Addressing girls’ body satisfaction: Impact of the Young Women Leaders’ Program

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Introduction
-Middle school girls are at risk for feeling dissatisfied with their physical appearance (Koff & Rierdan, 1991)
-Researchers recommend mentoring programs to increase girls’ body image self esteem (Iannantuono & Tyka, 2012)
-The Young Women Leaders’ Program (YWLP) pairs college women mentors with middle school mentees to enhance mentees’ global self-esteem
-This study will evaluate the effect of participating in YWLP on mentor and mentee attitudes and behaviors surrounding body image satisfaction

Methods
Participants
-7th grade middle school girls and college women in Charlottesville, VA
-Data collected from self-report surveys of program and non-program participants (control subjects)
Measures
-The Harter Scale (Harter, 1985), used for college women
-The DuBois Scale (Dubois, 1996), used for middle school girls
-Weight-reducing behaviors questions
-Self-report of change in body image perception

Results
-YWLP girls and non-program participants do not significantly differ in appearance satisfaction scores post-program
-Mentor self-perception of appearance satisfaction has non-significant correlation with mentee self-perception

Results cont.
-Mentees significantly differ in self-reported change in body image perception compared with mentors

Implications
-YWLP girls engage in less risky weight-reducing behaviors than mentors or non-program participants, and claim to be more satisfied with their bodies after the program
-Findings suggest that program participation has a beneficial effect on mentee’s body satisfaction; however, mentors may continue to struggle with their own body issues
-Future research should compare mentor and mentee appearance satisfaction, and consider cultural differences within groups relating to body satisfaction
-Mentor body positivity should be emphasized and further developed during YWLP training

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*References will be provided upon demand