To Be Thin or To Be "Buff": Relations Among Appearance-Related Feedback and The Body Image Concerns of Females and Males

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TO BE THIN OR TO BE "BUFF": RELATIONS AMONG APPEARANCE-RELATED FEEDBACK AND THE BODY IMAGE CONCERNS OF FEMALES AND MALES
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Body esteem has been found to be negatively correlated with susceptibility to appearance-related mass media messages and criticism from family and peers. Most research on body image/esteem has been conducted with females, and has concentrated on the dimension of body thinness, thus making dissatisfaction with one's body seem to be a gender-typed concern. However, males appear to have body image concerns also, particularly when it comes to body muscularity – as demonstrated by the increased use of anabolic steroids and dietary supplements among young males. We examined associations between body esteem along dimensions of thinness and muscularity, appearance-related mass media messages, and appearance-related feedback from family members and from peers in a sample of male and female college students (N = 287). Participants completed a measure assessing the extent to which their notions about body image are influenced by mass media messages, their experiences with appearance-related criticism from family and peers, and the extent to which their peers express body image concerns. They also completed a measure of body esteem, and a body shape questionnaire. Previous findings regarding body esteem and susceptibility to mass media messages, and criticism from family and peers were replicated. The results also extend previous research on body image and body esteem by highlighting muscularity as a salient dimension of body image for males. When both dimensions of body image are considered, appearance-related feedback from family, peers, and the mass media are differentially associated with the body image concerns of males and females. Finally, the results suggest that females may be rejecting media images of ultra-thin models as desirable.