Gender differences found in a qualitative study of a disordered eating prevention programme:

What do boys have to say?

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Appreciation is expressed to the participating schools and especially to the boys and girls interviewed.

Abstract

Qualitative studies examining gender differences (GD) of eating disorder prevention-programmes are scarce. We aimed to evaluate GD in adolescents who participated in a larger study on effectiveness of a disordered eating prevention programme. Perceptions of eating, female and male aesthetic models, media influences, prevention programmes and emerging topics from 12 school-going boys who received a media-literacy programme (n=4), media-literacy plus nutrition-awareness programme (n=4) or neither (n=4) were explored using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and compared with previous results in girls. Findings suggest that the prevention programme is effective for both genders. GD and consumer-culture influences may be considered in future interventions.

Keywords: disordered eating; adolescent gender differences; media literacy; prevention programme; qualitative research.

There are marked gender differences with respect to eating attitudes and body image which leads to gender-specific health-endangering body change strategies (Hoek & van Hoeken, 2003). Recent studies have found a link between the negative influences of the mass media on the body image of young people (O'Dea, 2012). The impact of media messages contributes to a critical, negative body image, body dissatisfaction, and a desire for the slim ideal among females and the muscular ideal among males (Clark & Tiggemann, 2007; Galioto & Crowther, 2013). The media also communicates messages regarding the expected benefits of thinness or muscularity, such as increased happiness, social desirability, stereotyped sexual roles and social status (Ter Bogt, Engels, Bogers, & Kloosterman, 2010). The perpetual social reinforcement of appearance ideals promotes their internalization (Thompson, Schaefer & Menzel, 2012). The key element of the effect of the media is the creation of social comparison among boys and girls, whereby they begin to compare themselves with the "perfect" images of young men and women portrayed in the media. This can lead to young people becoming hightly self-critical (O'Dea, 2012). Weight and body image concerns are particularly prevalent during adolescence and can lead to the implementation of restrictive diets or other unhealthy compensatory behaviours, especially in girls (Neumark-Sztainer, Paxton, Hannan, Haines & Story, 2006; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). However, Neumark-Sztainer et al. (2007) found that unhealthy weight-control behaviours were present in both girls and boys, which suggests the importance of incorporating gender aspects within prevention programmes.

Therefore, the main objectives of disordered eating prevention programmes conducted in schools should be to identify and criticise the aesthetic beauty model, develop critical thinking skills, and challenge the glorification of thinness for girls and a muscular ideal for boys (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2007; Richardson, Paxton & Thomson, 2009). Media Literacy (ML) adopts this approach to reduce the influence of the "perfect" beauty ideal (Levine & Smolak, 2006).

The disordered eating prevention programme "*Eating, feminine aesthetic beauty model and the mass media: How to train critical students in secondary school*"® (Raich, Sánchez-Carracedo, & López-Guimerà, 2008) is based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Model (Bandura,1986) and the ML perspective (Levine & Smolak, 2006), and includes two components: ML and Nutrition knowledge (NUT), the latter aimed at discussing false beliefs regarding nutrition and providing knowledge about balanced and healthy eating. The programme was designed for application to a middle-adolescent population and its multimedia format is interactive and discursive. The long-term follow-ups on the effectiveness of this prevention programme conducted in two versions (one only ML and the other also including nutrition knowledge, ML+NUT) showed that both versions were effective in reducing the internalisation of the aesthetic body ideal, body dissatisfaction and self-reported disordered eating attitudes in school-going adolescents 30 months after receiving the intervention (Espinoza, Penelo & Raich, 2013; González, Penelo, Gutiérrez, & Raich, 2011). Most eating disorder prevention programmes have addressed evaluations of their effectiveness using quantitative analyses. Consequently, little is known about the role and impact of participants' perception of prevention programmes and whether they consider such programmes to be helpful and significant to their lives (González et al., 2013).

Qualitative methods could introduce a more in-depth perspective (Flick, 2009) of the assessment of effectiveness, increasing our understanding of the interaction with risk factors, the prevention process and its practice, facilitating the examination of gender influences in the context of women's and men's health practices and illness experiences. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2004), González et al. (2013) found that girls in the prevention groups reported less ego-syntonic, unbalanced eating patterns (such as skipping meals, strict diet rules regarding types and amounts of food, etc.) and weaker signs of internalisation of the thin ideal compared to girls that had no intervention.

Little is known about the processes that are associated with poor body image in boys and it remains unclear whether there are specific components of disordered eating prevention programmes that are more relevant and effective for boys compared to girls. Understanding the factors that may be moderated by gender will be helpful in informing the development of prevention programmes to ensure they meet the needs of both male and female participants. As body image is a phenomenon whereby traditional gender ideals interact closely with appearance ideals (Tatangelo & Ricciardelli, 2013), it therefore important to know more about the boys' views and perceptions of the NUT and ML domains and to compare them to the findings previously reported by girls (Gonzalez et al 2013). Thus, in the current study we aimed to explore the perceptions and attitudes of a sample of boy participants in a 30-month quasi-experimental disordered eating prevention programme follow-up conducted in two versions (ML and ML+NUT). Differences with a non-intervention control group were examined. Moreover, finding were compared with those previously obtained in girls (González et al., 2013).

Method

Participants and Procedure

The initial sample of a previous quantitative study (González et al., 2011) comprised 254 girls and 189 boys ($M = 13.5$ years; $SD = 0.4$) from seven state or state-subsidised schools in Terrassa (Catalonia, Spain). The distribution of participants in terms of origin was: 92.8% from Europe, 4.7% from South-America, 1.9% from Morocco, and 1.2% missing data. They were all assigned to one of three possible conditions after an initial assessment: ML, ML+NUT, or the non-intervention control condition. Groups were balanced to ensure there was one state and one state-subsidised school in each condition. Thus, students received either

the ML prevention programme, the ML+NUT prevention programme, or no prevention programme (control group).

In the 30-month follow-up, 160 girls and 116 boys remained in the study (González et al., 2011). From this sample, initially 12 girls and afterwards 12 boys from the three different experimental conditions (4 ML, 4 ML+NUT and 4 control group) were selected for the qualitative-interview. In order to manage diversity (Flick, 2009) and maximize the range and variability of responses (Patton, 2002), participants with either the highest or lowest scores on self-reported eating attitudes and internalization of idealized aesthetic models in the larger quantitative study were selected. .

The whole study was welcomed by the Ethics Committee of our institution and was approved and mediated by the Terrassa Municipal Institute of Health and Social Welfare. The procedure for this study was the same as that used previously with girls (González et al., 2013). After informed consent was obtained from participants and their parents, the 12 boys who had been selected were interviewed in a quiet room at school for 50-70 minutes from September to December of 2009. All interviews were conducted after the 30 month follow up had been completed. Participants were reminded that the interview was confidential and there were no right or wrong answers and the aim of the interview was to understand their perspective on each topic, in their own words. All interviews were digitally recorded (with the participants' consent) and transcribed.

Semi-structured Qualitative Interview

The selection of the topics to be explored with the participants was initially related to the contents of the disordered eating prevention programme (ML and NUT), which were selected by the team and then reviewed and approved by four independent external raters (two experts in qualitative methods, one in public health and one in youth). Content and format suggestions

obtained from this process were incorporated into the semi-structured interview. The main themes explored were adolescents' perceptions of and attitudes to eating, female and male aesthetic models, fashion, media influences, self-care prevention programmes and emerging topics related to young people (Appendix A).

Analysis

The analysis of verbatim transcripts was conducted using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith & Osborn, 2004). IPA aims to explore in detail the participants' perceptions, i.e. their subjective experiences. Thus, as with girls (González et al., 2013), each of the 12 verbatim transcripts were compared with the audio recorded interview to check the accuracy of the text by the first author. The 12 boys' interviews corresponding to each experimental condition (ML, ML+NUT and Control group) were repeatedly read in order to identify the first tentative labels clustering similar units of meaning into themes. Subsequently, initial themes were gathered and refined according to analyses conducted by three researchers from the research group and two external researchers. Next, related themes were condensed, resulting in a set of themes and sub-themes which were compared according to experimental condition. Lastly, a gender comparison analysis was performed using the themes generated by girls in the previous study (González et al. (2013). Gender differences were examined within the three experimental conditions.

The analysis was conducted primarily by the first author; the second and fourth author reviewed the transcripts and annotations, checking the accuracy of the coding into themes process and performing the gender comparison analysis which also considers the experimental condition of girls and boys. As our researcher's own experiences and values may have impacted on the interpretation of the participants' discourse, we used a consensus strategy that consisted of three joint discussions of approximately four hours each between the

authors and two external analysts, focusing attention on relevant domains such as the gender similarities and differences for the 13 high-order-themes that had been extracted. The initial consensus reached at the first of these meetings was 92.31% (12 of the 13 high-order themes). We finalized a unanimous consensus for gender comparison at subsequent meetings, reaching 100% agreement on a final extract of similarities and differences in the 13 high-order themes scheme, as shown in Table 1. These themes were identified from the responses of the 24 participants (both boys and girls) interviewed from the three different experimental conditions.

Results

Definition of eating and nutrition: Almost all participants (12 girls and 8 boys from all experimental conditions) related these topics to the idea of "necessity". However, only the boys and girls in the ML and ML+NUT groups mentioned the importance of the "variety in eating". Girls in the ML+NUT group also mentioned the importance of "proper quantities", whilst boys from ML+NUT mentioned the need to have breakfast.

Definition of healthy diet: When participants were asked what they understood by "a healthy diet", most of them were able to relate it to "eating the proper quantities and varied eating". Nevertheless, more than half of the participants seemed to view a healthy diet as an ideal, highlighting the difficulty of applying it to daily adolescent life, especially when eating with friends means choosing the cheapest and tastiest option (3/4 male non-intervention-control-group), which is usually "fattening or unhealthy". All boys from ML+NUT correctly cited macronutrients when defining healthy eating. Most of the participants considered fast food, pizzas, processed and fried food, pastries and sweets to be unhealthy. The notion of balance and eating impulsively was also mentioned when defining healthy and unhealthy diets by three boys' from the ML+NUT group. Additionally, the social rules regulating appetite

and the need for a reasonable distribution of the amount of food consumed during the day were only mentioned by some girls and boys from either intervention group. These boys also mentioned homemade food with no chemical additives and introduced the sense of satiety to regulate eating. One quarter of the boys in ML+NUT mentioned the good properties of water rather than cola (or other sweetened beverages). However, almost all of the participants from the ML and ML+NUT groups and one boy from the non-intervention-control group viewed eating as a social event (family and friends), with 9/24 of boys and girls from the ML and ML+NUT explicitly mentioned eating as a pleasure.

Eating preferences: A third of the participants preferred not to eat alone, but whereas boys said that otherwise they "get bored", girls associated it with negative feelings. All the girls in the non-intervention-control group admitted to a lack of schedules and social norms to regulate eating in the absence of the mother. Young men showed less risky eating patterns than girls; boys seemed to have fewer opportunities to cook or prepare their meals because they said that their mothers "were always there" or left food prepared for them (9/12).

No boy mentioned skipping breakfast, but all the girls in the non-intervention-control group showed unbalanced, ego-syntonic dietary patterns (quantity and quality/skipping meals). However some girls (3/4) and boys (2/4) from the ML and ML+NUT groups recognised their own role in monitoring their eating patterns by choosing healthier options, "but without such rigid restrictions". Additionally, almost all the boys from the ML+NUT group mentioned drinking water during their meals.

Eating and gender: The vast majority of participants (12/12 girls and 9/12 boys) related women (mothers) to an eating function, mainly cooking. Only a small number of boys (3/8 from ML, ML+NUT) believed that both women and men are equally competent when cooking and that there should not be any gender-based differences. Most boys said that they were able to cook "just basic meals if needed". A third of the boys and girls (ML, ML+NUT

group) indicated that women are more concerned about what they should or should not eat. For one boy from ML+NUT, those eating patterns seemed to be driven by the desire to please and be accepted by others.

Fashion: As most participants (8/12 girls and 10/12 boys) expressed, fashion is a new social trend followed by a social group that communicates social belonging and social-status. Whereas most of the boys said that fashion also signifies "popularity", 11 girls highlighted that fashion also communicates personal identity. For 8/12 girls and 10/12 boys, this powerful trend regulates what people wear, their "cool possessions", attitudes, behaviours, and "the kind of trendy body you should have". Almost all participants (12/12 girls and 10/12 boys) said that fashion and fashionable ideals and goods come from the media, especially from TV. However, boys and girls from both versions of the program added that fashion could also come from everyday people, shops and billboards "that also enable people to find out about fashion" (4/12 girls and 7/12 boys).

Although only the girls from ML or ML+NUT (8/8) mentioned the need for differentiation from others, the boys from both these groups (7/8) showed negativity or indifference towards fashion, mentioning "the impossibility of being absolutely beyond the reach of fashion".

 In this sense, gender differences become more salient, with girls relating fashion to the identity process and considering the social consequences of not following these codes of belonging. So, fashion for girls could be an issue with more visible potential consequences when not adhering to social expectations. On the other hand, boys, although showing criticism, did not mention social sanctions or identity implications (for both genders, the non-intervention-control groups did not mention this topic).

In relation to attitudes to fashion, a third of the participants in either version of the preventive program showed negative (3/4 ML boys and 2/4 ML girls) or indifferent attitudes

(3/4 ML+NUT boys) and another third of participants (2/4 control boys, 1/4 ML girls, 2/4 ML+NUT girls and 2/4 control girls) showed ambivalent attitudes to following the latest trends. However, the final third from all the experimental conditions showed positive attitudes to fashion and following the latest trends (1/4 ML, 2/4 ML+NUT and 2/4 control group girls and 1/4 ML, 1/4 ML+NUT and 2/4 control group boys).

When examining cool and fashionable goods, attitudes and behaviours among young people, gender differences were also salient. Whereas girls defined male and female fashionable goods and attitudes in general, boys only referred to male ones. All the participants mentioned different clothing and activities such as: wearing low waisted trousers, wearing brands, revealing underwear, different hairstyles, wearing accessories, having piercings and tattoos, drinking and smoking. Girls referred to tight jeans, being thin, getting along with people, being on a diet , using technological devices (computers, mp3 player) and staying out late; while boys mentioned taking care of eating and the body, going to the gym, hair removal and cool possessions.

Some girls (3/8) and boys (2/8) from either version of the preventive programme said that food could also be fashionable, from light products and fruits to Waffles, fast food such as McDonald's, and gourmet meals.

Female ideal of beauty: When participants were asked about the female model of beauty, most of them agreed (11/12 boys and 12/12 girls) with the definition of the thin curvaceous girl. Whereas boys mentioned beauty and curvaceousness, girls added tallness and highlighted slenderness. Although thinness was a central aspect in the descriptions from all the groups, 'curves' were considered important in defining the current female ideal body. However, only 4/4 of the male participants (ML) mentioned height in their beauty ideal, defining the ideal to be a medium height girl who is not higher than they are. 8/8 girls (ML,

ML+NUT) added the ideas of dressing well, wearing accessories and having well applied make-up to the ideal.

Gender differences were also present in relation to this topic: On the one hand, boys defined the kind of woman they like as similar to the ideal, but not too skinny: "Not touching bones". It is interesting to note that boys (11/12) see themselves "touching", as an action. On the other hand, girls preferably assumed an objective role in emphasizing the body they should have. Even when they talked about male models, girls did not take an active role, they described the importance of considering how a person is inside. It therefore seems there that the thin, toned and curvaceous ideal has been normalised. Most boys recognised that they prefer girls who match the ideal (11/12). "Chubby girls" are widely discriminated against and considered ugly, however, boys (11/12) also prefer a girl not to be too thin, but curvy. "A woman with tits, thin waist and ass", "like Angelina Jolie, Elsa Pataky, Scarlet Johansson or Beyonce". Some 3/4 boys (ML+NUT) explained the interesting difference between a hot and beautiful girl, since hot seems to be related to the body and beautiful to the face. Some boys also added the notion of a beautiful face within the model.

Most girls and boys (3/4 boys and 4/4 girls from ML and 4/4 boys and 4/4 from ML+NUT groups) showed critical attitudes to the prevailing aesthetic model and the emphasis of physical appearance over other values such as intelligence or personality. In addition, more than half of the girls from the ML and ML+NUT groups perceived that the opposite sex's expectation of a "beautiful sexy girl" is related to an ultra-thin and perfectly curved body. Half of the boys from ML and ML+NUT (4/8) recognised that physical appearance is a central value in social interaction with the opposite sex, "especially when going out or when meeting someone for first time". This dual function, which seems to make girls want to have that "hot" body and men want to be with girls who have that "hot body".

Male ideal of beauty: All participants associated the ideal male model of beauty with thinness and muscularity. Almost all male participants (11/12) added strength, not being fat, tallness and not being over muscular. In this sense, men seem to be more concerned about "not getting fat" than "losing weight" and having bodies like the ones shown in the media, "like those of football players or athletes". Surprisingly, 8/12 (ML, non-intervention control-group) girls had the perception of a change in a male model of beauty throughout history, it now being more slender and muscular than before. Furthermore, more than half of the participants (6/12 boys ML+NUT and non-intervention-control group) added the notion of having a beautiful face to the ideal. There were also other signs of perceiving a change in the male ideal of beauty when mentioning: "A guy with no hair on his back" (3/4 boys ML). Nevertheless, the masculine body ideal was mostly reported as representing health and was more biologically possible compared to the female ideal of beauty. Many of our participants from ML and ML groups described the importance of a proportional body, avoiding both excesses of muscularity and adiposity. Boys (9/12) from all groups and 8/8 girls from ML and the control-group perceived a change in the notion of masculinity: nowadays men are seen as sexual/beauty objects as well, and their bodies have to match the "right measures and proportions". Both genders agreed that in the past, boys did not have to take much care over their physical appearance. Whereas boys (3/8 from ML and non-intervention-control group) felt that before they had to be nice and friendly to be attractive to women, girls (8/12 from ML, ML+NUT and non-intervention-control group) said that although men used to represent maturity, stability and security, this is generally not the case anymore.

Most boys (5/8) from the ML+NUT and non-intervention-control group said that muscularity is seen more specifically in the abdominals and chest. Most of the boys (7/8) from ML and ML+NUT expressed critical attitudes to the prevailing aesthetic male model and the overrating of physical appearance, indicating that they prefer "to be a normal guy".

The boys in the non-intervention-control group showed less criticism of the current masculine model of beauty, but one suggested that it means you can only show off your body if it matches this ideal.

Models of beauty, media and daily life: The vast majority of participants (10/12 boys and 12/12 girls) indicated the negative effects of the constant exposure to the media of "body image stereotypes" making appearance-related self-discrepancies more salient. However, whilst girls described the media's detrimental effects on girls' body image, boys expressed people's desire to look like models or celebrities in general: "You might not realise, but TV and advertising always leave things in you, shaping what you like or prefer... There is always something, even if you are not aware of it".

The ways mentioned by the participants that could trigger appearance related self-discrepancies are: the media, TV, celebrities' lives, adverts, teenage magazines (girls), shops, billboards and social situations (gym shower, good looking people in the street, interaction with the opposite sex, comments and social criticism, conversations about celebrities). In fact, some boys from the ML group recognised the detrimental role of the tabloids that promote "stupidity and celebrities' lives". Many girls (9/12, ML, ML+NUT and one from the non-intervention-control group) and some boys (2/4 ML, 2/4 ML+NUT, 1/4 control group) were concerned about the different strategies used to build an idealised model of beauty: touched up images, make-up techniques, and also mentioning the absence of "normal" size clothes in shops and the social discrimination of larger body shapes.

Models of beauty and body satisfaction: Six boys from ML and ML+NUT showed critical attitudes to the trend in current society to overrate physical appearance and fashion over other values: "the perfect body comes from fashion. You know, according to history, chubby girls used to be seen as attractive whereas nowadays the thin ones are attractive". "Friendly, charming men had more possibilities with women in the past, because they were

able *to produce sensations in women*, making them laugh". "But nowadays people are judged based on appearance, not solely arising from the body, but also the clothing". Although 3/4 boys from ML mentioned that young people are more vulnerable to the effects of the idealised ideal, it seems that these effects are more frequent in females than males. The majority of participants (10/12 of girls and 6/8 of boys from ML and ML+NUT) indicated that girls are in a more "vulnerable situation" regarding the influences of the media compared to boys. They said that overexposure to thin models and women who have had plastic surgery could have a detrimental effect on girls' body image, which could lead to an increased risk of dieting as a way to try to achieve the ideal "in order to please boys". Eating disorders, unhappiness, and body concerns are seen as consequences of the fashion and appearance industry. Although boys and girls from the non-intervention-control group showed signs of internalisation of the idealised model, there were differences in their attitudes to eating and exercising: boys indicated physical activity (such as going to the gym) and being a little more careful about what you eat as normal behaviours in order to achieve a trendy body: "You have at least try to make the effort to look better, to get that body. When you get it... You will feel satisfied with yourself". Almost all girls (3/4) from the non-intervention-control group talked about following a restrictive diet and doing excessive physical activity as normal behaviours in order to lose weight "but not taking diet pills as some girls do".

In addition, socio-environmental aspects related to the consumer culture and gender differences were described by the participants. Some boys from ML+NUT (2/4) highlighted the gender differences in market supply: "There are many ineffective women's beauty products on the market being sold by the media", "you can see more and more things for men", "there are guys who spend a lot of money on designer perfumes". Risk in men seems to be related to the possibility of spending lots of money. In this light, some boys from the

ML+NUT group (2/4) said that guys do not usually have that problem but women often cannot find their size in stores because clothes are made for thin women.

Some boys (2/4) and girls (2/4) from ML+NUT explicitly mentioned that there are economic interests behind the unrealistic messages disseminated though the media, warning of the misleading resources and visual techniques used by the media in order to sell products. Although the boy and girl participants from ML and ML+NUT specially highlighted the media's detrimental effect on people's body image, which triggers the comparison process and an individual accountability for the failure of the product or not having the perfect body, they indicated society and social situations as potential triggers of appearance related self-discrepancies. The immediate significant social environment, especially peers, progressively plays an important role in making sense of media messages and images: "When you go out, the way your friends look... It's hard when no one wants to dance with you". In light of this, some girls from ML+NUT (2/4) mentioned that comparison becomes less salient with images portrayed through the media after having participated in the prevention programme, but it is still strong in social interactions.

Most boys (9/12) also indicated that girls are more vulnerable to the influences of the media and social situations than boys. They said that girls could present more negative body evaluations and negative-affect. Girl participants (9/12) showed signs of internalisation of the unrealistic thin model of beauty; nevertheless, differences between the groups that received some intervention and those that did not were salient. However, even some girls from the ML and ML+NUT groups showed signs of internalisation of the unrealistic thin model of beauty, which has a negative effect on their body image (especially parts of the body), triggering the comparison process. Nevertheless, girls from the control group showed strong signs of internalisation of the thin model of beauty, associated with weight related self-discrepancies, extreme negative self-evaluation of appearance, negative affect, and personal suffering. In this

sense, the strong body focused negative affect (for the entire non-intervention-control group), seems to pollute the rest of the self, affecting normal daily functions (dieting, skipping meals): "We see this stereotype, you know, and we follow it". This is associated with weight-related self-discrepancies, extreme negative self-evaluation of appearance, negative affect and personal suffering. "I don't like myself, I look fat. I'd like to be different, not just skin and bone, but thinner"; "When you stand in front of the mirror and you don't like what you see, it's a bit traumatic. Sometimes I wake up and say what a face I have, but then I let it go…"; "You get mad when you see a super thin girl who can eat everything and you can't ... why do I get fat and she doesn't…I don't like being this fat."

Moreover, a third of boy and girl participants from all groups said that the social environment reinforces the unrealistic beauty ideal and the media puts more pressure on women than men: "Society is aware, criticises and pushes women more towards fashion and beauty stuff". Notwithstanding this, a few boys from the non-intervention-control group (2/4) warned of the detrimental effects of social situations that could trigger weight-related self-discrepancies and negative self-evaluation of appearance.

Furthermore, 3/4 of the boys in the non-intervention-control group showed signs of internalisation of the unrealistic beauty ideal with a possible double function: feeling better with yourself: "When you achieve it you will feel satisfied with yourself", and a social function regarding social belonging: "trying to please people and be accepted". In addition, two of them said that boys still have to be nice, know how to talk, not be shy, and "make the first move". They explained that whereas girls try to lose weight, boys try not to be fat. "Girls usually follow a diet more often and do some exercise, whereas boys exercise more and watch their diet less in comparison to women". Some boys (3/8) and girls (4/8) from ML and ML+NUT proposed ways of resolving the feeling of discomfort with the body or mentioned protective factors: social support and having a healthy lifestyle.

Beauty and health: Most participants (8/12 boys of all groups and 8/8 girls from ML, ML+NUT) related beauty and health with having a healthy lifestyle. This also seems to be associated with not being fat and being "in shape", which could be possible through "being careful about what you eat and being physically active".

Important issues for young people today: The first topic highlighted by all the participants as important issues for young people today was physical appearance. "Everyone is aware of image. It's a way of making contact with the opposite sex, important for the media and even getting a job". For all the boys and girls, having a career and a good future was the most important issue. Many boys (8/8 ML, control) and 10/12 of girls showed instrumental thoughts regarding study, seeing it as a tool or a way to achieve a better social status and money: "I prefer to study and afterwards get a good job, because I don't want to be a waitress or something like that". Many girls (9/12) and 2/4 boys from the non-intervention-control group mentioned that there is a lot of pressure to "not make mistakes when choosing your professional career". There were gender differences but also similarities in choosing important issues for young people, particularly regarding consumer culture: studying, getting good grades, physical appearance and fashion, concerns about going out at night with friends and trying to meet members of the opposite sex, leisure, drinking or using drugs when going out, getting along with people, and having money and a good future (social status). In this sense, "having material goods" is a way to gain "social status" and group membership, and "feel more popular".

Additionally, girls mentioned identity seeking and the need to be different from adults and from others but being part of the group at the same time (8/8 ML, ML+NUT-group). Most of the girls (10/12) said that getting a boyfriend or a girlfriend is an issue for young people, whereas a few participants 3/8 (ML and control groups) mentioned the opposite sex as important to them but in different ways: some of them prefer flirting and having sporadic

relationships, while others prefer "sharing with a person that you really want to be with". In addition, some boys (3/4) and girls (3/4) from ML+NUT mentioned the importance of having good friends and family. Boys did not mention either the symbolic function of having cool possessions as part of the identity process, or owning technological devices. Some boys 2/8 (ML and control group) additionally expressed criticism of the current topics present in the media related to celebrities and physical appearance (trash TV) rather than considering topics such as global warming and civic responsibilities.

Prevention/self-care: When participants were asked about their sense of prevention, most of them (9/12 boys and 12/12 girls) associated the concept with the consumption of alcohol and drugs as well as to sexuality. Almost all of the participants (23/24) related prevention to the idea of "taking care of yourself". Most boys (11/12) added the idea of "being prepared". More than half of the participants,7/8 boys ML and ML+NUT and 6/12 girls ML and control groups, also related prevention to having a healthy and balanced lifestyle, including eating and physical activity. However, 8/8 boys from ML and ML+NUT were able to apply and relate the notion of prevention to their own daily patterns, making more responsible and controlled choices regarding a healthier and more balanced active lifestyle; only one of them mentioned the regulation of alcohol consumption: "drinking less or eating during the process". Besides, 2/4 boys from ML included "going to the GP (general practitioner) when required, having medical checks, and getting to know yourself, when something is not good for you or you are feeling ill".

Weight-related problem prevention and the Prevention Programme: When asked to talk about weight-related problem prevention, a third of the participants from ML, ML+NUT and the control group criticised the omission of silhouettes that represent the majority of people in the media. They highlighted the importance of changing advertising policy, including the promotion of a range of different body sizes. The participants from ML

and ML+NUT (6/8 boys and 8/8 girls) indicated the importance of the person in general instead of only giving importance to physical appearance. Also, some boys (2/4 ML) considered that successful but not particularly beautiful models should be promoted in order to reduce the importance of image. Girls (2/4 ML+NUT) expressed their perception of adolescence as a vulnerable period and boys (2/4 ML+NUT) said that "prevention is important to help people feel more confident because the most vulnerable people are those who want to be someone else and look for different ways to achieve that". Most participants (9/12 boys and 9/12 girls) saw factors within the social environment as a protective factors, mentioning the family and having "a good relationship" with their parents. They considered social support to be a need: "friendship groups are more important than parents" .They expressed the need to have someone to talk to, although at that age friendships are not usually stable. Many boy and girl participants (17/24) from all groups indicated that peer comparison and social situations are common triggers of appearance related self-discrepancies and negative affect. Furthermore, the aforementioned self-competence, as an individual protective factor, was considered by almost half of the participants by including "good self-esteem, a good relationship with yourself and self-confidence" as protective factors. Most of the participants from the ML+NUT and ML groups (6/8 boys and 7/8 girls) offered a positive evaluation of the media literacy approach: criticism of media messages, the models and the techniques used to sell their products even though they are not effective, and indicating the economic interests behind misleading messages regardless of the effect on the person who receives them. "It is important to help people to see reality. A lot of people were surprised, especially girls". Some participants (2/4 girls and 1/4 boys from the ML+NUT group) gave a positive evaluation of the media-literacy approach applied to the harmful effects of dieting: "Some people's eyes were opened".

Additionally, 6/8 boys from the ML and ML+NUT groups described having a healthy lifestyle and joining the gym as better ways to improve their physical appearance than following a diet or weight control. Boys (3/4) and girls (3/4) from ML+NUT positively evaluated the visual techniques used in the programs, rather than the talks, but it could be even more interactive "letting us work on the computers". Girls from the control group (3/4) also indicated (more) topics that should be included in the prevention program: parental monitoring, good self-esteem, a healthy and active lifestyle using visual techniques, media literacy, negative and positive peer-influence, and resilience to teasing.

Interestingly, some boys (3/4 from ML+NUT) suggested that the results of our study and preventive information should be disseminated through the media, to reach parents and young people. Besides, 2/4 boys from ML+NUT said that the information should also be available on the website. Some boys (1/4 ML, 2/4 ML+NUT) and 6/12 of the girls (ML, control group) criticised the questionnaires for being too long and ineffective, with some boys (2/4) from the ML+NUT group indicating that "personal interviews are a better way to get to know what people really think about something".

Discusion and Conclusions

The aim of the current study was first to explore perceptions and attitudes in a sample of males taking part in a quasi-experimental study examining two versions of a disordered eating prevention programme at 30-month follow up, and to compare them with a non-intervention control group. Secondly, a gender comparison was conducted considering the previous findings obtained in girls by González et al. (2013). The findings are consistent with previously reported quantitative analyses (Gonzalez et al., 2011) and suggest that the prevention programme could be beneficial for the participants in its two versions, ML and ML+NUT. The qualitative nature of the data collected in the present study has allowed for a

rich understanding of the complex themes explored in the prevention programme and showed gender differences that were imperceptible from a quantitative approach (González et al., 2011). Compared to girls, boys showed healthier eating patterns, fewer concerns, and more pleasure related to eating. Despite social gender changes, there are still major gender disparities (Reddick et al., 2011) related to the distribution of general domestic responsibilities and cooking, which seem to affect boys and girls eating preferences and patterns.

These gender differences were also observed with regard to the social pressure of the idealised model: girls were widely identified as being more vulnerable to influences of the media and social situations compared to boys, being more likely to report weight concerns, body dissatisfaction, negative affect and engaging unhealthy-weight-control-behaviours (Vander Wal, 2011), as they are continue to be more exposed to the environmental pressure to be slim (Stice, Shaw & Marti, 2007).

Unlike boys, girls also mentioned personal identity and limits in their self-definition regarding fashion influences. Additionally, girls showed more signs of internalisation of the slim model of beauty, particularly in the control group, who also discussed the strong negative effects on the girls' self-image (González et al., 2013). The same pattern was seen in boys but to a lesser extent. As Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) found, the objectification theory may explain the relationship between female body image concerns, linking internalisation of media standards, sexual objectification, and self-objectification to body image concerns and even disturbed eating symptomatology (Calogero, Davis, & Thompson, 2005).

Although only girls consciously highlighted the importance of self-definition (González et al., 2013), boys also indirectly mentioned ways of constructing a self that is coherent, stable and distinct from others, against a background of increased cultural fluidity and the rapid dissolution of all boundaries in western societies (Skarderud & Nasser, 2007).

So, as the participants referred, the body becomes a tool for communication and self-transformation, the site where identities could be symbolically written (Skarderud & Nasser, 2007) and a space to show "who you are" either through piercing, tattooing, clothing (Tiggerman & Andrew, 2012), or even body building, exercise and dieting, as mentioned by participants in the non-intervention control group. In this sense, these everyday appearance-management behaviours seems to be seen by boys and girls as embodied practices linked to fashion (Tiggerman & Andrew, 2012). Additionally, for most boys and girls, the media has a strong influence on the young body image by overrating the importance of physical appearance as a value in our culture. As Lin and Yeh (2009) said, advertising can be powerful, because it creates visual associations between signs and symbols to create a product image in order to motivate consumers, creating "what is needed", or what it means to be "feminine" or "masculine".

Skarderud and Nasser (2007) explained the relationship between economy and the media by highlighting that every media representation (photograph, film, video, advertisement) is an act of selling a message coded as an image. In this long term-follow-up, boys from both versions of the prevention programme were able to de-codify these misleading images, as girls did (González et al., 2013). They could see that media representation of male and female body-ideals has become increasingly more restricted to certain body types over time (Schooler & Ward, 2006) showing a combination of features that rarely occurs naturally without restrictive dieting, excessive exercise or even through surgical treatments (Sarwer, Marge, & Clark, 2003).

However, as Ferguson, Winegard, and Winegard (2011) indicated, school children do not view media effects in a vacuum, but rather as part of a constellation of socialisation influences including genetics, peers and families. It is interesting that participants mentioned almost all of these risk-factors (except genetics) and their interaction as potential triggers for

appearance related self-discrepancies, especially the adolescents' immediate social environment and its roles in the development of multiple attitudes to idealised beauty (Ahern et al., 2011). As observed in girls (González et al., 2013), the consumer culture's influence on adolescents' self-definition and its role in the comparison process related to the influences of the immediate social environment (Dittmar, 2008) is notable as a new feature of disordered eating prevention in boys, even those who participated in the prevention programme (Kyung & Roedder, 2010). Likewise, the images and bodies portrayed through the media could be a product that can be recreated or purchased (Skarderud & Nasser, 2007). Even expectations of a good professional and social future seems to be related to economic success for our boy's and girl's participants.

One limitation of this gender comparison is that the boys' interviews were conducted approximately one year after the interviews that were conducted with the girls. Even so, findings indicate that the ML approach was widely approved by participants of both genders, along with the incorporation of these new contents and preventive agents (such as family, peers, dating partners and various significant adults). Nevertheless, as these results are not generalisable, the factors highlighted by the participants should be explored in future qualitative and quantitative research conducted by different researchers for a better understanding of the similarities and differences in the development of weight, shape and eating concerns in male and female adolescents.

Thus, disordered eating prevention programmes should: Promote even more interactive methods that facilitate participation, using constructivist methodologies instead of traditional psychoeducational talks; incorporate technology into activism activities to facilitate a critical view of manipulated media outputs, when students create their own advertisement, using computer programmes to edit and manipulate images; facilitate a critical view of the consumer culture's influence on adolescents' self-definition, promoting sense of

humour and critical analysis of gender stereotypes in each advertisement; promote a more in-depth exploration of gender specific topics, reviewing a specific male idealised aesthetic model component (not just the female one). The incorporation of these components would provide a comprehensive prevention programme that proposes a specific genealogic, historic and cultural comparison of male and female beauty models and considers the implication of these for adolescents quality of life.

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Table 1: Gender similarities and differences in the 13 high-order themes.

Higher-order themes	Lower-order theme gender similarities between males (current findings) and females (González et al., 2013)	Lower-order theme gender differences	
		Males (current findings)	Females (González et al., 2013)
Definition of eating and nutrition	Nutrition: Necessity and variety	Having breakfast Pleasure of eating and only girls from intervention programme.	
Definition of healthy diet	Proper variety and quantity Cheap-young people-fattening-food	Balance, homemade and natural eating v/s eating unhealthily and impulsively	Balance v/s Forbidden food Difficult applicability
Eating preferences	Eating as a social event Pleasure of eating Maternal regulation	Healthy eating patterns	Risky eating patterns
Eating and gender	Cooking as a women's role Women's eating concerns	Boys' ability to cook Equal gender competence when cooking	Amount of food
Fashion	New social trend Social belonging Social status Popularity Forms of transmission Attitudes to fashion Fashion (possessions, food and bodies)		Personal identity and limits in self-definition Social pressure to be thin
Female ideal of beauty	Thin, young and curvaceous body Critical attitudes to overrating of physical appearance	Beautiful face A range of attractive bodies, within curvaceous and slender body Beautiful girls ≠ hot girls Physical appearance is a central value in social interaction with opposite sex (especially first meeting)	Perceived expectations of the body from the opposite sex in social interaction
Male ideal of beauty	Thin (not fat), tall and muscular (not overly) Beautiful face and No hair on the back Chenge in masculinity: Men as a sexual object	Strength Physical appearance v/s personality and abilities to attract women Perceived expectation of opposite sex regarding a muscular body	Gender and aging Physical appearance v/s inside of the person
Models of beauty, media and daily life	Building an unrealistic model of beauty Ways in which people find out about fashion Critical attitudes to media's negative effect Internalisation of the idealised model Absence of a clothing range in certain sizes, especially for women	Social criticism and talks about TV Overrating of physical appearance, especially in women Gender-differentiated market supply of cosmetic products	Effect of good-looking normal people on the street Effect of the perceived expectations of the body among the opposite sex
Models of beauty and body satisfaction	Misleading resources that build an unrealistic model of beauty and economic interests Discrimination of overweight people Comparison process: negative body evaluation and negative-affect, especially girls Girls experience more social pressure to follow the model	Girls are more vulnerable to influences of the media and social-situations compared to boys Double function of internalisation in boys: Please others and be accepted & feel better with yourself Importance of self-esteem, body satisfaction, being informed & having a good social network Risky attitudes: dieting, going to gym every day, & plastic surgery	Individual accountability for failure Effect of the perceived expectations of the body among the opposite sex Levels of internalisation of the unrealistic model Preoccupation with a thin body Negative affect

Beauty and health	Thinness Healthy lifestyle as a mediator: physical activity & being careful about what you eat	Being in shape	
Important issues for young people today	Physical appearance Study and having a career as a way to obtain social status Having money and a good future Going out and leisure Fashion and fashionable possessions Having close and intimate friendships		Identity seeking Getting a boyfriend or a girlfriend is an issue for young people
Prevention/ self-care	Taking care of yourself Related to sex, drugs and alcohol Own daily patterns: healthier choices & balanced active life style.	Being prepared	
Weight-related problem prevention and the prevention programme	Changing advertising policies to promote a range of body sizes Good social network as a protective factor Internalisation ideal in society and peer group Positive evaluation of the ML programme in terms of the ideal, its transmission and in nutrition and visual techniques used Areas that should be worked on in a prevention programme Person as a whole and healthy lifestyles Criticism of questionnaires	Non confident people and vulnerability	Adolescence and vulnerability Criticism of weighing and measuring

Appendix A: Main topics guide for semi-structured interviews based on the components of

the prevention programme.

Component	Interview probes for participants	Eating disorder prevention programme content
NUT	1. What does eating mean to you? What do you associate the act of eating with? What do you think about nutrition? (Explore differences between eating and nutrition) 2. How do you prefer to eat? How do you usually end up eating? 3. What does eating in a healthy way mean for you? And eating in a non- healthy way?	A. Definition of balanced eating • Definition of and differentiation between nutrition and eating • Nutrients • Food pyramid and foods • Water B. Analysis of menus: • Balanced menu • Menu with high levels of fats • Menu with high levels of proteins • Menu with high levels of carbohydrates C. Final Recommendations (NAOS Pyramid)
ML	4. What does it mean to be fashionable for young people? And for you? 5. What is your idea of a good-looking woman? And a good-looking man? In your opinion, how important is it to be good looking for young people? 6. This ideal of pretty or good-looking women/men, where do you think it comes from? Is it the same for women and men? 6. How do you think that this ideal or model of beauty could influence people in their daily life? 7. Do you think that there is a relationship between beauty and being satisfied with ourselves? What do you think about it? 8. What kind of things are really important for young people today? And for you? 9. Do you think that there is a relationship between beauty and health? What do you think about it? 10. What does prevention mean for you? Have you heard about it? In which context? What does it mean for you? 11. If you have to think about how to prevent people from feeling bad about their own bodies what would you do? Which things would be important to consider? 12. (Only for prevention participants, not control participants) What do you think about what we did in class almost two years ago? What could we do to improve our program?	A. Beauty throughout history: • The canon of beauty proposed by the Greeks • Beauty through art • Beauty through fashion B. Recent changes in the criteria for beauty: • The Marilyn icon • The Barbie icon • Drastic changes in sizes for models C. Beauty in the world: • The deformed feet of Chinese women • The "giraffe-women" of Myanmar • The extremely obese women of Mauritania • The thinness of the West D. Analysis of advertising messages and transmission of values: • What advertising hides from us: • Real effectiveness of diets and their effects • "Nothing is as it seems" (example of a nonexistent ideal) • Manipulation of advertisements (fragmentation, make-up techniques) E. Economic interests that lie behind the beauty industry • Questioning the automatic association between beauty and happiness • Real women: a variety of sizes. F. Activism • How to criticise media advertisements • How to write a letter of complaint: group discussion • Write & send a letter of complaint