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**Psychological correlates of body dissatisfaction in children under 12 years old**

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I, Annie Aimé, disclose any involvement with industry that may be perceived as potentially influencing the presentation of the following material.

## Body Dissatisfaction in children

*I looked at a Barbie when I was 6 and said, 'This is what I want to look like'. (Cindy Jackson)*

- Children as young as 5 years old report being dissatisfied with their body.
- At age 6, more than 40% of girls are preoccupied with their weight and want to lose weight, no matter their objective weight.
- Body dissatisfaction increases with age and according to a child's BMI.
- Pre-adolescents are particularly self-conscious, and therefore likely to be preoccupied with their appearance and weight.

Dittmar, Halliwell, & Ive, 2006; Dohnt & Tiggeman, 2005; Frisen & Holmqvist, 2010; Smolak, 2011

## Weight stigmatization

- Children aged between 4 and 6 years old prefer thin individuals.
- The school context represents the most common place for weight stigmatization.
- Boys and girls, aged 6 to 11 years old, tend to attribute negative adjectives to overweight children.



Janssen, Craig, Boyce, & Pickett, 2004; Latner & Schwartz, 2005

## Body dissatisfaction and problematic eating

- At 5 years-old, girls know how to lose weight.
- Between 7 and 9 years-old, they start to adopt problematic eating behaviours in order to lose weight or gain muscle such as:
  - Skipping meals
  - Dieting
  - Exercising frequently

Davison, Markey, & Birch, 2000, 2003; Field et al., 2003; McCabe, Ricciardelli, Stanford et al., 2007

## Objective:

Compare body satisfied and body dissatisfied children on individual factors such as Body Mass Index, weight and appearance stigmatization, self-description, and problematic eating attitudes and behaviors

## Participants

- 678 children:  
8 to 12 years old  
Distributed in two groups according to their body satisfaction.
  - 519 satisfied with their body (76.5%);
  - 159 dissatisfied (23.5%).

## Characteristics of the participants

- 305 boys (45%) and 370 girls (54.6%)
- Grade:
  - Grade 3: 211 (31.1%)
  - Grade 4: 170 (25.1%)
  - Grade 5: 156 (23.0%)
  - Grade 6: 136 (20.1%)
- BMI:
  - Overweight: 106 (15.6%)
  - Obesity: 25 (3.7%)

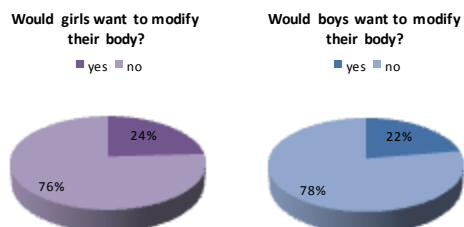
## Procedure

- Participation was volunteer
- French-speaking families were recruited in the Quebec City area (96.4%)
- Information about the study was provided in 19 schools (almost all classes from Grade 3 to Grade 6)
- 29% of the families initially contacted participated
- Each child was given written information for his parents as well as a questionnaire battery

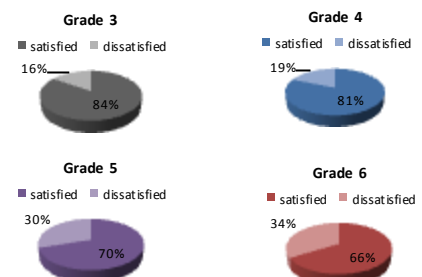
## Measure instruments

- Sociodemographic questions
- General Self-Concept subscale of *the Self-Description Questionnaire* (SDQ, Marsh 1989)
- *Children's Social Experiences Questionnaire – Self-Report* (CSEQ, Crick & Grotpeter, 1996)
- *Children's Eating Attitudes Test* (ChEAT, Maloney, McGuire, & Daniels, 1988)

## Results: Body dissatisfaction and gender



## Body dissatisfaction and school level



## Body dissatisfaction and Body Mass Index

	Body satisfied		Body dissatisfied		p
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	
BMI	17.3	± 2.2	20.1	± 4.6	.000

## Psychological correlates of body dissatisfaction

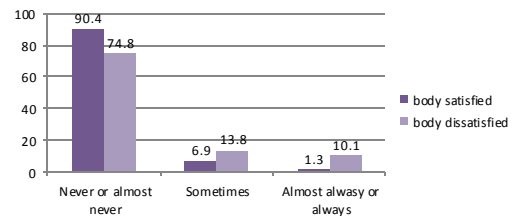
Psychological correlates	Body satisfied		Body dissatisfied		p
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	
General stigmatization	29.6	± 7.7	31.3	± 5.4	.02
General Self-Concept	34.0	± 5.4	29.6	± 6.6	.000
Problematic eating	5.6	± 5.1	9.1	± 7.1	.000

## Predictors of body dissatisfaction

Predictor	B	Wald $\chi^2$	p	Odds ratio
BMI	.292	25.98	.000	18.55
General Stigmatization	-.199	.031	.860	.819
General Self-Concept	-.609	25.72	.000	.544

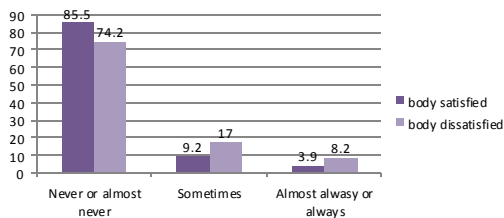
## Weight stigmatization

### Frequency of negative comments about weight



## Appearance stigmatization

### Frequency of negative comments about appearance



## Discussion

- In our sample, body dissatisfaction was not as prevalent as suggested in the literature (23.5% vs 40%).
- Boys were as likely as girls to report wanting to modify their body.
- Our results provide future evidence to the affirmation that body dissatisfaction in children increases with age and is strongly related to BMI.

## Discussion

- Social context is important in the development of body dissatisfaction.
- Psychological burden is heavier for children who are dissatisfied with their body.
- While higher BMI acts as a risk factor for body dissatisfaction, positive self-perception might be a protective factor.
- Body dissatisfaction combined to higher BMI and negative perception probably increase the risk of subsequently adopting problematic eating behaviors.