

1 **Appearance Esteem Trajectory According to Three Different Sources of Support Among Adolescents Over a**
2 **School Year**

3
4 **Abstract**

5 Although social support has been linked to body satisfaction, there has been little research on the effect of differential
6 sources of support on the trajectory of appearance esteem over time. To address this gap, this study explored changes
7 in adolescents' appearance esteem to perceived social support over one year. Data were collected from 339 Canadian
8 adolescents (54.57% females) in Grade 7 ($M_{age} = 12.05$) and Grade 10 ($M_{age} = 15.14$). Multilevel growth modeling
9 revealed that perceived social support from fathers was not associated with appearance esteem, whereas mothers'
10 support had the strongest effect on appearance esteem, consistently over time. Friends' support was also related to an
11 increase in the appearance esteem trajectory, but only for older students. Overall, this prospective study provides a
12 better understanding of the unique contribution of three different sources of social support during adolescence for
13 preventing negative appearance esteem, beyond the effects of other related variables.

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15 **Key words:** adolescence; body esteem; body image; peer support; parental support; multilevel growth modeling
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Introduction

21 Body image is particularly important during the critical period of adolescence (Bucchianeri et al., 2013), in
22 which concerns about the body tend to increase while lifestyles and physical and psychosocial health are developing
23 (Littleton & Ollendick, 2003). Among adolescents, low levels of body image can lead to various negative
24 psychological outcomes (Duchesne et al., 2017), problematic weight-related behaviors, and maladaptive appearance
25 management behaviors (López-Guimerà et al., 2013). As these consequences can last in the long term, focusing on
26 protective factors of negative body image is crucial (Cash, 2012). Among those factors, concerns about appearance
27 among adolescents have been the object of increased public interests in recent years (Ricciardelli & Yager, 2016).
28 However, few studies have focused specifically on appearance esteem, an important sub-construct of body image that
29 refers to general feelings about appearance (Mendelson et al., 2001). It is well known that social interactions are
30 important protective factors for body image among adolescents (Ata et al., 2007). However, little is known about the
31 respective influence of various sources of support on appearance esteem and its trajectory. Given that interpersonal
32 relationships are critical for helping adolescents cope with psychological distress occurring during this developmental
33 period (Camara et al., 2014), this prospective study extends previous research by assessing the differential impact of
34 three important sources of perceived social support on the trajectory of adolescents' appearance esteem over a 12-
35 month period using a robust statistical approach.

Appearance Esteem

37 Whereas body image is defined as individuals' beliefs, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors toward the
38 body (Pruzinsky & Cash, 2002), appearance esteem is an important part of the multidimensional and complex
39 construct of body image and refers to general feelings about appearance (Mendelson et al., 2001). During adolescence,
40 concerns about appearance become very important because of the numerous physical and psychological changes
41 occurring (Mendelson et al., 2001). Adolescents may be subject to considerable pressure about their appearance from
42 their family, their peers, and the media (Hardit & Hannum, 2012) and they may also be particularly afraid of being
43 criticized or evaluated negatively by others (Beesdo et al., 2007). In fact, in a qualitative study where adolescents were
44 asked to report factors related to the development of body dissatisfaction, many emphasized appearance teasing,
45 appearance pressure, appearance-related conversations, and appearance comparison (Gattario & Frisén, 2019). As
46 appearance esteem is associated with identity development (Wängqvist & Frisén, 2013), it seems paramount to explore
47 its protective factors to help promote better adjustment and mental health during this critical period of life.

48 The few studies focusing specifically on the appearance esteem trajectory have shown that it tends to exhibit a
49 negative transition from childhood to adolescence for both genders, with a greater decrease among girls and those
50 with a higher body mass index (BMI) (Frisén et al., 2015), and then to stabilize in adulthood (Nelson et al., 2018).
51 This finding is consistent with those on body dissatisfaction where predictors from adolescence to middle adulthood
52 would be gender, age, BMI, and other variables, such as depression, self-esteem, parental communication and caring,
53 peer dieting, and weight-based teasing (Wang et al., 2019).

54 Given that many individual and environmental factors can influence body dissatisfaction, it may be difficult to
55 specifically identify the role of each variable on its trajectory, as suggested in findings from the longitudinal study by
56 Wang et al. (2019). That study revealed several differences in the evolution of body dissatisfaction over time even if,
57 overall, it remained relatively stable from middle adolescence to adulthood. Their findings suggested that self-image
58 and thus body satisfaction develop at an early age, hence the importance of ensuring positive appearance esteem in
59 adolescence to prevent problems in the short and long term. However, no known studies have focused on the protective
60 factors that specifically influence the trajectory of appearance esteem.

61 **Social Interactions and Social Support**

62 The important role of the social environment in appearance concerns has inspired many sociocultural models,
63 such as the Bowlby attachment model (Bowlby, 1978) and the tripartite influence model of body image and eating
64 disturbance (Thompson et al., 1999). The theoretical model used for this study was the acceptance model (Avalos &
65 Tylka, 2006), according to which a person's body appreciation is strongly influenced by the appreciation that loved
66 ones have of their own body and by the social support that they provide. This association has repercussions from
67 adolescence to adulthood (Gattario & Frisén, 2019). One way to explore social influences in research is to investigate
68 social support. Feeling accepted and appreciated by others would make people more confident and give them more
69 positive feelings about themselves and their body (Stice & Whitenton, 2002).

70 Within adolescents' social groups, parents are important to consider in relation to body image. For example,
71 some aspects of parenting, such as attachment style and perceived parental care and control, are associated with body
72 esteem, self-esteem, and eating behaviors among young adult males and females (Sira & White, 2010). Furthermore,
73 in a 15-year study including 1,455 participants, Wang et al. (2019) found that environmental factors, such as parental
74 caring and communication, can be important predictors of body dissatisfaction from adolescence to adulthood. Besides
75 verbal communication and active encouragement, even indirect behaviors, such as mothers exhibiting body image

76 concerns, have been found to impact the appearance esteem of offspring (Handford et al., 2018). Parent-adolescent
77 relationships are thus important for the maintenance of a healthy body image and can be conceptualized as a protective
78 factor. However, whereas the mother-child relationship has been examined in many studies and a maternal influence
79 has been consistently found, little is known about the distinct role of fathers. This gap has been highlighted in previous
80 research (Sira & White, 2010), suggesting the need for more investigation of the respective contribution of every
81 dimension of family functioning. Moreover, research is needed to include additional information in the acceptance
82 model about whether and how support from others plays a role in increasing appearance esteem.

83 In adolescence, the social environment consists primarily of interactions with school peers, such as classmates
84 and friends (Brown et al., 2008), who play a significant role in appearance esteem among girls and boys. Adolescents
85 are more frequently confronted with peers' appearance cultures and with an integrated focus on appearance, beauty,
86 and thinness (Jones et al., 2004), which are associated with body image concerns and negative behaviors (Carey et al.,
87 2013). Thus, given that relationships with peers substantially influence body appreciation and that friends are very
88 present in adolescents' lives, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of the role of support received more
89 specifically from friends (Kenny et al., 2017).

90 The respective influence of peers and of friends on appearance esteem in adolescence varies. The results of a
91 meta-analysis of 25 studies conducted between 1995 and 2010 among adolescents and young adults revealed a stronger
92 relationship between body dissatisfaction and the influence of peers than of family (Quiles Marcos et al., 2013).
93 However, this meta-analysis grouped studies pertaining to parental and peer/friend support, and few focused on both
94 types at the same time. Nonetheless, the greater importance of friends could be explained by the notion that
95 adolescence is the developmental period in which emancipation from parents occurs alongside individualization,
96 leading the person to become a full-fledged autonomous adult (De Goede et al., 2009). In preadolescence, boys and
97 girls spend more time socializing with family than in later adolescence, when they tend to spend more social time with
98 same-sex peers (Graber et al., 1999). In early adolescence, boys and girls both perceive more support from their mother
99 and their father than in late adolescence (De Goede et al., 2009). Thus, regarding body image, it may be expected that,
100 in later adolescence, parental influence on appearance esteem would be less strong than peer influence. However,
101 previous studies have produced conflicting results. For example, among young university students, body esteem would
102 be greater for students who felt loved by, in order of importance, their mother, another family member, their friends,
103 and, lastly, their father (Merianos et al., 2012). Another longitudinal study conducted among adolescents, which was

132 sought to address this gap in the literature by focusing on the role of three sources of social support in appearance
133 esteem among Grade 7 and Grade 10 students over a one-year period. It also extended previous research by clarifying
134 the fathers' contribution to their offspring's body image. The results could help improve preventative programs based
135 on positive body image and protective factors. The current study had two main objectives. The first was to investigate
136 the relationship between social support from the mother, father, and friends and appearance esteem. In line with the
137 acceptance model (Avalos & Tylka, 2006) and with prior research (Quiles Marcos et al., 2013), it was expected that
138 social support from the mother, father, and friends would be related to the participants' appearance esteem for both
139 grades. More specifically, it was hypothesized that mothers' influence would be stronger than that of fathers, and that
140 relationships between social support and appearance esteem would be stronger among older adolescents when social
141 support was derived from friends rather than from parents, while the opposite pattern was expected among younger
142 adolescents. The second objective was to explore the contribution of demographics on the progression of appearance
143 esteem over one year. Based on previous work by Mendelson et al. (2001) and Frisé et al. (2015), it was hypothesized
144 that appearance esteem would be higher among Grade 7 students (early adolescence) than among Grade 10 students
145 (middle adolescence) and that there would be a gender-based effect, in which females were expected to report lower
146 appearance esteem than males.

147 **Methods**

148 **Participants**

149 Data used in this study were selected from a project, involving 740 respondents, in which the Healthy Mind,
150 Healthy Body (HMHB) program was evaluated. For that project, participants came from two high schools of similar
151 socioeconomic backgrounds and were randomly assigned either to the experimental condition consisting of health-
152 related interventions or to the control group. To achieve the aim of the current study, only the subsample of students
153 from the control group (who did not receive any intervention and who had no contact with the experimental group;
154 N = 427) was selected. To ensure complete anonymity of the participants' answers and to match their questionnaires
155 at each follow-up (from T1 to T3), students answered the same questions about their identity at each wave, so they
156 did not have to remember their code (the two first letters of their first name, their birthdate, etc.), generating an eight-
157 character identification code (Yurek et al., 2008). All students who were present during each of the data-collection
158 visits and who consented to participate in the study were included in the current sample. Participants in Grade 7 were
159 required to submit a parental consent letter to complete the survey, but this was not required for those in Grade 10,

160 because Quebecers can provide informed consent at 14 years of age. Overall, the research sample was composed of
161 339 students at baseline. The phenomenon of attrition is almost inevitable in longitudinal studies, and the current data
162 are no exception. At T2, 260 participants were still enrolled in the study and completed the survey, a loss of 23%, and
163 at T3, 240 completed it, a loss of 30%. The logistic regression showed that dropout variation was not related to any of
164 the variables included in the current study. These findings indicate that the missingness was random.

165 Approximately half of the participants at baseline ($N = 167$, 49.3%) were Grade 7 students in early adolescence
166 ($M_{age} = 12.05$ years, $SD = 0.24$) and the other half ($N = 172$, 50.7%) were Grade 10 students in middle adolescence
167 ($M_{age} = 15.14$ years, $SD = 0.36$). There were 154 males (45.4%) and 185 females (54.6%). As for their ethnicity, 95.3%
168 were Caucasian, 3.8% were from First Nations, 5.6% were from Western Europe, 2.1% were from North
169 Africa/Middle East, and 5.9% indicated another ethnic/racial background. A quarter (25.1%) of the participants
170 reported experiencing food insecurity (e.g., their families could not afford to eat balanced meals), an indicator of low
171 socioeconomic status (Daveluy et al., 2001). Baseline sociodemographic data of the study population are shown in
172 Table 1.

173 **Procedure**

174 There were three waves of data collection. Time 1 took place at the start of the school year (T1: October 2016),
175 Time 2 at the end of the school year (T2: May 2017), and Time 3 at the beginning of the next school year (T3: October
176 2017). Parents and students received a letter describing the study. They answered a custom-designed questionnaire
177 with different scales at baseline (T1) and at the 8- and 12-month follow-ups (T2 and T3). The questionnaire was
178 administered in computer rooms during regular class hours. This study received the institutional review board's (IRB)
179 approval (blinded for review).

180 **Measures**

181 **Appearance esteem.** The Body-Esteem-Appearance subscale of the Body-Esteem Scale (Mendelson et al.,
182 2001) was used. It consists of 10 Likert-scale items assessing general feelings about appearance. Participants were
183 instructed to report how much they generally appreciated their body (e.g., "I like what I see when I look in the mirror")
184 by giving a score from 0 (never) to 4 (always), where a higher score indicated positive appearance esteem.
185 Standardized Cronbach's alpha values in the sample were 0.933 at T1, 0.932 at T2, and 0.934 at T3.

186 **Perceived parental support.** Parental support was measured at T1 through the Parental Emotional Support
187 Questionnaire (Deschesnes et al., 1997) based on the questionnaires developed by Schaefer (1965), Siegelman (1965),

188 and Parker, Tupling, and Brown (1979). The adolescents were required to complete one questionnaire concerning
189 their mother and another one concerning their father (it was the same questionnaire apart from the instruction: Answer
190 the following questions while thinking of your father/while thinking of your mother). Support was assessed according
191 to a four-item Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (often), for example: Is he affectionate with you (e.g.,
192 takes you in her arms, smiles at you, kisses you or talks to you kindly). The scores were added together for a maximum
193 total of 15. Higher scores indicated greater social support. In cases where the students had little or no contact with one
194 or both biological parents, they completed a questionnaire referring to the female and male adults whom they
195 considered to play these roles (stepparent, adoptive parent, grandparent, etc.). The adolescents were not asked who
196 the person was; however, a sociodemographic question on family composition provided the information needed to
197 make this determination. According to this question, 85.1% of the participants in the sample lived with their biological
198 father and mother, 10.0% with their mother and her partner, 2.5% with their father and his partner, and 2.4% in other
199 situations (guardian, foster family). Standardized Cronbach's alpha values for maternal and paternal support in the
200 current study were 0.739 and 0.788, respectively, and the correlation between those two variables was 0.519 ($p =$
201 0.000).

202 **Perceived friends' support.** Friends' support was measured at T1 using four items developed by Zimet,
203 Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988) on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree
204 (6). Examples of these items are "I can count on my friends when things go wrong" and "I can talk about my problems
205 with my friends." Higher scores indicated greater support from friends. The standardized Cronbach's alpha was 0.876
206 in the current sample.

207 **Perceived current figure.** Perceived current figure was evaluated with the Figure Rating Scale (Collins, 1991),
208 generally used to determine participants' desire to change their figure by calculating the gap between the perceived
209 and ideal figures. Participants were instructed to assess which figures were closest to their own from a selection of
210 seven silhouettes, ranging from smallest to largest. In accordance with the aim of the present study, the analyses
211 included the perceived figure responses only as a measure of perceived body size in replacement of BMI, as the two
212 are strongly correlated (Gardner & Brown, 2010). BMI was calculated in this study but could not be included because
213 of the high level of missing data (35.54%) for either weight or height. Because the correlation between the BMI and
214 perceived figure was significant ($r = 0.580$, $p < 0.001$) among the respondents, perceived figure was deemed
215 appropriate for use as a control variable.

216 **Weight-related teasing.** The degree and source of the weight-related negative comments received by the
217 participants were assessed at baseline using an adapted version of the nine items developed by Bellerose (2002).
218 Participants answered the question, “Do the following people (e.g., mother, father, boyfriend/girlfriend, siblings,
219 friends, extended family, sport teacher or coach, ex-boyfriend/ex-girlfriend, or other) ever make negative comments
220 about your weight?” A score (from 0 to 9) indicating the number of sources of negative comments received at some
221 point in their lives was calculated. In the present sample, 47.5% of respondents reported having previously received
222 negative comments about their weight, and 1.5% had received negative comments from between six and nine different
223 sources ($M_{Sources\ of\ teasing} = 1.16, SD = 1.62$).

224 **Sociodemographic characteristics.** Participants were asked to provide sociodemographic information
225 including gender, grade level, ethnicity, and food insecurity.

226 **Statistical Analyses**

227 Before the main analysis was conducted, demographics and descriptive statistics were computed. Longitudinal
228 multilevel growth modeling (Grimm et al., 2017) was then conducted to investigate the association between social
229 support and the appearance esteem trajectory. This type of analysis has been proven to allow the examination of
230 individual differences in within-person variations and co-variations over time (Hoffman, 2007). Given the three
231 measurement waves (Burchinal et al., 2006) and the small amount of missing data (Enders, 2011), the sample size
232 provided sufficient statistical power to detect slope differences between groups even for small effect sizes (Coertjens
233 et al., 2017). Moreover, according to Arend and Schäfer (2019), the power estimation of this two-level model study
234 is considering as sufficient. First, the mean trajectory of appearance esteem across the three time points was modeled
235 (to determine if it increased, decreased, or remained the same over time). Second, the effects of predictors measured
236 at T1 on appearance esteem were examined. Gender, students’ grade level, current perceived figure, and negative
237 weight-related comments were included as control variables in the current model. Food insecurity was not significant
238 and thus not included in the final model for the sake of parsimony. A widely used software program for studying data
239 with hierarchical or nested structures, SAS (version 9.4), was used (Bell et al., 2013).

240 The three social support variables were centered-reduced, which made their coefficients comparable. Full
241 maximum likelihood (FIML) was used to handle missing data and to estimate parameters (Johnson & Young, 2011).
242 It is comparable to multiple imputation and is considered to produce stable, more efficient, and less biased estimates
243 of the parameters of interest (Johnson & Young, 2011).

244 Singer and Willett's (2003) multiple-step procedure, described below, was used to test hypotheses. First, an
245 unconditional model was computed (with no predictors). Second, a series of nested multilevel models was fitted. The
246 effect of each predictor, added sequentially, was tested on the intercept (baseline) and on the rate of change (time).
247 Then, alternate models including the interactions between the variables, or with time, were tested. To select the best
248 final model, fit indices, such as the Akaike information criterion (AIC), the Bayesian information criterion (BIC), and
249 the log-likelihood (deviance) statistics, were used (Grimm et al., 2017). Lower values indicated a better representation
250 of the data by the model (Singer & Willet, 2003). The difference in deviance between the unconditional model and
251 the final conditional model, which is a measure of goodness of fit, was $\Delta \chi^2 = 235.1$, $\Delta df = 23$, $p < 0.001$. This justified
252 the decision to retain this model to represent the rate of change in appearance esteem. Finally, the examination of
253 conditional residues indicated no major violation of the postulates of normality and homoscedasticity.

254 Results

255 Descriptive Statistics

256 Descriptive statistics and correlations among the variables are presented in Table 1. All the correlations
257 appeared to be in the hypothesized directions.

258 *INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE.*

259 Appearance Esteem and its Trajectory

260 **Appearance esteem trajectory.** Results of the unconditional growth model revealed that the intraclass
261 correlation was 0.77, justifying the use of conditional multilevel analyses. This finding indicated that students'
262 appearance esteem score variance was attributable mostly to differences between, rather than within, participants over
263 the 12-month period.

264 **Predicting appearance esteem at baseline.** The parameter estimates for each of the predictors in the final
265 model are listed in Table 2. In order of importance, mothers' and friends' support had unique and significant effects
266 on the appearance esteem subscale at baseline ($\beta = 0.194$, $p = 0.015$ and $\beta = 0.141$, $p = 0.024$, respectively), while
267 fathers' support appeared to be non-significant ($\beta = 0.119$, $p = 0.142$). This meant that higher levels of social support
268 from the mother and friends were associated with higher levels of appearance esteem at T1. Because the estimate for
269 social support from mothers was higher than for social support from friends ($\beta = 0.194$ and $\beta = 0.141$), these results
270 also suggested that the effect of social support from the mother was more important than that of social support from
271 friends. These effects were significant above and beyond the effect of the control variables, which were also all related

272 to appearance esteem. However, the appearance esteem association with social support from the father was not
273 significant. As for the control variables, gender and grade were associated with more positive appearance esteem ($\beta =$
274 0.658 and $\beta = -0.383$, respectively, $p < 0.001$), in the sense that being a boy and being in Grade 7 was associated with
275 better appearance esteem. Moreover, lower appearance esteem was associated with larger self-perceived figure ($\beta = -$
276 0.137 , $p < 0.001$.) and a higher number of sources of negative weight-related comments ($\beta = -0.070$, $p < 0.05$).

277 *INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE.*

278 **Predicting appearance esteem rate of change over one year.** The results also revealed interactions with time,
279 indicating that some predictors had an effect on the appearance esteem trajectory that differed over time. First, the
280 results indicated a significant general decline in the appearance esteem trajectory over time ($\beta = -0.017$, $p = 0.013$).
281 Second, an interaction was detected between time and grade levels, which revealed that appearance esteem declined
282 only for Grade 7 students ($\beta = 0.017$, $p = 0.016$). Finally, no significant association was found between mother or
283 father support and change over time in reported appearance esteem, which meant that the effect of mother support and
284 the non-effect of father support on baseline levels of appearance esteem stayed the same at all time points. Nonetheless,
285 the triple interaction was observed between grade levels, social support from friends, and time. Figures 1 and 2 provide
286 a graphical illustration of this interaction for Grade 7 students compared with Grade 10 students receiving high levels
287 (Figure 1) and low levels (Figure 2) of social support from friends. Overall, these results indicate that the grade level
288 modulated the effect of social support from friends on the appearance esteem trajectory. These findings suggest that,
289 among Grade 7 students, even though there was a positive effect of social support from friends on appearance esteem
290 at baseline, it had no effect on the declining appearance esteem trajectory over time. Among Grade 10 students, in
291 addition to its positive effect on appearance esteem at baseline, social support from friends also had a positive effect
292 on the appearance esteem trajectory. This means that receiving a higher level of social support from friends prevented
293 a decline in the appearance esteem trajectory over time. Graphically, even if older students' appearance esteem
294 increased when they had higher levels of social support from friends, their levels of appearance esteem remained
295 below those of younger students over time.

296 *INSERT FIGURES 1 AND 2 HERE.*

297 Finally, there were no time interactions with gender, perceived figure, or weight-related teasing, suggesting
298 that their effect on appearance esteem remained the same over time. Taken together, these results indicate that the

299 appearance esteem trajectory changed for both boys and girls as well as for participants with different perceived
300 shapes, regardless of the number of negative comments received.

301 **Sensitivity Analyses**

302 Because the data used for this study were from a single-source and self-administered questionnaire, common
303 method variance was possible and therefore examined. Although common method variance is more likely to emerge
304 in simple models (Chang et al., 2010) and therefore less likely in the current study given the complex model used, the
305 Harman's one-factor test was also conducted. The results showed no indication of common method variance. Finally,
306 a multiple regression was conducted with the three social support measures using the Durbin-Watson statistic. This
307 test is used as a diagnostic check for bias resulting from autocorrelation in the data when the residuals are not
308 independent from each other and not linearly auto-correlated (Cohen et al., 2013). The results indicated that the
309 Durbin-Watson statistic was in the recommended range, that is, between 1.5 and 2.5 (Durbin & Watson, 1971).

310 **Discussion**

311 Although predictors of body dissatisfaction among adolescents have been examined in several studies, for
312 example, psychological factors (Duchesne et al., 2017) or social influences (Quiles Marcos et al., 2013), less is known
313 about the evolution of appearance esteem and its association with social support from significant sources and with
314 other factors. The present study addressed these gaps by examining the impact of three sources of social support
315 (mother, father, and friends) on the trajectory of adolescents' appearance esteem over a 12-month period above and
316 beyond the effect of personal factors (gender, age, perceived figure, weight-related teasing). The data collection
317 included three waves, making it possible to perform a robust linear analysis of the appearance esteem trajectory. The
318 results confirmed most of the hypotheses regarding the positive effects of social support above and beyond the effects
319 of weight-related comments, perceived current figure, and gender. This work contributes to the application of the
320 tripartite model of influence on adolescents' body image and may help to elucidate social and individual factors that
321 can improve adolescents' well-being and mental health.

322 **Appearance Esteem and Social Support**

323 The findings indicated that only two of the three sources of social support were associated with the appearance
324 esteem trajectory, that is, mother and friends, but not father, which is consistent with previous studies on body
325 satisfaction, such as the ones by Merianos et al. (2012) and Back (2011). These findings support the notion that
326 perceived emotional and behavioral support from significant sources is a protective factor for own body appreciation

327 (Stice & Whitenton, 2002), and as early as possible in youths' lives, as suggested in the studies by Duru, Balkis, &
328 Turkdoğan (2019) and Thomann Mitchell (2014).

329 Social support from fathers was also expected to be associated (although less strongly) with appearance esteem
330 over time; however, this was not the case. One explanation that should be tested in future study may be because fathers
331 make fewer comments than mothers about their child's weight (Berge et al., 2016). These differences between mother-
332 child and father-child relationships regarding body image may also be explained by the difference in attachment with
333 parents (Szalai et al., 2017) and in type of influence, where children would be more influenced by modeling than by
334 other types of influence (Quiles Marcos et al., 2013).

335 Moreover, social support from the mother appeared to be more important than that from friends at the initial
336 measurement time, as found in the study by Merianos et al. (2012) and in a previous longitudinal study reporting that
337 deficits in parental social support, but not in peers' social support, predicted growth in body dissatisfaction for both
338 boys and girls (Bearman et al., 2006). Nonetheless, for Grade 10 students, the impact of friends' support on appearance
339 esteem appeared to change over time. Indeed, friends' support prevented a decline in the appearance esteem trajectory
340 during the school year for Grade 10 students, supporting the notion that friends can be an important source of influence
341 on adolescents' appearance esteem (Carey et al., 2013). This finding may support the notion that this transition occurs
342 in the period of middle to late adolescence, not from early to middle adolescence (De Goede et al., 2009). Further
343 studies should be conducted to better identify this transition.

344 Participants reporting high levels of social support from friends also reported high levels of social support from
345 parents. This is consistent with the study by Schneider, Atkinson, and Tardif (2001), who proposed that relationship
346 skills would likely be generalized from parent-child relationships to friendships during adolescence. These results may
347 be explained by adolescents' need for support and reassurance in a positive and secure family environment, despite
348 their need to gain more physical, social, and psychological independence. Thus, even if adolescents spend less time
349 overall with their family during adolescence, the time that they do spend with their mothers and fathers is important
350 for their development and entertainment (Coleman, 2011). These findings together support the hypothesis that social
351 support is related to appearance esteem over time, suggesting that social support plays a key role in appearance esteem
352 during adolescence. Even though the study was not intended to examine the mechanism underlying the link between
353 potential mediators and appearance esteem, those findings may be explained by the fact that social support contributes

354 to a more positive self-esteem and self-image, which, in turn, may positively influence how adolescents feel about
355 their appearance, as previously suggested (Sira & White, 2010).

356 **Appearance Esteem Trajectory**

357 Another goal of the current study was to investigate the appearance esteem trajectory over one school year.
358 The analyses revealed that, over time, appearance esteem decreased only among participants in Grade 7. This finding
359 suggests that entry into adolescence may have unfavorable effects on appearance esteem, which is consistent with
360 findings on the negative impact of puberty on body image, as in the studies by Ackard and Peterson (2001) and
361 Tremblay and Lariviere (2009). Appearance esteem also decreased in Grade 10 participants who reported low social
362 support from friends, which suggests a protective role of friends at this age (Kirsch, Shapiro, Conley, & Heinrichs,
363 2016).

364 Regarding associations with other control variables, as hypothesized, female adolescents reported being less
365 satisfied with their appearance than male adolescents, and this difference remained over the one-year study period,
366 which is consistent with previous studies by Abbott, Barber and Dziurawiec (2012) and Bucchianeri et al. (2013).
367 Moreover, a previous 11-year longitudinal study indicated that appearance esteem declined during the transition to
368 adulthood for people of both genders, but that this trend was more pronounced among girls (Frisén et al., 2015). In
369 another study where appearance esteem was compared among young people between the ages of 15 and 20, the results
370 revealed that boys had higher appearance esteem than girls, but that the gap decreased with age (Nanu, Tăut, & Băban,
371 2013). In the current study, while the period was only 12 months, no significant interaction was found between time
372 and gender, supporting the notion that people continue to be dissatisfied in the same manner, independently of gender,
373 as proposed in a previous study (Juli, 2017).

374 Consistent with the third hypothesis, adolescents' appearance esteem was found to be significantly related to
375 every control variable at baseline, and these effects remained the same over time, except for grade level. A larger
376 perceived figure was associated with poorer appearance esteem. As expected, considering that perceived figure is a
377 proxy variable for BMI, these findings are consistent with a previous study also indicating that higher BMI is linked
378 with poorer appearance esteem (Bucchianeri et al., 2013). In addition, weight-related teasing, as expected, was
379 negatively associated with appearance esteem, which supports the importance of the influence of significant others'
380 values on body image (Ata et al., 2007). This finding is also consistent with previous suggestions that this type of

381 comment in adolescence is associated with objectified body consciousness and eating disorders over time (Olvera et
382 al., 2016).

383 As the use of multilevel growth modeling analysis is relatively recent in the field, there are few studies available
384 for comparison. However, it is important to consider that other social factors may also influence appearance esteem.
385 For example, a previous study showed that individual adolescents' characteristics, such as gender, BMI, and general
386 self-esteem, moderated the prediction associations between weight-related comments and social comparison, and body
387 dissatisfaction over time (Cantin & Stan, 2010). Moreover, personal factors, such as anxiety, comparison tendencies,
388 and internalization of social ideals, can moderate parental influence (Rodgers & Chabrol, 2009).

389 **Study Strengths and Limitations**

390 Nevertheless, this study had some limitations that should be considered. Although the sample size was
391 sufficient to test the hypotheses of this study (Coertjens et al., 2017), it was not large enough to provide statistical
392 power to test other moderation hypotheses. For example, a previous study found that gender did not moderate the
393 relationship between social support from family and from peers and body dissatisfaction (Kirsch et al., 2016). Even if
394 a previous study suggested that body satisfaction of offspring is more influenced by parents of the same sex as them
395 (Kluck, 2010), having a larger sample would have allowed parent-adolescent differential gender analyses (i.e., mother-
396 daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son) to be conducted. Another limitation is that the current data
397 were based on self-reports provided by a single source (the students themselves), creating the possibility of common
398 method variance. In addition, the social support questions precluded knowing exactly to whom the adolescents were
399 referring. However, given that a large majority still lived with their two parents, it was supposed that it was their
400 mother or father. Future research should collect data from multiple respondents (mother, father, and friends) regarding
401 the social support they perceived to be offering. Finally, it may be helpful to examine negative behaviors of
402 adolescents' social groups in future studies, considering that appearance esteem and eating concerns are reported to
403 be negatively influenced by having social support from parents, friends, or significant others who regularly make
404 negative comments about their body or follow diets (Quiles Marcos et al., 2013).

405 Beyond these measurement issues and sample biases, an important strength of this research is the longitudinal
406 design used, combined with a robust and appropriate statistical technique, multilevel growth modeling (Hedeker,
407 2004), which overcome the limitations of other statistical methods (Burchinal et al., 2006). Overall, current knowledge
408 suggests that this is the first longitudinal study where a multivariable model was used to predict the trajectory of

409 appearance esteem according to social support, allowing the assessment of longitudinal observations of adolescents'
410 life realities. Furthermore, this study addressed gaps in the literature by examining the effects of various sources
411 simultaneously (i.e., mother, father, and friends) and by adding information about fathers' influence on their
412 offspring's body image. Despite the difficulty of collecting anonymous data in several waves and merging them
413 together using a self-generated code, a low rate of attrition was achieved, even if code inconsistencies caused the loss
414 of a small number of participants at T2 and T3. Nonetheless, the risk of bias was greatly diminished given that attrition
415 analyses indicated that no variable predicted dropout as well as by the use of FIML, which can accurately estimate
416 coefficients of participants with missing data points (Johnson & Young, 2011). As well, for growth models, the bias
417 is less pronounced for the mean slope compared to the variance or covariances, which is often more relevant for the
418 research practitioner (Coertjens et al., 2017). Moreover, the findings from this study add to the acceptance model by
419 providing more information on whether and how support from others can be associated with appearance esteem.

420 **Conclusion**

421 Several authors have investigated protective and risk factors of body satisfaction among adolescents, but none
422 had yet explored the influence of social support on appearance esteem, let alone on its evolution over a one-year
423 period. The present study addresses this gap by providing longitudinal data regarding three important sources of social
424 support (mother, father and friends) on appearance esteem within an adolescent population over one year, and by
425 exploring individual characteristics that may influence its trajectory. Overall, the results indicated that mothers' and
426 friends' support are significantly associated with adolescents' appearance esteem over one year. Being female, being
427 in middle adolescence, having a larger self-perceived figure, and receiving negative weight-related comments from a
428 higher number of sources were associated with poorer appearance esteem. Thus, the findings revealed that perceiving
429 high levels of social support from significant sources can be a protective factor for appearance esteem in adolescence
430 and may thus be key in adolescents' adjustment and mental health. Further studies should also be conducted to better
431 understand the fathers' role in this equation.

432 These results have practical implications and support the idea that schools and families can help promote
433 healthy body image through education and by reducing weight-related teasing. For example, prevention programs
434 should target parents to make them more aware of the impact that their support may have, even indirectly, on their
435 adolescents' appearance esteem. School programs should also highlight the importance of friends' support for older
436 adolescents and how it can become a positive agent for a healthy and positive body image. The mediators of

437 appearance esteem during adolescence should be examined in future studies to better understand the process of
 438 improving appearance esteem through social support. Identifying protective factors and highlighting the importance
 439 of adolescents' social groups for the promotion of a healthy body image may help clarify the influence processes of
 440 appearance esteem.

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443 References

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