, Presnell, Shaw, & Rohde, 2005) – an effect known as the "dietary failure" (Bearman, et al, 2006). Patton and colleagues (1990) reported that female teenagers that diet "severely" are 18 times more likely and girls who diet "moderately" are 5 times more likely to develop an eating disorder than are their non-dieting peers. As boys may be split between those who want to gain weight and those who want to lose weight (Kostanski & Gullone, 2004), reported dietary changes can also represent a desire to increase lean muscle mass. However, body change attempts among adolescent boys have been less investigated (but see e.g., McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004; Stanford & McCabe, 2005).

Social Support

Deficiencies in both the quantity and quality of social support from parents and peers have been linked with body dissatisfaction (Bearman et al., 2006). The idea is that adolescents who feel accepted by their support network may be less likely to try to attain acceptance by conforming to the thin ideal. Stice and Whitenton (2002) showed that deficits in social support predicted body dissatisfaction for adolescent girls. Barker and Galambos (2003) demonstrated that while supportive maternal relationships were associated with girls' increased body satisfaction, parental support did not predict greater body satisfaction for boys. Similarly, Schwartz and colleagues (1999) found that parental feedback about weight was uncorrelated to boys' body dissatisfaction. It seems as if parental support factors may contribute more to adolescent girls' body dissatisfaction, but as noted earlier, evidence on parental influences as a key source on body satisfaction have been inconsistent (Levine & Smolak, 2002).

Internalization of Beauty Ideals

Internalization of body ideals refer to a process that occurs when men or women assimilate beauty standards and its associated values into their own world view such that these ideas become guiding principles (Thompson, van den Berg et al 2004; Thompson et al., 1999). Cafri and colleagues (2005) showed in a recent meta-analysis that internalization had medium-to-large associations with body dissatisfaction in girls (too few studies had been carried out for Cafri and colleagues to conduct a meta-analysis on boys). Experiencing familial or peer pressure to conform to beauty-ideals may lead to a heightened susceptibility to internalize the thin-ideal (Smolak & Striegel-Moore, 2001).

Appearance-Commentary and Teasing

The prevalence of teasing related to appearance has been found to be quite high among children and adolescents (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2002; Rieves & Cash, 1996). Besides brothers, peers are deemed the most frequent and worst perpetrators of appearance related teasing (Rieves & Cash, 1995). Neumark-Sztainer and colleagues (2002) found that 19% of average-weight girls and 13% of average-weight boys reported being subject to frequent weight-teasing. Overweight girls and boys reported much higher percentages: 45% of overweight girls and 50% of overweight boys were frequently teased about their weight. Cross-sectional and retrospective studies have further identified that receiving negative feedback about one's appearance is linked to elevated levels of body dissatisfaction (Halvarsson et al., 2002; Kowalski, 2000; Tantleff-Dunn & Thompson, 1998). Cash (1995), for example, reported that retrospective accounts of ap-

pearance related teasing in childhood are strongly associated with current negative body image attitudes in older females. Subsequently, Cash and Rieves (1996) found that teasing experiences accounted for a fairly large proportion of the variance in college women's appearance self-evaluations and appearance schemata. The most common foci of the teasing were facial features (45%) and weight (36%). Peers and family members, especially brothers, were deemed the worst perpetrators. A shortcoming of these studies is that they do not provide clear evidence as to the direction of influence or whether there are long-lasting effects of teasing experiences.

Some studies have examined the long-term associations between weight-teasing and body dissatisfaction (Carlson Jones, 2004; Cattarin & Thompson, 1994; Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, Haines & Wall, 2006; Kostanski & Gullone, 2007; Lunner, et al, 2000; Stice & Whitenton, 2002; Thompson, et al, 1995). In one of the first prospective studies, Thompson and colleagues (1995) examined the impact of current teasing on the development of body image satisfaction and eating disturbances over a three-year period among a sample of 13-18 year old girls. They demonstrated that teasing directly influenced body satisfaction, eating disturbances, and overall psychological functioning. Similarly, Lunner and colleagues (2000) demonstrated through path analyses that there were strong effects of teasing on adolescent girls' body dissatisfaction. Somewhat later, Eisenberg and colleagues (2006) examined the effects of weight-teasing on both girls and boys emotional well-being, including body satisfaction. They showed that Time 1 teasing predicted lower body image as well as higher depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem five years later. Importantly, they also demonstrated that these relationships were fully mediated by Time 2 teasing. Eisenberg and colleagues therefore concluded that ongoing teasing seems to attenuate the total effect of early weight-teasing on later emotional health. Arguing that previous research has not considered teasing as a predictor of body dissatisfaction in younger populations, Kostanski and Gullone (2007) examined the extent of teasing and its effects on body dissatisfaction in a pre-adolescent sample (M=8.8 yrs) of boys and girls. The results were in line with those reported among older samples: teasing predicted body dissatisfaction, especially among children who were overweight.

Peer Victimization

As stated earlier, Berk (2004) has noted that during middle school the nicest children begin to behave in the most awful ways. Large scale US community studies suggest that as many as 20% to 30% of children and adolescents are chronically victimized by peers (Nansel et al., 2001). In a UK survey of 4700 11-16-year-old children, 75% of the children had been the victim of some variety of physical bullying, and 7% reported being the perpetrator or victim of more severe forms of bullying such as repeated verbal or physical aggression, property damage, or social exclusion (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000). In Scandinavia, Olweus (1991) (conducted a prevalence study of 130,000 11-16-year-olds and found that between 5% and 9% reported being bullied on a regular basis. Clearly, *peer victimization* is part of the social reality faced by early adolescents.

Peer Victimization-Terminology

What does the concept peer victimization entail? It is viewed as an umbrella term that encompasses a range of negative actions and may be defined as "the experience of being a target of peers' aggressive behavior" (Storch & Ledley, 2005). *Bullying*, a term that is used interchangeably or in connection with peer victimization, refers to a "systematic abuse of power" (Rigby, 2002) and more specifically as intentional aggressive behavior that is repeated against a victim who cannot readily defend him- or herself (Olweus, 1999). Peer victimization may be exerted through direct aggressive acts, for example by hitting or pushing, or by direct verbal abuse. More indirect and subtle forms of peer victimization include indirect aggression (done via a third party), relational aggression done to damage someone's peer relationships (e.g., spreading nasty stories or rumors), and social aggression done to damage self-esteem and/or social status (e.g., social exclusion, shunning, or ignoring) (Smith, 2004).

The percentage of children who report being victimized by peers gradually declines as children and adolescents grow older. Smith, Madsen and Moody (1999) suggested that the reasons for this are twofold: bullying declines as children gradually acquire better social skills and better grasp the adverse experience on behalf of the victim, and when children grow older there are a smaller

proportion of older and stronger potential bullies in their peer groups. Whereas Carnell and Merrell (2001) noted that the peak is usually between ages 9 and 15, a retrospective study demonstrated that participants' most frequent reports of being bullied was between age 11 and 13 (Eslea & Rees, 2001). These findings suggest that bullying may just be a phase in children's lives that they outgrow. Nevertheless, the personal suffering of an adolescent who has been repeatedly maltreated by peers may not subside until adulthood, if even then. Tragic instances of suicide attributed to long-term experiences of being the victim of bullying occasionally occur, and receive vast media coverage. Indeed, suicidal ideation (thoughts about suicide) commonly predates suicide attempts and is closely tied to bullying (Kim & Leventhal, 2008). Other reported long-term consequences of severe bullying experiences are depression and impaired physical health (Rigby, 2001). Physical and psychosomatic complaints like headaches and stomachaches, acute anxiety states, and social dysfunction are also frequently reported after children have been bullied in school.

Who is Becoming Victimized?

Bullying researchers have attempted to disentangle determinants of chronic victimization by mapping typical characteristics of bullied children. It is well-established that there are two types of victims, provocative or passive ones (Griffin & Gross, 2004). The provocative victim, or bully/victim, is someone who is victimized by aggressors but who also engages in aggression or bullying toward others (Griffin & Gross, 2004). Approximately 10% of children involved in bullying may be classified as bully/victim. These children often have problems with hyperactivity, social skills, and appear anxious or aggressive in response to the behavior of other children. The passive victim, on the other hand, represents the most common type of victim. They are described as children who are anxious, insecure, tend to cry or withdraw when attacked by others, and they tend not to use violence (Griffin & Gross, 2004).

The role of the victims' physical appearance has been dispelled as a myth by Olweus (2003), among others. Olweus argues that there is no data to suggest that children who possess a notably different aspect of their appearance (such as being overweight, having red hair or glasses) are targeted more frequently than other children. This conclusion may be premature. In a study by Erling and Hwang (2004b) nearly half (43%) of the children stated that bullied children are different in terms of appearance. Teräsahjo and Salmivalli (2003) found that the most common explanation for bullying was an "odd student repertoire", with oddness frequently referring to physical appearance. Frequent peer victimization experiences have further been associated with conditions affecting physical

appearance (Dawkins, 1996), short stature in boys (Voss & Mulligan, 2000), as well as to physical attractiveness and body mass index (Sweeting & West, 2001). There are several studies indicating that weight and obesity are recurring themes in teasing. Cash (1995), for example, demonstrated that weight and facial features were recollected as the most common content in teasing. It has also been reported that obese girls suffer higher rates of relational aggression (Pearce, Boergers & Prinstein, 2002), and social marginalization (Strauss & Pollack, 2003). The research cited by Olweus as evidence of the "appearance myth" was carried out some 30 years ago. While appearance is unlikely to be the sole trigger of peer maltreatment, negative attitudes and stigma toward what is perceived as culturally undesirable are undoubtedly prevalent within the appearance culture.

Aims of the Thesis

Satisfaction with one's appearance and peer relationships, respectively, are salient components of adolescents' everyday lives. Difficulties in either of these domains may be detrimental to individuals' psychological well-being. The major objective of this research is to attempt to disentangle the relationships between early adolescents' body satisfaction and peer victimization experiences. Specifically, what do these relationships (if any) look like in respect to frequency and type of peer victimization experience, as a function of gender, and as a function of time? The underlying assumption is that frequent peer victimization experiences may be linked to body dissatisfaction. Therefore, an additional aim was to approach body dissatisfaction from an in-depth perspective.

Summary of Empirical Studies

Papers I-III are based on the two first measurement waves of an ongoing longitudinal study for which details will be further outlined below. The final paper (Study IV) is based on a subset of participants from the main study and uses qualitative methodology. Details of the qualitative study design will therefore be described at the end of this section.

The Main Study

The main study is a longitudinal questionnaire study (the MoS-study), which is carried out in Gothenburg (second largest city of Sweden, inhabitants 480 000). The main study was initiated in the year 2000, and there have been four data collection waves to date (Wave 1: 2000; Wave 2: 2003; Wave 3: 2006; and Wave 4: 2008). The main study covers a range of issues pertaining to adolescent development, for example body satisfaction, peer victimization, identity, health and well-being, and adjustment.

Wave 1

Participant recruitment was enabled through collaboration with schools in Gothenburg. The research team contacted headmasters in 53 public schools, situated in different socio-economic areas of the city, with a request for participant recruitment among their 4th grade students. Once headmasters had consented, the 4th graders' class teachers received an information letter and a parental consent form that they handed over to students' parents. Active parental consent was required in order for a child to participate in the study. Thirty-eight individuals declined participation, and 221 individuals did not bring the consent form back with them, which precluded their participation in the study. The final sample consisted of 960 participants (515 girls, 445 boys) (main study group).

A trained research assistant visited the 4th graders during spring semester in 2000. Participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary, and that their answers would be treated as confidential. After children had given their consent, the research assistant handed out individual questionnaires to the participants. She stayed in the classroom while participants answered them,

offering to assist if any difficulties would arise. The research assistant collected the questionnaires once they had been filled out.

Wave 2

Data collection for the second wave was initiated during spring 2003, approximately three years after the first assessment. Data was collected by one of two procedures. First, research assistants visited the school classes (grade 7) of the participants from the main study group, and distributed questionnaires. In all, questionnaires from 626 participants were collected this way. If there were only 3 participants from the main study group in a class, the assistant did not go there. These participants, along with those who the assistant was unable to locate through information provided by the school (e.g., if they had moved), received written invitations. They received a questionnaire by post, and sent the questionnaire back to the research team themselves (they also received a prepaid envelope). This procedure facilitated the collection of data from an additional 248 participants. In all, 874 participants (474 girls and 400 boys) took part in the second wave, giving an attrition rate between Wave 1 and 2 of approximately 9%.

Measures

Body Satisfaction

Body satisfaction was measured by the *Body Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults* (BESAA), designed by Mendelson, Mendelson and White (2001). The BESAA has three subscales: BE-Appearance (general feelings about one's appearance, e.g., "I like what I see when I look in the mirror") (10 items); BE-Weight (satisfaction with one's weight, e.g., "I really like what I weigh") (8 items); and BE-Attribution (evaluations attributed to others about one's body and appearance, e.g., "People my own age like my looks") (5 items). Participants indicate their degree of agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*always*). Lower scores are indicative of more body dissatisfaction. The subscales have high internal consistency (BE-Appearance $\alpha = .92$; BE-Attribution $\alpha = .81$; BE-Weight $\alpha = .94$) and high test-retest reliability (BE-Appearance $r = .89$, $p < .001$; BE-Weight $r = .92$, $p < .001$; and BE-Attribution $r = .83$, $p < .001$) (Mendelson et al., 2001).

Perceptions of Body Shape

Participants' perceptions of body shape and stature were measured by two questions obtained from Marklund (1997). The question concerning shape stated:

"Do you think you are too skinny or too heavy?", and the question concerning stature stated: "Do you think you are too short or too tall?" Response alternatives were: far too skinny/short (1), a little too skinny/short (2), just right (3), a little too heavy/tall (4), and far too heavy/tall (5).

Self-Reported Weight and Height

Participants provided self-report of their current weight and height status. On the basis of these self-reports, participants' BMI were calculated. BMI is calculated as weight in kilos divided by height in meters squared, and is a widely used measure of weight relative to height. As body mass changes substantially with age, particularly during childhood as the body develops (Cole, Bellizzi, Flegal & Dietz, 2000), different cut-off points are applied when defining underweight, normal weight and overweight among children.

Peer Victimization

Bullying was measured using the self-report measure the *Victimization Index*, obtained from Rigby (Rigby, 1999). Self-report measures of victimization have been found to correlate with peer reports of victimization by approximately .41 in girls and by .45 in boys (Rigby, 1997). The *Victimization Index* is a single item measure that asks participants to indicate how often they have been bullied at school during the current year. The alternative responses are: every day (1), most days (2), one or two days a week (3), less than once a week (4) and never (5). For the purposes of Study I and Study II, the frequencies were collapsed into weekly or more (1) (including response alternatives 1 to 3) and never (0) (including response alternatives 4 to 5). This was done because of the skewed nature of this measure, that is, because few participants reported the most frequent experiences of bullying (and in line with most literature).

The questionnaire also included the *Victim Scale* (Rigby, 1999). The scale consists of five items, each of which refers to different types of peer victimization: social exclusion, name-calling, teasing, threats of violence, and overt physical violence. Response alternatives are never (1), sometimes (2), and often (3). The *Victim Scale* has been used among Australian adolescent students, aged 13-18 years, and was shown to have adequate reliability: in boys $\alpha = .83$; and in girls $\alpha = .77$. Its validity has been supported by correlations with a measure of peer victimization based on nominations by peers of .45 in boys ($n = 393$) and .41 in girls ($n = 347$); in each case $p < .001$ (Rigby, 1997).

As the *Victim Scale* does not include a direct question of appearance-related teasing, an additional question was included, stating: How often have you been

teased about your appearance? Response alternatives were: never (1); sometimes (2); and often (3).

Study IV

Participants in Study IV comprised a subset of participants from both waves in the longitudinal study. The aim was to invite those who had displayed stability in body dissatisfaction over the three-year course between Wave 1 and Wave 2. An overall body esteem score was calculated by summing up individual items from the body esteem measure (BESAA) at both measurement occasions. A descending listing ranging from lowest individual score to highest individual score served as the basis for recruitment. Starting from the bottom of the list, participants were contacted until 30 participants, evenly split by gender, had agreed to participate in the study (1 girl and 4 boys declined participation when contacted).

Semi-Structured Interview

An interview schedule was constructed in accordance with an *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA) perspective (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The interview covered broad topics, including: sociocultural influences (media, family, and peers), views on attractiveness, body dissatisfaction and/or satisfaction, importance placed on appearance, and views on sport and exercise. These topics were elaborated upon with the interviewee by the interviewer posing a number of open-ended questions (e.g., Do you think there are male/female beauty standards?; What do you think of your own appearance?; What do you believe peers think of your appearance?; Do you think appearance is important for your mother/father?). Challenging, clarifying and probing questions were asked along with the main questions as necessary. For example, when participants were asked what they believe peers think of their appearance, they were also asked "Why do you believe so?", "Have you had any comments from peers about your appearance?", and "How did that (comment) make you feel?" Interviews lasted no more than 1 hour, and were audio taped in their entirety.

Table 1
Participant characteristics on key variables for the main study sample and study IV sample (means and standard deviations)

	Main Study Sample	Study IV Sample
Body-Esteem age 10	3.01 (0.67)	2.20 (0.71)*
Body-Esteem age 13	2.64 (0.74)	1.97 (0.81)*
Peer Victimization age 10	1.99 (1.69)	2.55 (1.55)
Peer Victimization age 13	1.42 (1.45)	2.12 (1.66)*

Note. Asterisks denote a significant mean difference, $p < .001$.

Study I-IV

Study I pertains to the relationships between 10-year-olds' body esteem and their peer victimization experiences. Study II evaluates the relationships between participants' body composition (i.e., weight and height), their perceptions of body composition, and peer victimization experiences. Study III examines all of these associations from a prospective view-point, between age 10 and 13. Finally, in Study IV an in-depth approach to body dissatisfaction was taken by interviewing a subset of participants who had reported low body satisfaction at both waves in the major study. Table 2 presents an overview of participants' age in each study, and is followed by a more exhaustive summary relating to each study.

Table 2
Age of participants in each study

	Study I	Study II	Study III	Study IV
10yrs (Wave1)	•	•		
13yrs (Wave 2)			•	
14yrs (Subset)				•

Study I

A number of studies show that negative appearance commentary or teasing relate to elevated levels of body dissatisfaction. Arguing that teasing is one form of victimization subordinate to the broader construct of peer victimization, the objective of Study I was to examine how a range of frequent peer victimization experiences relates to different aspects of early adolescents' body esteem.

Results. Preliminary analyses (independent *t*-tests) revealed that girls were more dissatisfied than boys with appearance in general (M=3.08 versus M=3.25), as with weight (M=3.01 versus M=3.26) (p<.001). The relations between different types of peer victimization experiences and different aspects of body esteem were investigated by hierarchical multiple regressions, separated by gender, and controlling for BMI. Changes in regression coefficients were significant for all analyses when entering the peer victimization predictors, suggesting that they contributed significantly to the regression models. Social ex-

clusion emerged as the most powerful predictor of poorer body satisfaction in each body esteem domain. Sex differences included more bullied girls attributing more negative judgments of their appearance to other people, and appearance-related teasing relating to girls' poorer body esteem in terms of general appearance and weight. Boys' experiences of frequent teasing related to poorer body satisfaction in all dimensions.

Conclusions. Study I implies that a broader range of peer victimization experiences are connected to adolescents' body-evaluations than was previously known. These relations may vary as a function of gender, and type of peer victimization experienced.

Study II

Within the body image research literature, negative appearance commentary has repeatedly been linked to different aspects of physical appearance. These findings have led to the presumption that individuals with some non-normative appearance feature (e.g., overweight) may face unwanted stigma and prejudice in form of appearance commentary or teasing. Oft-cited research on bullying, dating back some 30 years, discounts the notion of bullying victims being physically different as a public myth or misconception. The objective of Study II was to examine 10-year-olds' frequent peer victimization experiences in terms of type of experience, and its relations to (a) body composition (weight and height), and (b) subjective perceptions of weight and height.

Results. Preliminary analyses (chi-square tests and independent *t*-test) showed that boys had been subject to more peer victimization than had girls, and had more often been exposed to beating and threats. Overweight girls and boys reported being targets of appearance-related teasing more often than other children. Overweight girls also reported that they had been subject to bullying on at least a weekly basis more often than did other girls. Perceptions of being too fat were associated with a wide range of peer victimization experiences for both girls and boys, and boys who judged themselves as too skinny had received threats of beatings more frequently. Finally, the relative importance of body composition and perceptions of body shape on peer victimization experiences was evaluated in regression models, separated by gender. For both girls and boys, children's negative body perceptions were more strongly associated with body satisfaction than was body composition.

Conclusions. In line with previous literature inferring that overweight children and adolescents may be frequently stigmatized by peers, Study I showed that overweight girls and boys had been subjected more frequently to certain

types of victimization. The most important contribution of the research related to the co-variation between negative body perceptions, overweight, and peer victimization experiences. As professionals encounter children who are critical toward their appearance, it may also be worthwhile to attend to the quality of their peer relations.

Study III

Researchers have stressed that longitudinal studies are highly warranted for further understanding of body satisfaction trajectories. In Study III, conceptual ideas and findings from the first two papers are intertwined and examined from a prospective view-point (between age 10 and 13). The twofold objective was to examine (1) developmental trajectories of adolescents' body satisfaction, and (2) the long-term associations between body composition, perceptions of body composition, peer victimization and different aspects of body esteem, as well as the interrelatedness between these.

Results. In order to examine developmental trajectories, a mixed design multivariate analysis of variance (*MANOVA*) was carried out. The combined body satisfaction subscales served as the outcome variable, time as repeated measure, and gender as the between-subject factor. Significant time and gender effects revealed that the overall sample was more dissatisfied at follow-up, and girls had become significantly more dissatisfied in comparison to boys. A significant time × gender interaction accounted for two of the subscales, with girls having become more dissatisfied than boys in terms of overall appearance and weight.

In order to examine the relations between body satisfaction, body composition and peer victimization, hierarchical regression analyses (controlling for initial body satisfaction) were carried out for each body esteem subscale and separately by gender. The main findings indicated that (a) while being actually more heavily built (BMI) was most strongly related to increments in body dissatisfaction for girls, perceiving oneself as too heavy was most strongly related to increments in boys' body dissatisfaction; (b) boys who perceived themselves as too short were more dissatisfied at follow-up; (c) frequent peer victimization experiences were associated with poorer weight-esteem for girls. For boys, appearance-related teasing accounted for a negative prospective effect of peer victimization on beliefs about how others view their appearance.

Conclusions. The main lesson from Study III is that early adolescence is a period when both girls and boys risk becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the way they look. The effects of peer victimization experiences on body satisfac-

tion may vary by gender. Boys who are specifically teased about their appearance, tend to believe that others don't think they are good looking. For girls, on the other hand, a higher frequency of peer victimization experiences tends to especially affect their weight-evaluations.

Study IV

The lion's share of studies on adolescents' body dissatisfaction relies on quantitative studies. The objective of the final paper in this thesis was to provide an in-depth qualitative investigation of adolescents who had demonstrated stability in terms of a low level of body satisfaction at age 10 and 13.

Results. Individual transcripts were analyzed following the IPA-approach (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis). The qualitative data-analysis led to a split of the sample into four subgroups (Severely Troubled, Non-Critical, Reflective, and Naïve), with group labels designated to illuminate typical features.

Severely Troubled participants (3 girls) were characterized by expressions of body dissatisfaction that appeared to be causing a great deal of psychological distress. Their positions towards societal beauty ideals were critical and condemning. Family- and peer-relations included histories of criticism, scorn, and negative appearance-commentary.

Whereas the Severely Troubled participants voiced critical opinions of beauty ideals, the Non-Critical participants (2 girls, 2 boys) were forgiving and non-critical toward societal beauty ideals, and expressed normative views on physical exercise. Their experiences also included appearance-conversations within the family mirroring socio-cultural attractiveness standards.

The Reflective participants (5 girls, 6 boys), on the other hand, demonstrated sophisticated reasoning about the dangers inherent in appearance-culture. Importantly, the reflective participants reasoned about the links between self- and body-image, not allowing their physical appearance to define who they are.

The Naïve participants (4 girls, 6 boys) struck us as not having given much thought to the "appearance culture" or normative attractiveness standards in society, but were on the other hand among the most reluctant to elaborate on the interview-topics generally. They were also the only ones that mentioned bodily functioning in relation to body satisfaction.

Conclusions. Study IV illuminates individual experiences of body satisfaction concerns. These experiences may interplay with subjective standpoints and perceptions of sociocultural influences on the experience of body dissatisfaction.

Discussion

A major focus in this research was to learn more about the role of the peer context for adolescents' body image by evaluating a wide spectrum of peer victimization experiences in relation to body satisfaction. The Discussion begins by addressing the most crucial findings in Study I to III, and finishes with a discussion of the most important contributions resulting from the qualitative research. Thereafter, I will address a number of critical notes, propose some issues for future research, and finish with some concluding remarks.

General Developmental Trajectories

Several researchers have stressed that there is a gap in the literature in terms of the understanding of the development of body satisfaction (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Smolak, 2004). While it has been hypothesized that there is a downward trend in terms of body satisfaction during adolescence, the empirical evidence supporting this notion is limited (Bearman et al., 2006). This research (Study III) confirms that, in early adolescence, the typical developmental trajectory was for an adolescent to become more dissatisfied with his or her looks. Study III also confirms that girls' dissatisfaction development was steeper than boys', at least in terms of satisfaction with overall appearance and weight.

Body mass emerged as one of the most potent contributors for explaining deterioration in girls' body satisfaction, a finding that was to be expected based on a range of empirical evidence (Cattarin & Thompson, 1994; Gardner et al., 1997; Oliver & Thelen, 1996; Stice & Whitenton, 2002; Striegel-Moore et al, 2000). However, such a contribution was lacking for boys, and the perception of being too heavy emerged as a more important contributor to the development of boys' body dissatisfaction. These findings are in line with findings from Carlson Jones (2004), who demonstrated that body mass was not a prospective predictor for body dissatisfaction among 12.5 year-old boys. The finding indicates that, contrary to girls, a heavier body build does not mean that an adolescent boy risks becoming increasingly uncomfortable with his appearance. However, early concerns about being too fat seem a better predictor for the development of young boys' body dissatisfaction.

Peer Victimization and Body Satisfaction

There is an intuitive appeal to the notion that appearance-related teasing can be damaging to individuals' evaluations of their appearance. Retrospective accounts have supported this notion (Cash, 1995; Crozier & Skliopidou, 2002) and so have cross-sectional and prospective studies (Carlson Jones, 2004; Cattarin & Thompson, 1994; Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, Haines & Wall, 2006; Kostanski & Gullone, 2007; Lunner, et al, 2000; Oliver & Thelen, 1996; Stice & Whitenton, 2002; Thompson, et al, 1995. An extreme, but tentative, "burden of proof" on the relation between teasing experiences and body satisfaction was recently reported in a retrospective study by Buhlmann and colleagues (2007). In a sample of 16 individuals clinically diagnosed with body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) (referring to an extreme preoccupation with a perceived appearance-flaw, whether real or imagined), the severity of BDD symptoms was positively related to the frequency of perceived teasing experiences. Similarly, Wolke and Sapouna (2008) reported that childhood bullying experiences in combination with muscle dysmorphia predicted more psychopathology (anxiety, low self-esteem, as well as depressive and obsessive-compulsive symptoms) in a sample of male bodybuilders. However, and as noted by the authors, retrospective accounts may be confounded by the passage of time. A more reliable estimation of the role of teasing as a risk factor may be obtained through longitudinal methodology. Stice and Whitenton (2002) conducted a study on risk factors for body dissatisfaction, with a sample of 11-to-15-year-old girls. The authors stressed that in order to provide evidence for a prospective effect it is crucial to control for initial levels of body dissatisfaction, otherwise it is possible that "an apparent prospective effect is due to a reverse direction or effect" (p. 670). So they controlled for initial levels of the outcome, and demonstrated that there were in fact no significant prospective associations between participants' teasing experiences and body dissatisfaction. They therefore noted that the reliance on cross-sectional data may have led to an overestimation of the role of teasing for the development of body dissatisfaction. Similarly, Jones (2004) showed that peer teasing did not prospectively predict body dissatisfaction in two samples of middle school and high school girls and boys (age 12.5 and 15.5 at baseline). Despite the lack of a prospective contribution by teasing on body dissatisfaction, Jones noted that it may be premature to dismiss teasing as an experience involved in the development of body dissatisfaction.

Findings from the prospective study presented in this thesis (Study III) support the notion that it in fact would be premature to rule out the role of teasing. Or at least to rule out a wider perspective of peer victimization experiences on the formation of body dissatisfaction. After having controlled for initial levels

of body esteem, girls' more frequent peer victimization experiences predicted heightened weight-dissatisfaction. Boys' frequent experiences of appearance-related teasing predicted more negative appearance-evaluations attributed to others. These findings imply two things. First, the impact of peer victimization on adolescents' body dissatisfaction may vary as a function of gender and type of victimization experienced. Weight-concerns are an omnipresent reality for many females, so common it has been referred to as normative (Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1985). Females also tend to internalize negative feedback to a greater extent than do men (Befort & Rickard, 2003). As appearance is a salient concern for women, a "woman's issue" (Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002), it follows logically that repeated feedback signaling you are inadequate and disliked may result in negative self-evaluations in an appearance domain already including anxiety. Boys' reacting to appearance-related teasing by attributing negative appearance-evaluations to others also follows logically. This is perhaps a more adequate response. It is more adequate in terms of being a direct response to actual appearance commentary. No wonder, being scornfully reminded time and time again of some appearance-feature may evoke beliefs that others disapprove of your looks and find you less attractive. Girls, on the other hand, may not have to receive direct appearance commentary for them to feel inadequate about their physical selves.

Second, the prospective relations between peer victimization and body dissatisfaction may vary as a function of age. Peer victimization and bullying are more likely to occur in settings with younger school children, gradually decreasing as children grow older. This downward trend has been frequently reported through the ages 8 to 16 (Smith & Madsen, 1999; Smith, Madsen, & Moody, 1999). The downward trend may underlie the null-findings between appearance-related teasing and body dissatisfaction in Stice and Whitenton's (2002) and Jones' (2004) studies. Standing before the normative challenges of early adolescence (e.g., puberty, striving for autonomy), frequently victimized children carry an additional burden. These individuals may face a troublesome period.

Peer Victimization and Body Composition

One of the aims of Study II was to examine the links between peer victimization and body composition. An underlying objective was to address the issue of whether certain adolescents report being victimized more often than others. Being overweight emerged as a characteristic associated with more frequent victimization experiences. Both overweight girls and boys reported being subject to teasing more often than other children, a finding well in line with previ-

ous research (Cramer & Steinwert, 1998; Faith, et al, 2002; Janssen, Craig, Boyce & Pickett, 2004; Wertheim, Koerner & Paxter, 2001).

However, a unique contribution of the present research relates to the finding that overweight girls also reported being victims of bullying. Puhl and Brownell (2002) have described the negative attitudes held against overweight individuals as "one of the last socially acceptable forms of discrimination" (p. 108). This oppression begins at a young age and lasts throughout the life span (Annis, Cash, & Hrabosky, 2004; Cramer & Steinwert, 1998), and tends to be shared by overweight persons themselves (Lewis, Cash, Jacobi, & Bubb-Lewis, 1997). The finding that overweight 10-year-old girls find themselves in frequently occurring negative encounters with peers that are prolonged over time is alarming. Overweight is in itself one of the most stable correlates to body dissatisfaction (Thompson & Smolak, 2001). The intimate interplay between overweight, body dissatisfaction, and problematic eating behaviors (e.g., bingeing, or restrained eating) already put overweight children in a stressful position. In a study by Engström and Norring (2002) girls with bullying experiences were considered to be a clinically "at risk" group for developing an eating disorder. Study II hence stresses that young girls who battle both overweight and dysfunctional peer interactions may be an especially vulnerable group.

An In-Depth Perspective on Body Dissatisfaction

So far, the discussion has pertained to whether or not body dissatisfaction increases during early adolescence, and to issues that may or may not be involved in the rise of body dissatisfaction. However, it has been argued that the "continuum of body dissatisfaction" is poorly defined as most research quantifying body dissatisfaction ignores the psychological significance and consequences of negative appearance-evaluations (Cash, 2002). Study IV represents a different approach to body dissatisfaction, one aiming at illuminating subjective experiences rather than quantifying them. It also represents a response to the request for more qualitative studies within the body image field (Tiggemann, Gardner & Slater, 2000). To recap, the aim of Study IV was to examine the continuum of body dissatisfaction in a subset of participants reporting stability in body dissatisfaction. Three main issues will be addressed: participants' different views on the impact of societal beauty ideals, a critical note relating to the methodology of choice in relation to the reluctance some participants showed in disclosing their thoughts and feelings, and finally what signified the most dissatisfied 14-year-olds in the subset.

Individual reasoning about whether societal forces convey beauty standards and whether people (including oneself) perceive and are potentially affected by

those messages varied among the participants. Whereas some of them were unaware of or did not acknowledge those forces (Naïve participants), others were knowledgeable but uncritical (Non-Critical), and yet others demonstrated sophisticated reasoning when elaborating on these issues (Severely Troubled and Reflective). However, a critical position against beauty ideals did not necessarily grant a more accepting position towards one's own body and appearance. For females, it has been suggested that beliefs in feminist ideas may allow women to have a more positive body image as feminist theory criticizes and rejects the thin ideal, and women's need to conform to it (Myers & Crowther, 2007). This notion has received some support (Myers & Crowther, 2007; Tiggemann & Stevens, 1999). However, there may be a conflict between feminist beliefs and feelings about one's own appearance. While feminist beliefs has been found to be associated with a lesser likelihood of negatively evaluating others' bodies (Ojerholm & Rothblum, 1999), Tiggemann and Stevens (1999) argue that the importance of appearance is so highly socially reinforced that it is hard to actually apply these ideas to oneself. This may be particularly true among younger females. Study IV supports these latter ideas, rejection of beauty ideals may not mean that the same ideals have not been internalized. Notably, a more limited role of internalization has been suggested as internalized appearance ideals recently have failed to prospectively predict changes in body dissatisfaction (Carlson Jones, 2004; Stice & Whitenton, 2002).

A number of the male participants voiced their opinions reluctantly, and those who remained non-elaborative throughout the interview and appeared "naïve" in terms of their reasoning about the addressed issues were assigned the Naïve group-label. Being reluctant to disclose personal body image experiences is in line with previous findings in male samples (Adams, Turner & Bucks, 2005; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2006). It may hence mirror the "feeling and talking-taboo" (Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000) surrounding males' appearances. Men in Western society are not supposed to fuss about their looks, and consequently "the embarrassment of revealing body concerns may be greater than the pain of keeping the feelings bottled up inside" (p. 228). While appearance-conversations may be a natural part of girls' daily interactions (Nichter, 2000), the non-elaborative accounts on part of the Naïve participants may also mirror a lacking body-image vocabulary. In hindsight there are probably more viable methodologies for addressing adolescent boys' individual experiences of the kind of issues addressed in Study IV. Focus groups, for instance, may motivate participants to speak more freely and disclose personal experiences (Mor-

gan & Kreuger, 1993), especially when sensitive topics are treated (Renzetti & Lee, 1993).

A minority of the respondents expressed profound body image concerns with behavioral and emotional consequences attached. These participants were indeed in the minority (three in all), but they were all female and they all reported having received severe appearance-criticism from family members and/or peers. Each of them had attempted to alter their appearance by vigorous exercise or restricting their eating. As stated by one of them: "I started exercising and running, because I wanted to have a firm and skinny body so people would like me." This statement may reflect a belief of a perceived social benefit from conforming to appearance ideals. Carlson Jones (2004) noted that if there is a perceived relationship between one's appearance and one's acceptance among peers, then there is a potential threat to body satisfaction. The participant quoted above merely tells her lesson lived: with family and peers repeatedly conveying there is nothing positive about her and her physical persona, she becomes preoccupied with changing that person. Maybe then she would become accepted, even loved.

Limitations

There are some critical issues that can be raised in conjunction with the research presented here. In this section, I will acknowledge three broad issues.

Are children's claims of being bullied a reliable measure of whether a child actually is subjected to recurring victimization by other children in his or her surroundings? Or do they merely reflect the position of a child who frequently interprets others' social interactions as hostile when in fact they are not? Peer victimization is usually assessed using self-ratings or peer-ratings (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2001). The correlation between these two measures often ranges from .2 to .4, and hence, the two measures only share about 16% of the variance. Juvonen and colleagues argue that peer-ratings and self-ratings represent two different constructs: social reputation and subjective experiences. Peer-rated victimization status is associated with more rejection and less acceptance by the peer group. Self-reported victim status, on the other hand, is foremost associated with poor personal adjustment (social anxiety, self-worth, and loneliness), and self-reported victims feel worse off than do peer-nominated victims. Juvonen and colleagues conclude that "if the goal is to understand the personal plight of the victim (e.g., to predict self-worth or depression), then the inclusion of self-reported victim status is critical, at least among early adolescents" (p.

120). In terms of the present research, using self-reported peer victimization experiences therefore appears to be the viable method of choice.

A subsequent issue is whether the findings presented in this research merely reflect that frequently victimized children have low self-esteem, and that it is their poor self-esteem that underlies their negative appearance-evaluations – as well as their tendency to self-report victimization experiences. The relation between victim status and poor self-esteem is well-established (Perry, Hodges, & Egan, 2001), and demonstrating these ties again may seem to contribute little. However, findings from a longitudinal study of 8 to 10-year-old girls and boys may help illustrate the relations between self-esteem and body-satisfaction further. Mendelson and colleagues (1996) evaluated the development of self-esteem and body-satisfaction over a 2-year period, and demonstrated that there were no causal links between the two. Rather, self-concept and body-satisfaction develop concurrently, and are interdependent dimensions of the same construct (i.e., overall self-concept). Similarly, Tiggemann (2005) has noted that body dissatisfaction and self-esteem may play different causal roles with respect to each other at different developmental stages across the lifespan. In respect to early adolescence, body satisfaction probably plays a more salient role for self-esteem than ever due to the significance of physical appearance at this time in life. Consequently, the present research adds to the knowledge about the low self-esteem of victimized children by illuminating that they also tend to have poorer body-esteem.

The final issue pertains to the male participants in this research. Although an overall measure of body satisfaction was used, covering different aspects of appearance-evaluations, critical aspects in terms of boys' body dissatisfaction may not have been adequately addressed. What are significant appearance-issues to girls may be less significant issues to boys, and several researchers have stressed that issues about muscularity are more crucial for boys than are issues about weight. Using measures that more sufficiently tap male body image would help answering the question whether adolescent boys who have received negative remarks about their appearance tend to feel inadequate in some other appearance-domain.

Future Research

As mentioned earlier, Cash (2002) has stressed that the continuum of body dissatisfaction is poorly defined. Future research needs to be designed to better recognize when body dissatisfaction diminishes individuals' quality of life, and when a negative body image becomes predictive of disordered eating. The

foundations of body image concerns are probably laid in childhood (Smolak (2004), and the individual experiences reported in Study IV underscore that the close interpersonal context may play an important part in this development. Future studies should address body image development early on in life, and evaluate the interplay between different interpersonal variables and children's appearance-evaluations.

One of the main contributions of this research is the evaluation of a wide range of victimization experiences. Future research may address several related issues. First, how upsetting or hurtful the participants perceived the victimization incidents was not assessed. Cash (1995) and Cash and Rieves (1996) showed that the frequency of appearance-related teasing weighted by how distressing it was perceived was a better predictor of body satisfaction than were the mere absence or presence of teasing. Second, are there "worst" perpetrators? For example, is it more detrimental for body satisfaction to be frequently teased over appearance by opposite-sex perpetrators, or if the perpetrator is someone in your family or a friend? Also, are there "worst" age periods? For example, are individuals in the pre-pubertal phases of development especially vulnerable in terms of peer victimization and body satisfaction? Third, sexual harassment was not included in the evaluated victimization types. Although school-based sexual harassment appears commonplace, it is a type of victimization that has been overlooked (Shute, Owens, & Slee, 2008). These are potential issues for future research.

Future research may also focus on victimized children's relations to other body image aspects. If one was to view social interactions as the "looking-glass" by which we come to form beliefs and images about ourselves (Cash & Fleming, 2002), one issue would be to answer whether frequently victimized children display more distorted body perceptions than other children. Also, are frequently victimized children more likely to try to change their appearance, for example by restricting their eating, or engaging in vigorous exercise? If so, what are their belief-systems about what a changed appearance would involve?

The time period that was studied in this research is limited. Longitudinal studies spanning over longer periods of time could answer the questions about frequently victimized children's developmental trajectories, and whether they mirror those of other children. Previously reported retrospective accounts of being teased as a child being related to actual eating pathology in later adolescence raise the question whether children with more severe victimization experiences are at risk for subsequent eating disorders. Engström and Norring (2002) identified bullying experiences among girls at risk for eating disorders as

a potential underlying factor. The role of frequent peer victimization experiences in eating disorder pathology needs to be further addressed.

Finally, what is to be done in order to prevent peer victimization from taking place in the first place, and what to do when it already does, needs to be systematically validated. Swedish schools are obliged by law to counteract bullying, and the head of school is responsible for developing an action plan against school bullying (Skolverket, 2008). Each individual school is free to individually decide which measures to take with the consequence that many anti-bullying programs seem to have been based on commonsense ideas about what might reduce bullying rather than on empirically-supported theories of why children bully, why children become victims, or why bullying events occur. An oft-recommended first step for victims of bullying is to tell an adult about one's experiences. However, in a study by Erling and Hwang (2004b) 25% of bullied children had not told anyone about the bullying. Discouragingly, only 25% of those who had told an adult felt that they had received any help. Thus, it is of utmost importance to evaluate and implement programs that have proved to be effective in reducing incidents of peer victimization.

Conclusions

In my view, four main lessons emerge from the research presented in this thesis. First, a wider range of peer victimization experiences relate to adolescents' body satisfaction than has formerly been known. Second, the impact of such experiences may vary as a function of gender and type of victimization experienced, and as a function of time. Third, individuals who are overweight, especially girls, may be frequent targets of peer victimization. These individuals hence carry a double burden that may obstruct body satisfaction. Finally, there seems to be substantial inter-variability among a group of adolescents who have demonstrated stability in terms of body dissatisfaction.

In their early teens, individuals gaze more than ever into the social mirror for what standards and attributes to make their own. The research at hand demonstrates that children who have negative relationships with their peers also battle unfavorable attitudes and beliefs about their appearance. The final words are from one of those who enabled this work: What people tell you gets to you.

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Appendix

I. Lunde, C., Frisén, A., & Hwang, C. P. (2006). Is peer victimization related to body esteem in 10-year-old girls and boys? *Body Image, 3*, pp. 25-33.

II. Frisén, A., Lunde, C., & Hwang, C. P. (in press). Peer victimization and its relationships with perceptions of body composition. *Educational Studies, 35*.

III. Lunde, C., Frisén, A., & Hwang, C. P. (2007). Ten-year-old girls' and boys' body composition and peer victimization experiences: Prospective associations with body satisfaction. *Body Image, 4*, pp. 11-28.

IV. Lunde, C., Frisén, A., & Hwang, C. P. (2009). *"Nobody loves you when you are fat and chubby". Interviews on the continuum of body dissatisfaction*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

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