

## **The Body-As-Object Versus The Body-As-Process: Gender Differences and Gender Considerations<sup>1</sup>**

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*The present study analyzed the influence that gender and gender concepts have on predominantly white young adults' attitudes toward their body parts (body-as-object) and body functions (body-as-process). Results indicated that, regardless of gender, participants held more positive attitudes toward their body functions than toward body parts. Masculinity was positively related to body-as-object attitudes, yet this relationship was true only for women. As expected, femininity had exactly the opposite effect on women's body-as-object attitudes. Unexpectedly, femininity was found to be positively related to men's body-as-object attitudes. Regarding the body-as-process, although no attitudinal gender differences were found, masculinity had a significant positive correlation. Finally, results suggested that what may partly account for the more positive body esteem expressed by males than females in previous research are that men appear to hold a higher percentage of neutral attitudes toward their body parts and women hold a higher percentage of negative attitudes.*

There are two basic ways of thinking about one's body that have particular relevance to a discussion of gender differences in body esteem. One way is to view the body as an *object* of discrete parts that others aesthetically evaluate, and the other is to conceptualize it as a dynamic *process* where function is of greater consequence than beauty. The vast majority of social scientific research on the physical self has analyzed only the body-as-object, presumably because it is this aspect of the physical self that principally in-

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fluences people's first impressions (McArthur, 1982; Roberts & Herman, 1986) and forms the basis for the *physical attractiveness stereotype* (e.g., Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Feingold, 1992; Karraker & Stern, 1990). What this research indicates is that the body as a static aesthetic object receives greater public scrutiny and evaluative comment than the body as a dynamic process.

In regards to how this object-process dichotomy figures into a gender analysis of body esteem, there is considerable evidence (e.g., Lerner, Orlos, & Knapp, 1976; Story, 1979) that females are more likely than males to focus attention on and identify with body aspects that are objectified by others and judged for their static beauty (e.g., legs, buttocks, face, chest, lips), whereas males are more likely than females to focus attention on and identify with physical aspects that are judged according to their instrumental function in the world (e.g., reflexes, muscular strength, coordination, health, agility). These differing conceptions of the physical self as object versus process reflect the larger passive-active cultural dichotomy of femininity and masculinity. For females, the tendency to focus on the body-as-object results in a great deal of attention to individual body parts (e.g., Cash, Winstead, & Janda, 1986; Fisher, 1964), whereas males' tendency to focus on the body-as-process results in a more holistic body perspective (e.g., Brown, Cash, & Mikulka, 1990; Franzoi & Shields, 1984). In an experiential sampling study illustrating this gender distinction, Franzoi, Kessenich, and Sugrue (1989) monitored young men's and women's body perceptions over a two day period as they engaged in normal activities. Consistent with the perspective of women objectifying their bodies and men having a more process-oriented view, when females engaged in body awareness their focus of attention tended to be on specific body parts, while men's focus was more global, and tended to be concerned with physical movement and function. Similarly, Cash and Brown (1989) found that young women are more appearance-oriented, whereas young men are more fitness-oriented.

### *Differential Focus on the Male and Female Body*

This tendency for females to view bodies as objects of others' attention is likely due to the greater cultural scrutiny of the female form (e.g., Archer, Iritani, Kimes, & Barrios, 1983; Nigro, Hill, Gelbein, & Clark, 1988). Starting at a very young age, from the Barbie dolls and toy makeup cases girls are encouraged to play with, to the close attention given to clothing fashion and other bodily adornments, females are taught that their body-as-object is a significant factor in how others will judge their overall value (e.g., Ban-

ner, 1983; Freedman, 1986; Orbach, 1986; Stannard, 1971). The pervasiveness of the attention is seen in the message conveyed in television commercials and magazine advertisements, where difficult to attain standards of female beauty are established in order to sell more products (e.g., Adams & Crossman, 1978; Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz, & Thompson, 1980). By adulthood, women are more likely than men to habitually experience what Hart, Leary, and Rejeski (1989) identify as “social physique anxiety”—anxiety due to others’ observing or evaluating their physiques.

In contrast, young males are typically trained for a world of action (e.g., Langolis & Downs, 1980; Tauber, 1979), where the ability of the body to adeptly move through physical space is stressed more than how it looks as a stationary object. Thus, similar to the manner in which a boy views a locomotive or a teenage mutant Ninja turtle, he is also taught that power and function are more important criteria for evaluating his physical self than visual appearance. As a result, the body-as-process often takes on more importance than the body-as-object in the daily body experience of many males. This centrality of the body-as-process in male body concept was demonstrated in a study by Tucker (1983) in which he found that college males’ degree of muscular strength was not only related to positive body esteem, but it was also related to more positive self-esteem, social confidence, and self-satisfaction.

In this conception of the male body-as-process and the female body-as-object, it is not suggested that men don’t also think of their bodies as static objects of aesthetic beauty, or that women are unaware of their bodies as instruments of action. Indeed, there is evidence that males are becoming more aware of and concerned about their physical appearance (Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein, Striegel-Moore, 1986) at the same time that females are expressing greater interest in athletic endeavors (Goldberg & Chandler, 1991). Research further suggests that gay men are more appearance-oriented and lesbians are less appearance-oriented than are their heterosexual counterparts (Gettelman & Thompson, 1993; Silberstein, Mishkind, Striegel-Moore, Timko, & Rodin, 1989). Yet despite these social facts, it is still true that, on average, males are more likely than females to conceive of their bodies as process and females are more likely than males to have an objectified body perspective. Freedman (1990) terms this gender difference in body orientation the “ornamental feminine ideal” and the “instrumental masculine ideal.” Although there most certainly are individual and even subcultural differences in adherence to these general body orientations, the body as “process” versus “object” is a useful metaphor in the understanding of male and female body esteem in contemporary North American culture.

### *Body Attitude Differences Due to Gender*

Although males and females are socialized to conform to these different conceptions of the body, it is contended that the body as a static, aesthetic object is a more potent and salient standard of evaluation than the body as a dynamic process. The best empirical documentation of this differential salience is the previously cited research on the *physical attractiveness stereotype*: What primarily figures into people's judgments of others' physical appeal is the body as a static object. To females' detriment, the cultural fixation on their bodies as objects results in a standard of the feminine ideal that is not only extremely salient, but also virtually impossible to attain. Even if a woman cognitively resigns herself to the fact that she cannot match the attractiveness standard, or even if she rejects the standard outright, the larger culture often still judges her by it (e.g., Bar-Tal & Saxe, 1976; Krebs & Adinolfi, 1975; Langolis & Stephan, 1981). For males, although striving toward the body-as-process ideal generally results in more positive body and self attitudes, this masculine standard is not as culturally salient as its feminine counterpart (Rozin & Fallon, 1988). Due to this fixation on female physical appearance, women's self-assessments are more likely to be negatively impacted by the feminine ideal than are men's by the masculine ideal.

True to this analysis, the vast majority of studies investigating gender differences in body esteem find that males have more positive attitudes toward their bodies than females (e.g., Calden, Lundy, & Schlafer, 1959; Cash et al., 1986; Mintz & Betz, 1986). Further, at least one study (Franzoi & Herzog, 1987) has found that most of the body items that women judge more negatively than men are *body parts* they consider most essential to female attractiveness. As a result of this greater cultural scrutiny of the female body-as-object, in the present study it was hypothesized that gender differences in body attitudes and interest in changing the body would be most apparent for body part evaluations—the body-as-object—rather than for evaluations of body functions—the body-as-process. In addition, because the body-as-object is more likely to be publicly scrutinized than the body-as-process, it was also predicted that both young adult males' and females' evaluations of their body parts would be less positive than their evaluations of the body functions.

### *Body Attitude Differences Due to Masculinity and Femininity*

Although past research indicates that there are affective differences in the experience of the body due to gender, the exact nature of these

differences is still not clear. One way in which some researchers have attempted to better understand male and female body esteem differences is by examining the role that psychological masculinity and femininity play in the body attitudes equation. The majority of these studies have found evidence indicating an association between these two gender concepts and body esteem (e.g., Hawkins, Turell, & Jackson, 1983; Jackson, Sullivan, & Hymes, 1987; Jackson, Sullivan, & Rostker, 1988; Kimlicka, Cross, & Tarnai, 1983). In most cases, masculinity has a stronger relationship to positive body esteem than does femininity. This stronger association between masculinity and body esteem mirrors the more general finding that masculinity has a more potent positive effect on psychological health than femininity (Aube & Koestner, 1992; Taylor & Hall, 1982).

Regarding the differential effect that masculinity and femininity may have on men's and women's body attitudes, it was hypothesized that these gender concepts would have a greater impact on young women than on young men, and would center on the body-as-object. The basis for this prediction was again the greater cultural scrutiny of the female body-as-object. If the way men and women think about and evaluate their bodies has its roots in the differing functions they have traditionally served in our culture, then women who have adopted many feminine personality traits should have the most negative body attitudes. That is, individual differences in adherence to cultural body standards should be related to a woman's larger adherence to cultural gender traditions. Due to their greater acceptance of and adherence to cultural standards for their gender, highly feminine women should have the most difficult time escaping from the negative consequences of our culture's fixation on the female body as a beauty ornament. As a result, in the present study, it was hypothesized that they would have the most negative body perceptions about the body-as-object, and would also express the greatest interest in changing these body parts. In contrast, it was predicted that masculinity, which has previously been shown to be related to satisfaction with physical appearance (Hawkins et al., 1983), would have the opposite effect on evaluations of the body-as-object than femininity. That is, masculinity was expected to be positively related to body-as-object attitudes and negatively related to interest in changing the body-as-object.

No such gender differences were expected for people's perceptions of body functions—the body-as-process. This was so, because females are not expected to attain this masculine ideal, and males—especially post-adolescent males—are generally not harshly judged if they fail to match or strive to match this ideal. Instead, it was hypothesized that, regardless of gender, masculinity would be positively related to body-as-process esteem and negatively related to interest in changing the body-as-process.

### *The Structure of Gender Differences in Body Attitudes*

Beyond exploring the role that masculinity and femininity play in the body attitudes of young adults, another way to better understand gender differences is by more closely examining the *structure* of these attitudinal differences. Surprisingly, researchers—this one included—have too often simply been interested in determining whether males and females have more or less body esteem in relation to one another on a particular dimension. Yet, when such analyses find that males have more positive body attitudes than females, what forms the basis for these differences? In comparison to females, do males have a greater percentage of positive body attitudes making up their overall body assessment? Do they perhaps have a greater percentage of neutral attitudes? Or do they have a fewer percentage of negative attitudes? The answer to these questions is that, based on the way body attitudes have traditionally been measured, we simply don't know. A final objective of the present study, then, was to shed some light on this heretofore overlooked avenue of inquiry by determining how men and women differed on the percent of positive, neutral, and negative attitudes expressed toward their body parts and their body functions.

## **METHOD**

### *Participants*

One hundred and eight male and one hundred and twenty female undergraduates enrolled in psychology courses at Marquette University participated in this study in exchange for extra course credit. The vast majority of volunteers were white, native-born Americans.

### *Measuring Instruments*

*Body Attitude Measures.* The Body Esteem Scale (BES; Franzoi & Shields, 1984) was used to obtain participants' perceptions of their various body parts and body functions. The BES consists of 35 body parts and functions rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1" ("Having strong negative feelings") to "5" ("Having strong positive feelings"), with "3" being a neutral midpoint attitude. Because the standard BES scoring procedures yield noncomparable male and female body esteem dimensions, a new categorization procedure was developed to directly compare gender differences in terms of the "body-as-object" and the "body-as-process." A

BES item was operationalized as a “body-as-object” measure when it was judged by independent evaluators to be a body part and was also judged to be thought of in terms of how it looked rather than in terms of what it did. In contrast, a body item was operationalized as a “body-as-process” measure when it was similarly judged to be a body function and was also judged to be thought of in terms of what it did rather than how it looked.

One hundred and thirty undergraduate students (46 males and 84 females) served as judges in identifying BES items in this manner. They first identified the 35 body items as either a body part or a body function, and then evaluated them on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “I think of it in terms of how it looks” to (5) “I think of it in terms of what it does.” A body item had to be identified as a body part by at least 90% of the judges and had to have a mean score on the “look-does” measure of less than 3.00 to be categorized as a “body-as-object” item. Exactly opposite criteria were used for a “body-as-process” item. This operationalization procedure resulted in the following 17 body parts being classified as “body-as-object” measures: nose, lips, waist, thighs, ears, biceps chin, buttocks, width of shoulders, arms, chest or breasts, cheeks/cheekbones, hips, legs, feet, body hair, and face. Likewise, the following 12 body functions constituted the “body-as-process” measures: physical stamina, reflexes, muscular strength, energy level, physical coordination, agility, sex drive, health, sex activities, body scent, appetite, and physical condition. Six BES items (sex organs, body build, figure or physique, weight, appearance of eyes, and appearance of stomach) did not meet the operationalization criteria and were not classified in either category.

In addition to merely summing the 5-point Likert-scaled BES items in these two categories and comparing respondents’ mean scores, the percent of body items in each category for which participants held positive (scores of 4 or 5), neutral (score of 3), or negative attitudes (scores of 1 or 2) were also analyzed. Each participant received three scores for each of these conceptualizations: the percent of body items for which they held positive attitudes, the percent for which they held neutral attitudes, and the percent for which they held negative attitudes.

*Body Change Interest Measure.* To obtain measures of the degree of interest participants had in changing body items comprising the two body esteem dimensions, after recording their attitudinal responses they were asked to rate how interested they would be in changing something about each of the body items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Definitely would not change”) to 5 (“Definitely would change”). Body items were summed using the same body-as-object and body-as-process categories to form two subscale scores for each person.

*Masculinity and Femininity Measures.* Masculinity and femininity were measured using the Masculinity and Femininity subscales of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), each containing eight bipolar items (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975). The PAQ operationally defines masculinity and femininity as personality traits. Stereotypically masculine attributes reflecting self-assertive instrumental activity and judged desirable for both males and females comprise items for the masculinity scale. In contrast, stereotypically feminine attributes reflecting communal expressive qualities judged desirable for both males and females comprise items for the femininity scale.

## RESULTS

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Table I presents means, standard deviations, and correlations for all study variables. The internal reliabilities of the "body-as-object" and "body-as-process" attitude measures were well within the acceptable range ( $\alpha = .76$  and  $.77$ , respectively), while the reliabilities for both interest in body change measures were equally very good (both alphas =  $.84$ ). The masculinity and femininity scales had alphas of  $.69$  and  $.79$  respectively.

### *Evaluative Comparison of Body Parts Versus Body Functions*

To determine whether evaluations of body parts were more or less positive than evaluations of body functions, within-subjects effects were analyzed using each participants' mean body-as-object and body-as-process scores as the dependent measures. As predicted, both male and female participants' evaluations of their body-as-object were less positive than their evaluations of their body-as-process (for males,  $M_{\text{body-as-object}} = 2.19$ ,  $SD = .40$ ,  $M_{\text{body-as-process}} = 2.70$ ,  $SD = .55$ ,  $F(1, 226) = 124.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ; for females,  $M_{\text{body-as-object}} = 2.05$ ,  $SD = .45$ ,  $M_{\text{body-as-process}} = 2.51$ ,  $SD = .51$ ,  $F(1, 226) = 115.94$ ,  $p < .001$ ). What these results suggest is that, for at least young adults, negative body affect is more likely when one evaluates body parts rather than body functions.

### *The Body-As-Object Analyses*

Separate three step, hierarchical regression analyses were performed for each dependent variable. At step 1, gender, masculinity, and femininity



Table I. Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for All Variables<sup>a</sup>

Variables	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender	1.53	.50													
2. Masculinity	21.06	4.12	-.27												
3. Femininity	23.72	4.17	.19	.05											
4. Body As Object evaluations	36.06	7.37	-.17	.22	-.02										
5. Interest in changing body as object	28.87	10.84	.24	-.14	.05	-.65									
6. Percent of negative body as object attitudes	24.90	16.20	.36	-.23	.14	-.73	.66								
7. Percent of neutral body as object attitudes	40.20	22.00	-.35	.03	-.21	-.26	-.12	-.42							
8. Percent of positive body as object attitudes	34.90	21.20	.09	.15	.11	.83	-.39	-.33	-.22						
9. Body as process evaluations	31.14	6.45	-.18	.46	.12	.57	-.37	-.38	-.16	.46					
10. Interest in changing body as process	20.02	8.48	.12	-.33	-.02	-.43	.60	.37	.02	-.31	-.63				
11. Percent of negative body as process attitudes	17.20	17.30	.04	-.32	-.07	-.43	.30	.43	-.06	-.27	-.81	.54			
12. Percent of neutral body as process attitudes	23.10	17.50	.20	-.26	-.10	-.26	-.12	-.01	.37	-.37	-.46	.19	-.04		
13. Percent of positive body as process attitudes	59.70	24.10	-.18	.41	.12	.50	-.30	-.30	-.22	.46	.92	-.53	-.69	-.70	

<sup>a</sup>Correlations greater than .13 are significant at  $p < .05$ . For gender, 1 = male and 2 = female.

were entered to test for simple main effects. In step 2, the interaction of masculinity and femininity, gender and masculinity, and gender and femininity were entered to determine whether they accounted for any additional variance beyond that already accounted for by the separate variables. Finally, in step 3, the triple interaction term was entered. Due to the fact that the additional variance accounted for in step 3 was not significant in any analyses, it will not be discussed further.

As can be seen in Table II, when the *body-as-object* attitude measure was analyzed in step 1, there was a tendency for females to express more negative attitudes than males, but this gender effect did not reach the conventional level of significance ( $Beta = -.12, t = -1.71, p < .09$ ). Only psychological masculinity accounted for a significant amount of variance. As expected, individuals high in masculinity had more positive attitudes toward their body-as-object than those low in masculinity.

Although gender alone did not significantly predict evaluation of body parts, in step 2, gender did significantly interact with both masculinity and femininity. When plotted (cf. Cohen & Cohen, 1983), two different interaction patterns emerged. As can be seen in Fig. 1, for the gender  $\times$  masculinity interaction, masculinity has virtually no effect on male attitudes

Table II. Results of the Body-As-Object Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Independent variables	Betas for dependent variables				
	Overall attitudes	Interest in changing body	Percent of negative attitudes	Percent of neutral attitudes	Percent of positive attitudes
Step 1					
$R$	.25	.25	.40	.39	.21
$R^2$	.06	.06	.16	.15	.04
$F$ value	4.52 <sup>b</sup>	4.73 <sup>b</sup>	13.37 <sup>c</sup>	12.32 <sup>c</sup>	3.30 <sup>a</sup>
Gender	-.12	.22 <sup>b</sup>	.31 <sup>c</sup>	-.34 <sup>c</sup>	.12
Masculinity	.18 <sup>b</sup>	-.08	-.15 <sup>a</sup>	-.05	.17 <sup>a</sup>
Femininity	.00	.01	.09	-.14 <sup>a</sup>	.08
Step 2					
$R^2$ increment	.04	.03	.03	.02	.04
$F$ value for increment	2.99 <sup>a</sup>	2.20	2.14	1.63	3.37 <sup>a</sup>
Gender $\times$ Masculinity	.91 <sup>a</sup>	—	—	—	1.13 <sup>b</sup>
Gender $\times$ Femininity	-.93 <sup>a</sup>	—	—	—	-.79
Masculinity $\times$ Femininity	-.02	—	—	—	-.40
$R_{total}$	.31	—	—	—	.30
$F$ value total	3.82 <sup>c</sup>	—	—	—	3.39 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> $p < .05$ .

<sup>b</sup> $p < .01$ .

<sup>c</sup> $p < .001$ .

toward their body-as-object. Thus, what accounts for the masculinity main effect are the females—high masculine women have significantly more positive attitudes toward their body-as-object than low masculine women. In contrast, upon examining the plots of the gender  $\times$  femininity interaction in Fig. 2, what is clear is that femininity has *opposite* effects on males and females—for males, femininity is positively related to body-as-object attitudes, whereas for females, femininity has a negative relationship.

When desire to change the *body-as-object* was examine, it was found that females were significantly more interested in change than males, and neither masculinity or femininity influenced this relationship, nor did the step 2 interaction analyses yield a significant increase in accounted for variance.

When the percent of body parts that people held negative, neutral, or positive attitudes toward were analyzed, even greater clarity began to emerge regarding gender differences in attitudes toward the body-as-object. In regards to the percent of negative attitudes people have toward their

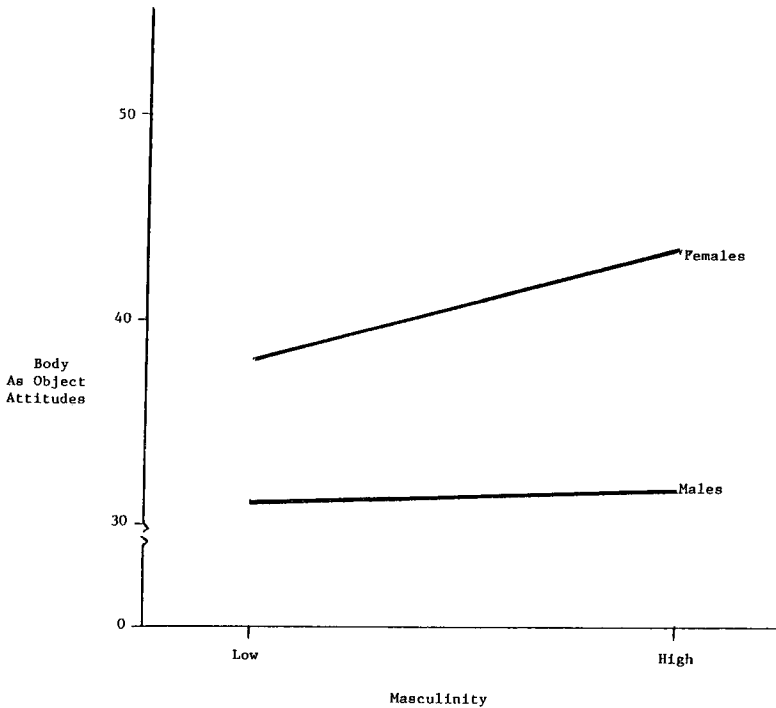


Fig. 1. Interactive effects of gender and masculinity on body as object attitudes.

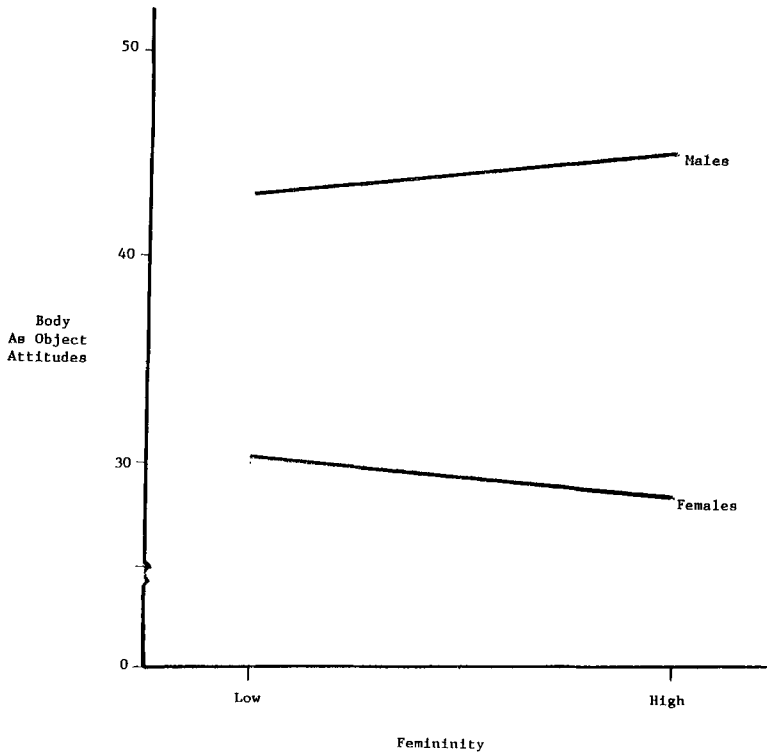


Fig. 2. Interactive effects of gender and femininity on body as object attitudes.

*body-as-object*, females expressed a higher percentage of negative attitudes than did males (Mean = 31% vs. Mean = 19%, respectively). Further, masculinity was negatively related to the expression of negative attitudes toward the body-as-object. The increment in variance accounted for in step 2 did not reach the conventional level of significance, and thus, interaction effects were not examined.

When neutral attitudes were analyzed, a decidedly different pattern emerged. Now, males were found to express a *higher* percentage of neutral attitudes toward the body-as-object than were females (Mean = 49% vs. Mean = 32%, respectively). In addition, femininity—and not masculinity—was now negatively related to the expression of neutral attitudes. As with negative attitudes, the increment in accounted for variance due to the interaction terms was not significant.

For positive attitudes expressed toward the body-as-object, males and females did not significantly differ (Mean = 32% vs. Mean = 37%, respectively), but masculinity was positively related to the expression of positive attitudes. Although there were no significant gender main effects, gender did significantly interact with masculinity in step 2. The resulting plot indicated that the slope of the regression line for women was steeper than the line for men, Thus, masculinity was a more important predictor of the percent of expressed positive attitudes toward the body-as-object for women than for men.

*The Body-As-Process Analyses*

Regarding the *body-as-process*, none of the regression analyses yielded significant increments in accounted for variance in step 2, and thus, Table III presents only the regression results from step 1 dealing with main effects. In the evaluation of body functions, only masculinity accounted for a significant amount of variance. As predicted, high masculinity was associated with more positive attitudes toward the body-as-process. Masculinity was also the only significant predictor of interest in changing body functioning. As hypothesized, high masculine individuals expressed less interest in changing their body-as-process.

When the percent of body functions that people held negative, neutral, or positive attitudes toward were analyzed, a similar pattern emerged. Re-

**Table III.** Results of the Body-As-Process Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Independent variables	Betas for dependent variables				
	Overall attitudes	Interest in changing body	Percent of negative attitudes	Percent of neutral attitudes	Percent of positive attitudes
<b>Step 1</b>					
R	.48	.33	.32	.31	.44
R <sup>2</sup>	.23	.11	.10	.10	.19
F <sub>value</sub>	20.97 <sup>c</sup>	8.70 <sup>c</sup>	8.22 <sup>c</sup>	7.73 <sup>c</sup>	16.56 <sup>c</sup>
Gender	-.09	.03	-.04	.17 <sup>a</sup>	-.10
Masculinity	.43 <sup>c</sup>	-.32 <sup>c</sup>	-.32 <sup>c</sup>	-.21 <sup>b</sup>	.38 <sup>c</sup>
Femininity	.12	-.01	-.05	-.12	.12
<b>Step 2</b>					
R <sup>2</sup> increment	.00	.02	.00	.03	.01
F <sub>value</sub> for increment	.08	1.78	.39	2.16	1.13

<sup>a</sup>p < .05.  
<sup>b</sup>p < .01.  
<sup>c</sup>p < .001.

garding the percent of negative attitudes people have toward their *body-as-process*, males and females did not differ (Mean = 16% vs. Mean = 18%, respectively), but masculinity was negatively related to negative body expression. For neutral attitudes expressed toward the *body-as-process*, females were more likely than males to hold neutral attitudes (Mean = 27% vs. Mean = 20%), and again, masculinity was negatively related to neutral body expression. In expressing positive attitudes toward body functions, males and females did not significantly differ (Mean = 64% vs. Mean = 56%), but masculinity was positively related to positive body expression. What these analyses suggest is that, in evaluating the *body-as-process*, males and females don't really differ in the percent of negative and positive attitudes they hold, but they do differ in the percent of neutral attitudes. Females hold more neutral attitudes toward the *body-as-process*.

## DISCUSSION

Results of the present study suggest that, regardless of gender, young adults hold less positive attitudes toward their body parts—the *body-as-object*—than toward their body functions—the *body-as-process*. The likely reason people express less satisfaction for the body as a static object is that it is this aspect of the body that receives the most public scrutiny and forms the basis for the physical attractiveness stereotype. Regarding gender differences in body perception, the findings suggest that it is too simplistic to merely state that men have more positive attitudes than women and that women are more interested in changing their bodies than men. Instead, the findings here indicate that gender differences in body attitudes and body perception are significantly influenced by the degree to which individuals possess masculine and feminine personality traits, and also by whether their evaluations are of the *body-as-object* or the *body-as-process*.

### *The Body-As-Object*

Although the expected gender main effect of attitudes toward the *body-as-object* was only marginally significant, the fact that women expressed greater interest in changing their body parts indicates that they are generally less satisfied with their *body-as-object* than are males. When individual differences in masculinity and femininity were taken into account, gender differences in evaluating the *body-as-object* emerged more clearly. As predicted, these findings suggest that young adults' attitudes toward their body parts are influenced not simply by whether one is male or fe-

male, but also by the degree to which one possesses masculine and feminine personality traits. Masculinity was positively related to body-as-object attitudes, yet this relationship was true only for women. For men, individual differences in masculinity did not influence attitudes toward body parts. As expected, femininity had exactly the opposite effect on women's body-as-object attitudes—women who adhered to cultural gender traditions by adopting many feminine personality traits had more negative attitudes toward their body parts than women who possessed few gender stereotypical traits. These results suggest that it is feminine women who are most likely to be negatively affected by the culture's stringent female attractiveness standards.

Why does masculinity and femininity have opposite effects on women's attitudes toward their bodies as objects? Regarding feminine personality traits, the argument I have made in this paper is that women whose personalities conform to cultural gender stereotypes (i.e., those possessing many feminine traits) are also the women most likely to try to conform to cultural standards of feminine beauty. Yet because these standards are so difficult to match, it is the highly feminine women who are the most dissatisfied with their bodies as beauty objects. Regarding masculinity, my contention has been that the possession of masculine traits may partially "inoculate" women against this fixation on female attractiveness standards. That is, women who think of themselves in terms of instrumental masculine personality traits (e.g., active, dominant, powerful) may be less likely to think of their bodies as mere static objects of beauty. Support for this "inoculation" hypothesis comes from research indicating that feminine traits appear to moderate the need to pursue such harmful masculine-typed behaviors as drinking and smoking (Evans, Turner, Ghee, & Getz, 1990; Shifren, Bauserman, & Carter, 1993). Similarly, as suggested by the present findings, it may also be the case that women who possess many masculine personality traits may be less likely to try to conform to potentially harmful feminine body-as-object attractiveness standards that can not only cause negative body affect but can lead to eating disordered behavioral practices.

One unexpected finding was the significant positive relationship between male femininity and body-as-object attitudes. Directly counter to the findings for women, men who possessed more feminine traits had more positive attitudes toward their body-as-object than low feminine men. One possible explanation for this relationship is that men who possess non-stereotypical personality characteristics may feel more comfortable in attending to and grooming their bodies as aesthetic objects. Because the standards of physical attractiveness are not as stringent for men than women (Buss, 1987; Davis, 1990), this attentiveness may result in more positive affect toward the male body-as-object.

### *The Body-As-Process*

Regarding the body-as-process, results suggest few readily apparent attitudinal differences between men and women in their evaluations of body functions. This expected finding does *not* mean that self-assessments of how one's body moves through physical space and how it functions as an instrument of activity is not related to gender issues. It is consistent, however, with the hypothesis that gender differences in body attitudes are greatest when people evaluate their body parts rather than their body functions. What these analyses further indicate is that one's degree of psychological masculinity has a more important impact on attitudes and perceptions of the body-as-process than does one's gender. As hypothesized, individuals high in masculinity expressed greater satisfaction with their body-as-process and were least likely to be interested in changing their body functions than those who possessed few masculine personality traits.

### *"Object" Versus "Process" Orientation*

Consistent with the notion that women are more likely than men to view their bodies as objects of others' attention while men are more likely than women to conceive of their bodies as instruments of action in the world, the present findings provide evidence that gender differences in experienced body affect are associated with these different body orientations. To sum up the findings, when evaluating their body-as-object, men appear to hold a high percentage of neutral attitudes, but not in evaluating their body-as-process. For the body-as-object, men are not as opinionated as women, yet they are decidedly positive about their body-as-process. Women are opinionated about both the body-as-object and the body-as-process, yet are much more negative about the body-as-object than the body-as-process. More specifically, the present findings indicate that it is simply not true that men have a greater percentage of body parts that they feel positive toward than women. In this sample, men held positive attitudes toward 35% of their body parts to 39% for women. What may partly account for the gender differences in body esteem documented in so many previous studies is that men appear to have a higher percentage of neutral attitudes toward their body parts (43% vs. 29%) and women have a higher percentage of negative attitudes (33% vs. 22%).

Why might men be less opinionated than women about their body-as-object? As stated earlier, perhaps due to the lack of a cultural fixation on the male body-as-object, when men do not hold a clearly positive attitude toward a particular body part they may feel they have the luxury to hold



no opinion whatsoever about this body part (Franzoi et al., 1989). Women, on the other hand, don't appear to be afforded this break, because their physical appearance figures more prominently in others' evaluations of them. Because of this heightened cultural scrutiny, it is much more difficult for them to hold no opinion about their body-as-object.

Women's generally positive attitudes toward their body functions also is not surprising. The body-as-process is not a key defining characteristic for women, nor is it a body quality that is as readily evaluated as is the body-as-object. As a result, women not only hold more neutral opinions about their body-as-process than men, but their overall attitude concerning their body-as-process is quite positive.

### *Directions for Future Research*

Cultural beliefs concerning gender result in females being socialized to focus on a difficult to attain feminine ideal of the body-as-object. The importance of the present results for female body esteem are that they suggest the possibility that the acquisition of masculine personality traits may serve to moderate women's need to conform to stringent female attractiveness standards. Future research should explore in greater depth how cultural shifts in gender beliefs might affect body attitudes. For example, O'Heron and Orlofsky (1990) observe that one of the liberating effects that the feminist movement has had for women is expanding the range of options available to them. This shift in cultural attitudes has resulted in greater tolerance for females who adopt the less traditional—and more valued—personality traits associated with masculinity. If O'Heron and Orlofsky's observations are correct, then our culture's current pre-teen generation of girls may develop less gender stereotyped personalities than previous generations. Hopefully, the upshot of this cultural "gender shift" is that women become less susceptible to—or more likely to be inoculated against—the feminine body-as-object "beauty trap."

Another promising research avenue is the effect that participation in athletic activities might have on women's body perceptions. For example, as women become more involved in masculine activities such as organized sports (Melnick, Vanfossen, & Sabo, 1988; Messner, 1988), identification with the body as a static object may diminish as others pay more attention to their body-as-process. If this shift occurs, it may not only change female body attitudes, but it may restructure their body esteem as well. That is, as women associate their bodies more as instruments of action rather than as beauty objects, they may become less preoccupied with weight concern issues (DiNucci, Finkenbergh, McCune, McCune, & Mayo, 1990). The fact

that female body esteem is more dependent on gender role orientation than male body esteem raises the possibility that, for nontraditional women, this restructuring of body esteem may already be taking place.

Regarding male body esteem, the fact that men who possess more feminine traits express more favorable attitudes toward their body parts than less feminine men warrants further study. Our cultural stereotype of the "typical male" is a person who is relatively unconcerned about his physical attractiveness. This downplaying of attention to physical appearance in the male persona may cause the average man to avoid certain special grooming activities (e.g., stylized hair cuts, dental bleaching) or clothing styles that enhance physical attractiveness. Yet, if current cultural pressures are indeed now causing men to become more aware of and concerned about their bodies as aesthetic objects (Mishkind et al., 1986), then perhaps individual differences in psychological femininity will have an increasingly powerful and different influence on male body attitudes than on female body attitudes. That is, it may be the less traditional men (i.e., those who possess many feminine personality traits) who might feel most comfortable in attending more to their physical appearance, and it is for this reason that they feel better about their body-as-object.

Finally, the fact that both young men and women express more positive attitudes toward their body functions than toward their body parts raises a set of intriguing questions. As people age, not only does their physical appearance fall farther out of line with youthful attractiveness standards, but their body functions also become more problematic and a focus of increasing concern. How might this dual change in the body-as-object and the body-as-process affect people's body attitudes? Will the object-process attitudinal difference of young adulthood disappear or even reverse? Will individual differences in psychological masculinity and femininity still influence body attitudes in the same way that they did earlier in adult life? Because attractiveness standards are standards of youth (Cunningham, 1986; Cunningham, Barbee, & Pike, 1990), it may well be the case that these object-process attitudinal differences will indeed change with advancing age. It's unclear what to expect regarding how masculinity and femininity might influence body attitudes in the elderly. The answer to these gendered questions awaits the penetrating analysis of future empirical inquiry.

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