

ED SIG

Editors

ED SIG Co-Chairs

Dana K. Voelker, PhD, CC-AASP
Christine Selby, PhD, CC-AASP

Our Purpose

Eating Disorders, Body Image, and Related Concerns in Sport: Brief Reports is a publication of the Eating Disorders Special Interest Group with the Association for Applied Sport Psychology. Our purpose is to synthesize and share empirical findings and best practices on this important topic that appeals to both the researcher and practitioner.

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Eating Disorders, Body Image, and Related Concerns in Sport: Brief Reports

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Hot Off the Press!

Eating Disorders: An Encyclopedia of Causes, Treatment, and Prevention

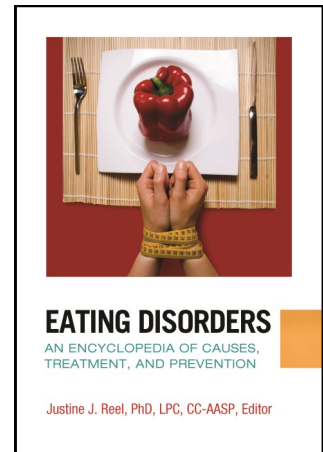
Edited by Dr. Justine J. Reel, PhD, LPC, CC-AASP, the purpose of this volume is to cover diverse topics that relate to body image and eating disorders from A to Z. The book explores the definitions, risk factors, symptoms, and health consequences of eating disorders from interdisciplinary perspectives. The media and sociocultural influences on one's body image and eating behaviors are discussed as well as how to assess and treat eating disorders and body image disturbances. More recent phenomena (e.g., pro-ana websites, virtual reality as a form of therapy) related to body image and eating behaviors are also included.

ED SIG members, Drs. Dana Voelker, Christine

Selby, and Nick Galli contribute entries about at-risk populations as well as causes, assessment, and treatment. While the entries attempt to provide a historical reference for the construction of body ideals for athletes, current statistics are provided about the prevalence of disordered eating and specific sport-related weight pressures. Exercise dependence or having the compulsion to exercise is covered across several entries with regard to prevalence, symptoms, and treatment.

Health education strategies are discussed related to the "Do's and Don'ts" of eating disorder education and prevention efforts. ATHENA, an eating disorder prevention pro-

gram for female athletes, is outlined in a separate entry. Readers will learn how to recognize eating disorders and seek help if a friend or family member shows symptoms. The



book is written for the high school student or athlete while achieving the breadth of topics that may appeal to researchers and clinicians.

For more information about the Eating Disorders Special Interest Group, please visit the AASP website:

<http://www.appliedsportpsych.org/about/sigs/eating-disorder>

Disordered Eating in Equestrian Athletes

Submitted by Eva V. Monsma, PhD, University of South Carolina

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

About 42% of female collegiate equestrian athletes are at risk for disordered eating. Both biological and psychological characteristics are proposed risk factors of disordered eating, but whether these characteristics interact together or are uniquely involved is unknown. This study compared body mass index, pubertal timing, riding context, uniform-specific body image, and social physique anxiety as risk factors among 138 female collegiate equestrian athletes competing in either Western or English style riding contexts. Average age at first menstrual cycle was 13.00 ± 1.31 years, which was slightly later than the general population (12.8 ± 1.0 years), and mean body mass index was healthy at 22.6 ± 3.0 . Nearly two-thirds of the riders saw themselves as larger than their actual body mass index in daily clothing (64.5%) and uniform (63.8%) and wanted to be smaller. Dieting and bulimia were associated with greater discrepancies between current and ideal physique perceptions. Regardless of discipline, uniform-specific body image dissatisfaction and social physique anxiety uniquely and equally predicted disordered eating risk more so than body mass index. Pubertal timing was not a predictor of disordered eating. These results suggest that equestrians who experience uniform-specific body image dissatisfaction and social physique anxiety can be targeted separately in interventions, and equestrians with relatively larger, but healthy, body mass index may be at greater risk.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Disordered eating risk is prevalent among collegiate equestrians and should be noted by coaches and athletic healthcare support staff. Pubertal timing is measured by age of first menstrual cycle. Although not a significant predictor of disordered eating risk, pubertal timing was considered because of its association with distinct physical characteristics. Specifically, muscularity and shorter relative leg length are features of early maturation whereas leanness, linearity, and longer relative leg length are associated with later maturation and reflect the aesthetic ideal. Later maturation was not prevalent in this sample. Unsurprisingly, uniform-specific body image dissatisfaction was indeed related to social physique anxiety and predicted disordered eating. This suggests that when athletes do not think they meet their ideal physique, they may diet, binge, or purge. Based on these findings, it is recommended that practitioners work with athletes on body dissatisfaction. To help manage anxiety, practitioners may help athletes develop social support mechanisms and educate parents, coaches and sport governing bodies about the interconnectedness of biological characteristics, self-perceptions, and eating disorder risk behaviors.

Reference:

Monsma, E.V., Gay, J. L., Torres-McGehee, T.M. (In Press). Physique Related Perceptions and Biological Correlates of Eating Disorder Risk among Female Collegiate Equestrians. *Journal of Athletic Enhancement*, 2.

Disordered Eating in Figure Skaters

Submitted by Dana K. Voelker, PhD, SUNY Brockport

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Figure skaters are often considered “at risk” for disordered eating due to unique performance demands and weight-related pressures. While anecdotal accounts suggest that disordered eating is pervasive across figure skating, little research exists to support this claim. The purpose of this study was to examine the frequency and psychological predictors of disordered eating in figure skaters. A total of 301 current figure skaters (272 females, 29 males) ages 12 to 26 were surveyed across five states. Disordered eating did not differ by figure skating discipline, competitive level, or sex. The majority of figure skaters was not symptomatic of an eating disorder and cited numerous benefits of figure skating on body image, eating, and exercise. A smaller proportion scored within clinical range of an eating disorder, but figure skaters were no more symptomatic than their adolescent and college-aged peers. Among female sub-elite figure skaters, disordered eating was significantly predicted by body dissatisfaction, weight pressure, and both positive and negative perfectionism. Together, results suggest that figure skating has the potential to both positively and negatively influence body image, eating, and exercise.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Disordered eating is clearly a health concern that must be addressed by those who govern and coach the sport. However, figure skaters can and often do learn healthy habits when participating. Anecdotal assumptions that most are negatively influenced and that figure skating has no redeeming qualities relative to body image, eating, and exercise behaviors should be re-evaluated.

Sport psychology practitioners may work to maximize the benefits of figure skating while minimizing the risks of disordered eating. For example, figure skating provides a model for encouraging youth to become physically active and think about food as fuel. Practitioners should identify and celebrate such health-related benefits in addition to helping figure skaters appreciate their athletic strengths, cope with weight pressures, and defy nutrition-performance myths. Understanding psychological predictors of disordered eating also informs prevention and intervention efforts that should not be reserved solely for the elite figure skater.



Image From: <http://www.cohomepages.com>

Reference:

Voelker, D. K. (2012). An examination of the frequency and psychological predictors of disordered eating in female sub-elite figure skaters (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest Dissertations & Theses. (UMI no. 3517349).

Sport Type, Context, and Body Image

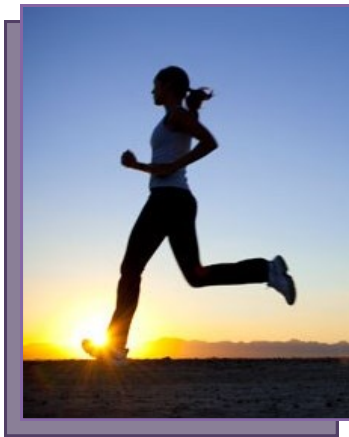
Submitted by Maria-Christina Kosteli, MS, Springfield College

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Exercise can have a positive impact on body image (Hausenblas & Downs, 2001). However, participation in sports that require a slim physique such as distance running is associated with body image problems (Crissey & Honea, 2006). The purpose of the research was to better understand this apparent paradox by examining the body image of female distance runners and throwers. Athletes completed body image questionnaires, compared their bodies to line drawings, and evaluated themselves via digital body image software. Overall, distance runners reported more favorable body image than throwers. However, when comparing themselves to sport ideals, distance runners were less satisfied with their bodies than were throwers. That is, within a sport context, runners, whose bodies meet social norms, were less satisfied with their bodies than were larger athletes (throwers). These results suggest that body image is variable and highlight the complex factors affecting the body image of women athletes. With regard to body image measurement, digital body image software may be more sensitive than line drawings in detecting predicted relationships.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this research show that body image issues are complex for female athletes. Athletes who appear to meet social norms (distance runners) may be vulnerable to body image concerns.



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Athletes with larger bodies may be comfortable with their bodies, particularly in sport contexts. Awareness of the variability of body image relative to context may allow practitioners to anticipate potential athlete concerns and to educate athletes and coaches with regard to this issue. This is particularly important as body image concerns have been associated with the development of eating disorder symptoms. Given the serious nature of eating disorders, sport psychology practitioners may serve as a conduit through which athletes gain an understanding of body image in various environments, which may help them to acquire a realistic body image and a healthier lifestyle.

Reference:

Kosteli, M., Van Raalte, J., Brewer, B., & Cornelius, A. (2011). The Relationships among Sport Type, Context, and Body Image of Female Athletes. In S. Serpa, N. Teixeira, M.J. Almeida & A. Rosado (Eds.). *Sport and Exercise Psychology: Human Performance, Well-being and Health*. Proceedings of the 13th FEPSAC Congress of Sport Psychology (p. 338-339). Institute of Sport of the Autonomous Region of Madeira.

Eating Disorders and Weight Pressures in Male Athletes

Submitted by Justine M. Chatterton, MS, University of North Texas

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Approximately 42% of female collegiate equestrian athletes are at risk for disordered eating. Both There are unique weight pressures that male collegiate athletes experience within the sport environment, which may increase the risk for disordered eating (Petrie & Greenleaf, 2012). The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence and severity of disordered eating symptoms in male collegiate athletes. Participants included 744 NCAA male athletes across 21 sports and 35 states. Responses from self-report measures revealed that most male athletes did not have eating disorder symptoms (82.8%); 16.1% exhibited symptoms of eating disorders; and 1.1% met criteria for eating disorder diagnosis. The most frequently reported weight control strategies were exercising for two or more hours a day in addition to regular practices (35.2%) and fasting or strict dieting at least once a year (20.3%).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Gathering prevalence information on disordered eating among male collegiate athletes provides information about the magnitude of the problem in this population. The results of the current study are important because they indicate that most disordered eating behaviors occur at the subclinical level. Athletes who engage in subclinical disordered eating behaviors may not be obviously underweight; however, unhealthy weight management behaviors are associated with physical and psychological health problems, such as dehydration, fatigue, depression, and substance abuse. Therefore, despite the low prevalence of clinical eating disorders among male collegiate athletes, approximately 17% are engaging in behaviors that have significant health consequences.

Additionally, due to the subclinical nature of disordered eating, it may go unnoticed by those working with athletes unless health professionals within athletic departments are provided with education and intervention training. Individuals working with athletes may be operating under the assumption that men do not struggle with disordered eating. Therefore, generating awareness about disordered eating will help professionals learn to identify and intervene when a male athlete may be suffering from disordered eating symptoms. Understanding prevalence and severity of disordered eating for male athletes is critical in guiding the development of policies for athletic departments and other health professionals working with athletes.

Reference:

Chatterton, J.C. & Petrie, T. A. (2012, August). *Prevalence of Eating Disorders and Pathogenic Weight Control Behaviors in Male Collegiate Athletes*. Paper session presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association. Orlando, FL.



Eating Disorders Special Interest Group

***Interested in joining?
Please Contact us!***

Dana K. Voelker, PhD, CC-AASP
voelkerd@gmail.com

Christine Selby, PhD, CC-AASP
selbyc@husson.edu

About Us

The Eating Disorders Special Interest Group (ED SIG) was founded and chaired in 2008 by Dr. Beth McGilley and Dr. Christine Selby. Dr. Dana K. Voelker became co-chair of the ED SIG with Christine in 2012. The ED SIG held its first meeting at the 2008 Association for Applied Sport Psychology Annual Conference in St. Louis, MO at which time we discussed ways to educate the membership and the public about eating disorders and their impact on athletes and exercisers. The ED SIG has approximately 45 members. The group has sponsored two workshops focused on helping Certified Consultants identify and assist those with eating disorders, and our members have published articles and books on the subject. The ED SIG's most recent initiative is this newsletter in which we hope to inform practitioners about cutting edge publications in the field. We hope that you find the summaries and practical implications sections to be immediately useful in your work with athletes and exercisers.

ED SIG Mission Statement

To educate athletes, coaches, parents, treatment professionals and the media about signs and symptoms, treatment and consequences of eating disorders and body image disturbance in athletes and exercisers. This SIG will also develop, for use by AASP members, prevention materials that can be presented to athletes, exercisers, parents and coaches. The ED SIG will work with other SIGs within AASP and other professional organizations devoted to athletes, exercisers and/or eating disorders to promote this effort.