

DISSERTATION

THE BODY IMAGE OF ASIAN AMERICAN MEN:  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

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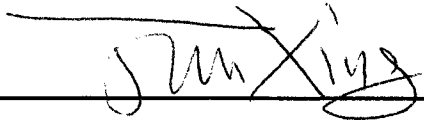
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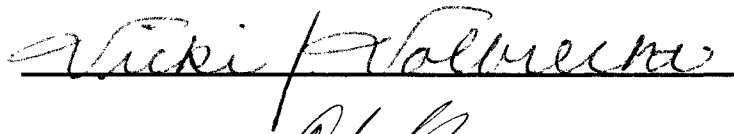
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## ABSTRACT

### THE BODY IMAGE OF ASIAN AMERICAN MEN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

It was once believed that body image concerns were limited to young European American women (Collins, 1988). Today, researchers believe that appearance-related issues affect individuals across gender, age, and racial boundaries (Story, French, Resnick, & Blum, 1995). Past studies have provided mixed conclusions regarding the body image issues of Asian American men (Story et al., 1995; Gross & Rosen, 1988; Mintz & Kashubeck, 1999). It was believed that a qualitative approach would enable researchers to better understand the phenomenon by examining it from the individual's perspective. Ten Asian American male undergraduate student participants completed the acculturation measure SL-ASIA (Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987), the ethnic identity measure Orthogonal Cultural Identification Questionnaire (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990-1991), and an individual interview. Four salient themes emerged from the interviews. First, there was limited expressiveness and awareness of their body image experiences. Their responses were often vague or contradictory in nature. Second, the ability to depersonalize negative feelings about one's body was noted as a unique way of expressing one's body satisfaction. Though several participants expressed much negativity regarding their body satisfaction, they seemed to be able to remove themselves from it emotionally. Third, factors that influenced and reinforced their body image were friends, childhood experiences, family, society, media, and the opposite sex. Fourth, the

participants felt that their ethnicity had little to do with their body image. Though this aspect was specifically probed, the interviewees denied that their physical Asian characteristics were made the subject of ridicule. Possible explanations of these findings are explored. There were no significant findings regarding the relationship between ethnic identity or acculturation and body image. The small, homogeneous sample size may have related to these inconclusive findings. Given the limitations of qualitative studies, it is hoped that the rich, descriptive results of these in-depth interviews help researchers better understand the body image experiences of Asian American men and lend impetus to future studies.

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*“The physical sense of maleness is not a simple thing. It involves size and shape, habits of posture and movement, the image of one’s own body, the way it is presented to other people, and the ways they respond to it.”*  
- R. W. Connell, *Gender and Power*

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### History of Body Image

Body image has been studied over the course of the century and its implications have evolved along with the changing focus of research. Early body image studies examined neurological representations that determined bodily experiences, such as a loss of a limb (Head, 1920). Over time, “body image” came to describe a personality construct (Schildner, 1935; Fischer & Cleveland, 1958), as well as one’s feelings and mental images about one’s physical body (Secord & Jourard, 1953; Kay & Leigh, 1954; Crisp, 1977).

More recent researchers, such as Thompson (1990), are examining “physical appearance-related body image,” that is, the evaluation and perception of one’s physical appearance, including body size, weight, and shape. This construct of body image can be further delineated into “subjective” and “perceptual” components. The subjective component includes the affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of one’s body image. The perceptual component includes the mental and neurological representation of certain body parts as well as the physical body as a whole.

In 1959, Kolb proposed a broad-based definition of body image as the aggregate sum of the “perceptions, attitudes, emotions and personal reactions of the individual in relation to his own body” (p.751). Since then, researchers have used a similar “body image” term almost interchangeably with other generic terms such as “body esteem,”

“self image,” and “body satisfaction.” With the developing literature on body image today, it is interesting to note that definitions of “body image” are infrequently operationalized. A conceptual understanding of the terms utilized in research is important in understanding this phenomenon. In the present study, “body image” will be personally defined and described by the participants in order to obtain a clear understanding of the participants’ experiences and perceptions.

#### Body Image of U.S. Women

It has been well documented that many women in the U.S. are unsatisfied with their physical appearance (Wooley & Wooley, 1984; Cash, Winstead, & Janda, 1986). One national U.S. survey of body satisfaction indicated that 96 percent of those polled wanted to change at least one physical aspect of their bodies, with more women than men expressing body dissatisfaction (Harris, 1987). Indeed, Collins (1988) states that American women are in an unrelenting pursuit of the thin ideal because thinness has now become synonymous with attractiveness and success.

#### Body Image of U.S. Men

Given the significance of women's body image research it is not surprising that the majority of body image studies have focused on women rather than men (Wooley & Wooley, 1982; Brownell, 1991; Stice & Shaw, 1994). Recent studies, however, have found that men are increasingly dissatisfied with their physical appearance as well. Whereas many women strive to obtain a thin and slender body by restrictive eating and excessive exercising, men tend to idealize a large muscular frame and may turn to extreme weight gaining measures such as anabolic steroid use (Edwards & Launder,

2000). Harmatz, Gronendyke, and Thomas (1985) reported that men who were underweight suffered poor body image to the same extent as overweight females.

Because past studies often indicated that men traditionally rated their current bodies as “ideal” and felt satisfied with their weight and body shape, body dissatisfaction in men is a relatively new phenomenon in research (Fallon & Rozin, 1985; Leon, Carroll, Chernyk, & Finn, 1985; Huenemann, Shapiro, Hampton, Mitchell, 1966). It was believed that unlike women who feared weight gain and social disapproval, men were protected from such stigma and body-consciousness by virtue of their confidence and satisfaction with their current images. Other studies, however, have shown this not to be the case. Tucker (1982) examined ideal somatotypes among college-age men and found that nearly 70% of research participants were dissatisfied with their current bodies and preferred a more muscular shape. High school and college male students stated that their main concerns were to gain weight, size, and strength. Males at this age often view themselves as underweight and wish to gain more muscle weight to achieve the muscular ideal (Dwyer, Feldman, Seltzer, & Mayer, 1969; Gray, 1977).

Similar to the female desire to lose weight, male subcultures that value slimness appear to exist. Middle-aged male runners who are preoccupied with body weight have been compared to female anorexia nervosa patients. Conversely, male swimmers and wrestlers who strive to maintain weight standards have been examined for symptoms of bulimia nervosa (Striegel-Moore, Silberstein, & Rodin, 1986; Enns, Hinz, Clark, Grinker, Cohen, & Drewnoski, 1987; Yates, Leehy, & Shisslak, 1983). Gay males, who tend to score higher on femininity measures than masculinity measures, have also been shown to

display more body dissatisfaction than heterosexual males (Strong, Singh, & Randall, 2000).

It appears that male body dissatisfaction has been a concern for many decades. Some researchers have conjectured that past studies that found males to be “satisfied” with their bodies, that is, wanting to neither lose weight or gain weight, may have been misinterpreted (Drewnoski & Yee, 1987). That is, if a population of male research participants included approximately equal numbers of those who wished to lose weight and those who wished to gain weight, their desired weight-change responses would mathematically average to zero, which would signify no desire for body change. Therefore it is possible that past studies that contend that males are satisfied with their bodies are actually measuring opposing male body ideals. Studies on female body image would, nevertheless, continue to indicate body dissatisfaction among women, since the female ideal follows a unipolar direction towards thinness.

### Theories of Body Image

Studies examining the development, progression, and continuation of body image concerns have considered the phenomenon from various theoretical constructs. Using a sociocultural perspective, many researchers suggest that the leading causes of body image dissatisfaction for men today are the high value placed on physical strength and the belief that women are attracted to muscular male ideal (Ricciardelli, McCabe, & Banfield, 2000; Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz, & Thompson, 1980). Ricciardelli et al. (2000) reports that the main transmitters of these sociocultural pressures affecting male body image are family, peers, and mass media.

According to Festinger's social comparison theory (1954), people have a natural drive to evaluate themselves, and individuals utilize observable social standards to meet this need. In comparing the self with others, people tend to choose individuals who are similar to them in ability or opinion. In the absence of a highly visible and similar comparison group, people form imprecise and unstable self-evaluations based on inaccurate information. In other words, many men who do not resemble the male body ideal will note discrepancies between their appearance and those portrayed as society's standard. These individuals may consequently form unstable and unreliable views about themselves.

Satisfaction theory states that the larger the discrepancy between one's standard of performance and one's perception of performance, the more dissatisfied one will become with oneself (Higgins, 1987). Relating this theory to body image suggests that many men will note a large difference in perceived attractiveness between the body ideal and themselves. Because appearance is an important facet of the American culture, this discrepancy may lead to personal dissatisfaction.

A reinforcement model of body image demonstrates ways in which positive reinforcements may strengthen and influence the continuation of particular behaviors, feelings, and attitudes (Vincent & McCabe, 2000; Skinner, 1948). Indeed, in a study of high school boys attending a private school in Australia, researchers reported that praise and complements from mothers and female peers greatly increased the boys' level of body satisfaction and self-esteem and strengthened their positive body image (Ricciardelli et al., 2000). Conversely, the less a man resembles the culture's male ideal, the more he may engage in behaviors and attitudes to avoid being viewed as unattractive.

This may explain why many men choose to engage in exercise in order to alter body shape.

#### Developmental Trends in Male Body Image

Childhood. Studies on male body image have examined this phenomenon in different age groups: young children, adolescents, and young adults. A mixture of findings have been reported for young boys in terms of body ideal and body satisfaction. A study of British boys ages 9-10 found that 41 percent of those sampled preferred a broader body shape over thinner shapes (Hill, Draper, & Stack, 1994). A U.S. study of children in grades 3-6, however, reported 55 percent of girls and 35 percent of boys wanted to be thinner (Maloney, McGuire, and Daniels, 1988). Other researchers have reported that unlike young girls, young boys do not appear to be concerned with body satisfaction issues. Williamson and Delin (2000) investigated the body image of Australian children ages 5-10 and found that girls expressed a significant amount of body dissatisfaction while boys had no discrepancy between their current and ideal body figure. According to the researchers, comments such as "I weigh a lot!" were common among girls and statements such as "I'm happy with the way I am" were common among boys.

Adolescence. Approximately 50-70 percent of adolescent males are reportedly dissatisfied with their bodies (Davis & Cowles, 1991; Furnham & Calman, 1991). Adolescence, a period of childhood to adulthood transition, is a time marked by physical, emotional, hormonal, and relationship changes. As described by Corrigan (1991), during the high school years "not only does the body change, but bodymeanings and the image-repertoire of bodies become, in contradictory ways, 'available'"(p.206). That is to say,

the complex interplay between these various factors shape a young man's sense of self, body, masculinity, and sexuality and makes itself present during this age (Davison, 2000).

In a qualitative study investigating the effects of high school physical education classes on masculinity and male body image, Davison (2000) asked eleven adults to share their stories of being boys in physical education classes. The participants recounted that their experiences of changing in the locker room, being compared to "jocks," and being judged by peers on appearance and athletic ability were particularly dreadful and humiliating. One participant highlighted the importance of physical prowess, "You could be very intelligent as a male student, you could have all kinds of other attributes, but if you don't excel in gym class then you're not going to have that same status" (p.257). Not only did various physical, emotional, and social forces occupy this developmental period, but many participants felt compelled to keep their personal concerns to themselves. Salisbury and Jackson (1997) reported that "some boys' image of themselves are so full of hatred that they find it impossible to talk about. It is a forbidden zone where to let other boys into the world of internal doubt would risk the fear of ridicule and the possibility of being excluded" (p.193).

Adulthood. As prominent as body dissatisfaction is among adult U.S. women, several researchers contend that adult men experience a parallel sense of body dissatisfaction (Cash & Brown, 1989; Jackson, Sullivan, & Rostker, 1988; Janelli, 1993). Women's fear of fat often leads to a preoccupation with weight loss. Men, however, seem to display high levels of concern when they feel they are either "too skinny" or "too fat" (Muth & Cash, 1997). With two models of the ideal body being presented to men, it

appears that many men strive for either a thin frame or a muscular frame. Thus, regardless of current body size and ideal shape, many adult men are facing body image problems in this country (Cash & Brown, 1989). In their study of gender differences in body image, Muth and Cash (1997) found that within their sample, 40% of women and 22% of men reported unfavorable overall body image.

#### Factors Influencing Male Body Image

To better understand the nature of male body image disturbance, researchers have examined several factors that may account for the development and progression of male body concerns. Several studies have suggested that family and media play an influential role in the growth of male body image (Ricciardelli et al., 2000; Vincent & McCabe, 2000; Andersen & DiDomenico, 1992). Ricciardelli et al. (2000) reported that these identified variables were perceived as having at least some influence over body satisfaction for approximately one-third of their adolescent male population. Other studies point to the cognitive processes involved in assessing and internalizing sociocultural messages (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999).

Family. In a study of forty Australian high school boys, mothers were viewed as having more influence over the boys' body image than any other factor (Ricciardelli et al., 2000). Very frequently the participants received positive messages and compliments from their mothers regarding their bodies, thus increasing the boys' self-esteem and providing a barrier against negative messages from the environment. Unlike girls, boys reportedly receive much more encouragement and praise from the opposite-sex parent and opposite-sex peers. At a time when the opposite-sex becomes of interest, adolescents may find this type of praise particularly promoting.

Vincent and McCabe (2000) discovered that family encouragement to lose weight, and not criticism, discussion, or modeling of such behaviors, most predicted dieting behaviors among boys. Dieting encouragement from mothers often lead to dietary restraint and normative weight loss while encouragement from fathers often lead to more extreme eating problems such as bulimic and binge eating symptoms. Fathers, brothers, and male friends appear to also have influence over muscle gaining regimens such as weight lifting (Ricciardelli, 2000).

Media. Unlike women who often feel more depressed, guilty, and ashamed after exposure to media messages and images, the boys in one particular study stated that the media either made them feel more positive about their bodies or had no effect on their body satisfaction (Ricciardelli, 2000). Other studies have noted that the media appears to be targeting males at an increasing rate. In a comparison of male and female magazines for 18-24 year olds, researchers discovered that men's magazines published significantly more advertisements and articles about changing body shape than about losing weight (Andersen & DiDomenico, 1992). Other researchers have noticed an increasing number of articles on men's weight and greater use of young male bodies in men's fashion magazines (Leit, Pope, & Gray, 2000). Even among action toys for young boys, there appears to be a movement towards a more muscular physique, often to the point of being more muscular than is humanly possible (Pope, Olivardia, Gruber, & Borowiecki, 1999). According to the authors of the study, the impact of children's action figures should not be underestimated as it accounted for \$687 million in manufacturers' shipments in 1994 alone. In studying the transmission of information about dieting, Schur, Sanders, and Steiner (2000) found that television, advertising, and marketing were major sources of

dieting information for children in grades 3-6. These researchers suggest that exposure to such pervasive messages of the cultural masculine ideal may lead to lowered self-esteem and unhealthy behaviors to attain the ideal body (Leit et al., 2000).

Sociocultural messages. In addition to the influences of family and media, perhaps the most direct predictors of male body image are the interpretation and identification of external messages. In developing the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale, which measures the body image of boys and girls ages 8-11 years old, Cusumano and Thompson (2000) discovered that the three independent factors that predict body dissatisfaction are awareness of societal pressures, internalization of messages, and feeling pressured by the media. The researchers stated that these findings were similar to their work with adult populations (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999).

Similarly, Edwards and Launder (1999) developed the Swansea Muscularity Attitudes Questionnaire based on the responses of 303 male participants from Wales. Researchers determined that the two underlying constructs to male muscularity were the desire and engagement of gaining muscularity and the belief that being muscular leads to increased masculinity, confidence, and attractiveness. Thus, awareness and internalization of body messages, feeling pressured to change their body, and the belief that change in body shape change will result in self-assuredness and appeal to others seem to reflect and predict how men feel about their own bodies.

#### Ethnicity and Body Image

Researchers often use the terms “race” and “ethnicity” interchangeably. While there may be some overlap in construct, the terms describe two distinct concepts (Herron,

1998). Race refers to the genetic transmission of physical traits that are distinct to a group of individuals. Where descendants of the same race have common inherited physical characteristics, recognition is attained through physical appearance. Ethnicity, however, covers a much broader spectrum in that ethnicity includes the sociocultural element. Ethnicity includes the values, behaviors, and traditions of a certain group of people; these individuals may be of the same or different genetic makeup.

According to Altabe (1998), ethnicity has become widely recognized as a contributing variable to psychological phenomena. As the nature of body image is influenced by cultural values, ethnicity is of particular importance to researchers. Recent studies on body image have begun examining the effects of ethnicity on women's and men's body image. Research findings have been mixed, however, as the connection between ethnicity and body image is a challenging construct to examine.

Some studies assert that U.S. ethnic minorities do not feel pressured to conform to the societal beauty ideal and therefore have healthier body images than their European American counterparts. For example, many African American, Asian American, and Hispanic women have reported higher levels of body satisfaction as compared to European American women (Rosen et al., 1988; Abood & Chandler, 1997; Altabe, 1998). Yet other studies have reported that many individuals from these very ethnic groups also engage in unhealthy eating patterns such as dieting, binge eating, and purging (Gray, Ford, & Kelly, 1987; Story, French, Resnick, & Blum, 1995).

Inasmuch as European Americans stress weight loss and thinness to attain the beauty ideal, the roles of weight and eating are still unclear in the body image of ethnic minorities. Some studies have shown that Asian American men display more (Story et.

al., 1995), less (Gross & Rosen, 1988), or equal (Mintz & Kashubeck, 1999) levels of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating as compared to European American men. On the other hand, racial physical features have been reported as a significant aspect of body dissatisfaction in ethnic minorities. Asian American women may show more body dissatisfaction with their hair color and eye shape than the size of their hips, for instance (Chang, 2000).

Feeling “inferior” to European Americans has also been documented in many U.S. ethnic minorities. It is suggested that the beauty ideal is so prevalent in this country that individuals who do not resemble the ideal may view their own appearance as unattractive. To cite an example, 24% of a sample of Native American women reported feeling “jealous” and “envious” of the European American standard of beauty (Osvold & Sodowsky, 1995).

Given the complex body image concerns of ethnic minorities, it is important to note that often the quantitative questionnaires used in such studies have focused on either weight or general appearance issues and missed the specific concerns of ethnic minorities (Altabe, 1998). The range of findings across these studies illustrate the need for a more thorough investigation. Therefore, research on the body image of ethnic minorities must be examined and assessed for its unique perspective.

Asian American Cultures. Although often grouped together generically, Asian Americans actually represent at least 40 distinct cultures, values, beliefs, and customs (Sandhu, 1997). It would be improper to generalize aspects of one particular Asian subgroup to the other subgroups. For example, Filipino American families tend to be the most egalitarian in gender relations, while Southeast Asians still value a patriarchal

system and give preferences to sons over daughters (Sue, 2001). There are, however, some common characteristics that range across many Asian subgroups.

Because of comparable family backgrounds and styles, it is not surprising that Asian Americans share many characteristics with Asians in their homeland. According to Sue (1989), the family is the “fundamental unit” of the Asian culture. The structure of the traditional family is crucial, and any deviations from the norm are strongly discouraged and avoided. Roles of each family member are well defined in order to minimize family discord. To further deter disharmony within the family unit, emotional restraint is encouraged and expected. The ability to restrain one’s emotions is seen as a sign of strong character. Thus, expressing or voicing different views is often repressed for the sake of the family unit.

The values of the Asian culture are often in conflict with the values of the American culture, making it difficult for many Asian Americans to balance the two cultures. Work is done for the good of one’s family, not oneself (Shum, 1996). A success accomplished by an Asian American is not seen as a personal achievement, but a family’s success. The collectivistic nature of the Asian culture often clashes with the Western culture of individualism, where the drive to succeed is to prove one’s own abilities. Compared to European Americans, Asian Americans may appear less autonomous and more reliant on parental controls and family duties. In essence, they are seen as obedient, conservative, conforming, introverted, and inhibited. Such a sharp disparity between what is valued in the Asian and the American culture often leads Asian Americans to feel strong emotions of confusion, guilt, and personal blame when problems arise. Studies examining Chinese American and Japanese American college students show that these

individuals often exhibit feelings of isolation, loneliness, rejection, and anxiety (Sue & Kirk, 1973). Indeed, a major task for Asian Americans to accomplish is the balancing of Eastern and Western ideologies (Shum, 1996).

Sue (1989) states that in collective societies, the self is much more influenced by external situations and the values of society than those in individualistic societies. Asian Americans generally internalize the judgments and demands of the environment, and place more importance on external cues than self-perceptions and assessments. One major factor that accounts for this type of attitude is the use of shame in Asian American culture. In order to reinforce and regulate family and societal obligations, expectations, and rules, Asian American parents utilize the role of shame to cultivate in their children a sense of responsibility to the collective whole. Parents use shame to create tremendous guilt if one does not meet the ideals and goals set by the family. As a result, the children who are hypersensitive to the judgments of their parents become adults who worry and dread the negative reactions of others. Shame plays a crucial role in maintaining relationships and interdependence, the foundations of a collective culture.

It is important to note that the terms “Asian” and “Asian American” are often generically used to represent a group of individuals who actually comprise at least forty distinct cultures, values, beliefs, and customs (Sandhu, 1997). Therefore it would be incorrect to assume that the aforementioned characteristics are representative of all individuals of Asian descent. While there are certain commonalities shared among the different cultures, factors such as ethnic identity and acculturation lead to more variations among this population. Due to the exploratory nature of the current study, the

term “Asian American” will be used with sensitivity to denote the emic and etic characteristics of this particular ethnic group.

Asian Americans. According to statistics, Asian Americans are proportionately the fastest growing minority population in the U.S. by rate of growth (Ong & Hee, 1993). With a projection of 20 million by the year 2020, Asian Americans currently comprise 2.9 percent of the total population of the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 1993). Between 1980 and 1990 the population of Asian Americans increased by over 108%, which was 2 times faster than the Hispanic American population, 8 times faster than the African American population, and 15 times faster than the European American population (Ong & Hee, 1993).

Despite the growing rates, Asian Americans are frequently called the “forgotten minority” and face challenges of discrimination. Lee (1996) points out several reasons why Asian Americans are frequently excluded from the discourse of race in this country (Lee, 1996). When researchers or lecturers discuss racial problems or racial diversity, it is usually in reference to “Whites versus Blacks.” People of Asian descent, for many reasons, are absent from these debates. Another reason issues of Asian Americans are often ignored relates to the perception of Asian Americans not being viewed as legitimate racial minorities (Lee, 1996). For example, universities who wish to increase their racial diversity may target only African Americans and Hispanic Americans. Those of Asian ancestry often are not considered for financial assistance or scholarships as they may not be seen as contributing to racial diversity. Similarly, there is the notion that there are not enough Asian Americans to warrant a separate racial/ethnic category. In many instances, Asian Americans are subsumed under the category of “White and others.” Lee (1996)

also states that Asian Americans are perceived as "unassimilable foreigners." Unlike other ethnic minorities, people of Asian ancestry appear so different that many people believe that an "Asian person can never become an American" (Lee, 1996, p. 4). The harm in this perception is that Asian Americans who are not viewed as legitimate members of this country may not be seen as being entitled to the rights granted to the American citizen.

Asian American Men. Historically, immigration policies, labor practices, and media images helped shape Americans' perspectives of Asian American men. Being a source of cheap labor in plantations, canneries, mines, and agriculture in the 1850s to 1930s, Asian American men were viewed as a threat to the jobs of other Americans. Anger, fear, and race riots contributed to the eventual race-based immigration laws and exclusionary policies. Furthermore, images of Asians as inferior, corrupt, opium addicts, and Yellow Peril invaders continued to spread throughout dominant society (Chan, 1991).

To ensure tighter limits on the economic success of Asian American men, the media simultaneously hypermasculinized and desexualized this group. Society began to view Asian American men as "sex-starved gangs of men lusting over white women, as potential rapists, and as hypersexualized invaders ready to produce Asian children in the U.S. if given the opportunity" (Chua & Fujino, 1999, p.394). At the same time, Asian American men appeared to be emasculated by given more domestic tasks such as servants, launderers, and cooks. It was not until 1965 that immigration laws against Asians became less restrictive, allowing political and military refugees to enter the U.S..

Since then, larger proportions of middle-class professionals have replaced the earlier settlers of farm, manual, domestic, and small business workers (Chan, 1991).

The images of Asian American men today carry a theme of the model minority and an emasculated masculinity. Seen as economically successful and politically non-threatening, Asian American men are often held in high regard as society deems them free of discrimination and thriving in this country. In the media, Asian American men are frequently characterized as asexual beings of academic achievement, martial arts masters, perpetual foreigners, or fatalistic victims (Cheng, 1996; Tajima, 1989).

Recent studies have shown that Asian American men are beginning to define a new concept of masculinity for themselves (Chua & Fujino, 1999). Whereas European American men often view masculinity as a critical component of their identity, Asian American men tend to use their economic power to self-define themselves. Asian American men also have an expanded notion of masculinity as they appear to readily incorporate more feminine traits of domestic tasks and care taking as roles for themselves. Indeed, a group of ethnically diverse college students reported Asian American men to be more "cheerful, gentle, shy, too nice, and understanding" than their European American counterparts (Cheng, 1996). It is interesting to note that while Asian American men are members of a patriarchal society, they are also targets of racial discrimination. To circumvent this issue, many Asian American men may try to emulate the stereotypical traits of American masculinity but find racism eventually restricts them from fully copying hegemonic masculinity (Chua & Fujino, 1999).

Ethnic Identity. Ethnic identity is an individual's sense of self in belonging to an ethnic group, in terms of attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and emotions. Sue, Mak, and

Sue (1998) outlined the three salient components in the development of ethnic identity: affect, cognition, and behavior. The affect component refers to an individual's self-labeling of an ethnicity and the feelings of membership and commitment with others of the same ethnic group. The cognitive component, accordingly, influences the manner in which the person perceives and interprets the world. It involves the knowledge of one's ethnic history, traditions, and values. The final component of ethnic identity development is the behavioral aspect, which researchers define as the ability and amount of participation of cultural practices, customs, and activities. It is important to note that although these three components of ethnic identity development can interact and influence one another, these aspects are generally regarded as independent factors.

Researchers continue to develop and improve models of ethnic development. Sue and Sue (1971) began conceptualizing ethnic identity in terms of typologies. Specific categories were delineated, and individuals within each category were assumed to possess the same attributes and characteristics in relation to their ethnic identity. Several other models have been proposed since Sue and Sue (1971) first developed their typology model. Oetting and Beauvais (1990-1991), who believed that identification with two cultures could be measured independently from one another, developed an orthogonal model to cultural identity. They suggested that identification with one culture is independent from identification with another culture.

Neither of these models addressed the process of forming an ethnic identity, however. Several stage models have been proposed for the development of ethnic identity: Atkinson, Morten, & Sue's (1989) minority identity development model, Sue and Sue's (1990) racial/cultural identity development model, Cross' (1991) racial identity

theory, Phinney's (1989, 1993) three-stage model of identity formation, and Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky's (1994) ego identity model. Of the numerous stage models that have been designed to examine the process of ethnic identity formation, only one study has attempted to propose an ethnic identity development model addressed specifically for Asian Americans (Kim, unpublished manuscript, cited in Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993).

Kim (1993) conducted an exploratory analysis examining the identity crises that third-generation Japanese American (Sansei) women experienced as Americans of Asian ancestry living in a predominately European American society. As summarized by Ponterotto & Pedersen (1993), Kim concluded that the Asian American identity conflict is resolved through a developmental, progressive, and sequential process of five stages: Ethnic Awareness, White Identification, Awakening to Social Political Consciousness, Redirection to Asian American Consciousness, and Incorporation. As individuals progress through each stage, they move from a negative self-image and identity conflict towards a more positive sense of self and an identification with other Asian Americans.

The first stage in Kim's Asian American identity development model is the Ethnic Awareness, and generally begins around age three or four. Through interactions with the family, the participants began to identify with their ethnic origins. If families were highly involved with participating in ethnic activities, their children tended to have more positive self-concepts about being a member of that ethnicity. Conversely, if families were less involved in the cultural traditions, then the children tended to have more neutral self-concepts and a confused sense of being ethnic. Instilled by the parents, their self-

concepts continued until elementary school, where they were first exposed to the predominantly European American society.

Kim's subjects reported that entering the school system was invariably a negative experience, where they were faced with others' prejudice and stereotypes on a continual basis. Unprepared for these hostile encounters, the Asian American children realized that they were different from their peers and felt personally responsible for the treatment they received. Their positive or neutral self-concepts were usually replaced by self-concepts that were much more negative. These Asian American children, feeling at fault and inferior to others of the dominant culture, began to identify with the European American culture by embracing European American values and beliefs, and by alienating themselves from other Asians. Kim called this second stage of development White Identification.

Children who had a neutral self-image during the Ethnic Awareness stage were more likely to display "active White identification," where they believed that they were part of the dominant culture and did not acknowledge cultural differences. These children identified themselves as European American and behaved in that same manner. Children who had a more positive self-image during the Ethnic Awareness stage, however, did not actively identify themselves as part of the dominant culture. Instead, with "passive White identification" these children still recognized their ethnic culture, but used the European American culture as a reference point for behaviors, standards, values, and beliefs. In terms of physical beauty, Kim notes that (Ponterotto & Pedersen, p. 129)

During this stage all subjects have subconsciously internalized overt, positive, White images, especially regarding standards of physical beauty and attractiveness. Hence, alienation from oneself is experienced primarily as a negative self-image focused around physical attributes.

Usually a significant social event that affected the cultural philosophy of the White-identified pushed the participant to the third stage, Awakening to Social Political Consciousness. In this stage, individuals began to question and reassess the standards and values of the dominant culture, and came to realize that they are part of an oppressed minority. In some cases, participants deliberately alienated themselves from the dominant culture for political reasons. At this stage there was also a sense of connection to other ethnic minority groups. With the awareness that they were not inferior to the dominant culture, individuals started to gain a more positive sense of self.

A newfound respect for themselves and their ethnic heritage propelled these individuals to fully embrace their Asian American identity. This illustrates the fourth stage of Kim's model, Redirection to Asian American Consciousness. At this stage individuals felt intense anger towards the dominant society as they perceived European Americans as being responsible for their negative experiences and their adoption of European American values. Their anger eventually resolved itself into a healthier concept of self and others as Asian Americans.

The final stage of Kim's Asian American Identity Model is Incorporation. At this stage, participants came to a balance between self and others. They felt pride in being Asian American, yet did not necessarily define themselves solely on the basis of membership to this category. They realized that there are other aspects of the self by which they may define themselves, such as career, political affiliation, religion, or sexual orientation. At the same time, these Asian Americans did not feel the need to socially isolate from or identify with the European American culture. They are able to evaluate

themselves, European Americans, and other ethnic groups from a broader perspective. It is in this stage that they felt the most comfortable and secure with being Asian American.

Again, Kim's Asian American Identity Model has perhaps been the only attempt to conceptualize a model for the ethnic identity development for Asian Americans. Yeh and Huang (1996) have argued that for Asian Americans, the ethnic identity development process is much more complex and adaptable than a linear stage model would suggest. They point out that present ethnic identity models fail to capture the sense of collectivism that prevails throughout the Asian culture. When Asian Americans define their identity, the social and environmental situations, rather than the psychological inside, are used as a reference point. These are the factors that Yeh and Huang (1996) indicate as the critical aspects of the Asian culture which heretofore have not been fully addressed in present ethnic identity theories.

Ethnic identity is a critical component to consider when examining an ethnic minority's sense of self. Because body image is related to how one views and interprets one's physical appearance and body structure, it is imperative to clearly examine the relationship between ethnic identity and body image. For example, an individual who is accustomed to relating more to the American culture than the Asian culture may also subscribe more to the American beliefs and values of an ideal beauty. Presently it is uncertain to what extent ethnic identity affects body image, thus the current study will examine this particular aspect.

Acculturation. Whereas ethnic identity refers to the relationship between an individual and his or her ethnic group, acculturation focuses on the relationship between an individual and the dominant culture (Phinney, 1990). Acculturation can be defined as

a minority group's "stress reduction process of adaptation, as it attempts to reduce the majority-minority group conflict over cultural value and power differences" (Osvold & Sodowsky, 1995, p.188).

Currently there are two distinct perspectives on the acculturation process (Abe-Kim, Okazaki, & Goto, 2001). The unidimensional model of acculturation posits that ethnic minorities who adapt to the dominant culture will inevitably have weaker ties to their culture of origin. This model assumes that factors such as values, attitudes, and self-construal move in a linear fashion along a minority and majority culture continuum.

The multidimensional models of acculturation consist of two main strategies (Abe-Kim, Okazaki, & Goto, 2001). The first strategy involves delineating acculturation domains of language/communication, customs, self-identification, preferences, attitudes, and values. The Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation (SL-ASIA, Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987) scale is based on this model although researchers often use the scale to measure linear, unidimensional aspects of acculturation.

The second approach to a multidimensional acculturation process stresses the cultural orientation to both the dominant and native cultures. It is believed that an ethnic minority's acceptance of the dominant culture and preservation of their native culture are independent of each other. Therefore it may be possible for an individual to retain much of his or her culture of origin while adopting many aspects of the dominant culture to function successfully in both worlds.

For Asian immigrants, the age of immigration and the amount of time spent in the U.S. were found to be significantly related to acculturation (Sodowsky & Lai, 1997). Third-generation Japanese Americans had higher levels of self-esteem than both recent

immigrants and second-generation Japanese Americans (Padilla, Wagatsuma, & Lindholm, 1985). In general, ethnic groups who embraced both their cultural heritage and the dominant culture tended to have higher levels of self-esteem. Conversely, ethnic groups who devalued their own culture and endorsed the dominant culture exclusively tended to have lower levels of self-esteem (Phinney, Chavira, & Williamson, 1992).

The acculturation of gender roles in the dominant society is another aspect of acculturation. Gender-role acculturation is defined as the dominant culture's gender-role values affecting or changing an individual's perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Being bicultural may be especially difficult and stressful for those dealing with gender-role issues. They must battle between retaining, accepting, adopting, or reframing the gender roles of their former and present cultures. This form of gender-role conflict occurs when the rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self (Kim, O'Neil, & Owen, 1996). Many bicultural adults experience a sense of confusion and conflict during times of acculturating to American gender roles and norms. In a study examining the gender-role conflict among acculturated Asian American men, Kim et. al (1996) found that the more acculturated participants had more gender-role conflicts related to success, power, and competition. They suggest that these acculturated Asian American men may have been more successful at adapting to the dominant society but at the price of striving for mastery and rivalry. The researchers also found that the more acculturated men had less restrictive emotionality than less acculturated men. This finding is most likely accounted by the men's adoption the American value of liberal emotional expression rather than the Asian value of restrictive emotions.

### Special Research Considerations

Past research studies that have used traditional means of quantitatively measuring body image have generated many important findings in this area. Currently considerable information exists about the relationships among personal satisfaction with one's body, sociocultural beliefs and attitudes, and distorted somatic perceptions, particularly in women. Despite the vast amount of findings, however, these measures have several shortcomings of relevance to this study.

By its nature, quantitative assessment measures the trends and averages in participants' responses. This method attempts to minimize individual differences and maximize general patterns. When studying such a complex issue such as body image, especially with its relation to ethnicity, it may be critical to investigate the individual factors that affect how each of their responses is shaped. Perhaps understanding the differences among people and seeing the relationship between the many factors as a holistic unit can aid in our conceptualization of this field of study.

Questionnaires are frequently criticized for their "forced choice" format. That is, subjects are asked to choose an answer from a selection of given choices. There is little if any room for alternative preferences or selections. Similarly, some participants may interpret certain phrases or terms differently from other participants. Personal experience, especially if the individual is from another culture, can affect one's interpretation of an event or phenomenon. Questionnaire formats often do not allow for clarification or expansion on alternative explanations. This could account for studies that have yielded inconsistent or inconclusive results.

Especially with the population of interest in the present study, it is presumed that the measurements often used by researchers were not normed on samples that included subjects of Asian ancestry. Furthermore, questions utilized in the instruments often do not pertain to the participant's ethnic culture, thus results may be inaccurate or inconclusive. For example, questions pertaining to one's family may examine the values and beliefs of the typical European American household but may not be applicable to the traditional Asian family and its unique dynamics.

Although the exact reasons for the inconclusive research findings on the body image of Asian Americans are unknown, the use of traditional methods by researchers may account in part for the variable results. Tanaka, Ebreo, Linn, and Morera (1998) argue that researchers who use such mainstream instruments with ethnic minority populations may be measuring different constructs for them than the constructs intended for the norm sample. Without empirical data supporting the instruments' reliability and validity with a particular ethnic group, it is difficult to ensure the accuracy of the constructs measured. For example, Koff and Benavage (1998) specifically used identical instruments for their European American and Asian American female participants to see if explanatory models of body image for European Americans were "applicable to non-Caucasian populations" (p.659). Because there were no significant group differences found in the constructs measured, the researchers concluded, "norms about breast size appear to be shared and to transcend cultural boundaries" (p.669). It would be difficult to make the inference that this construct transcends cultures solely from the results obtained with Koff and Benavage's instruments because they need to take into account response styles, among other methodological issues when investigating cultural ethnic groups.

Hui and Triandis (1989) and Marin and Marin (1991) indicated that ethnic minorities have a tendency to respond to extremes on scaled items. Other researchers (Ross & Mirowsky, 1984) have shown ethnic minority groups to exhibit an acquiescent response style, that is, agreement to items regardless of content. Asian Americans therefore may have a tendency to respond in agreement to body image issues desired by the European American culture. In addition, Smith (1990) suggests that Asian Americans in particular may have acquiescent responses that are moderated by educational and acculturation levels of the participants. Tanaka et. al (1998) advise researchers that Asian Americans may respond in socially desirable ways, especially if the issues are sensitive or personal. Thus, Asian American participants may invalidate their responses regarding behaviors and attitudes by selecting the socially desirable response over the less desirable ones.

Accurately assessing the body image of Asian American men has been challenging given the methodological concerns in researching this particular population. As such, body image investigators have urged future studies with ethnic minorities to examine the topic from a different, more in-depth and culturally sensitive perspective. In a letter to the editor regarding the study of body dissatisfaction between Hispanics and Asian Americans, Pumariega (1997) asserts that studies should include methodologies to address the cultural beliefs, values, and degree of acculturation of their participants. Story et al. (1995) recommend studies to explain the cultural reasoning behind their statistical finding that Asian Americans had one of the highest percentages of body pride but also had the highest percentage of binge eating and out of control eating. Sue (1999) recommends using a variety of research methods, including qualitative research, to create

a better understanding of psychosocial and cultural phenomenon which heretofore may not have been measured accurately.

### Summary

Body image problems once thought to be limited to European American women are now of a growing concern among various ethnic groups and even men. Male body image appears to be a complex issue involving opposing “ideal” forms, one emphasizing muscularity and one valuing thinness. Anabolic steroid use, disordered eating patterns, and preoccupation with bodily concerns are all potentially hazardous outcomes of untreated and misunderstood body image problems among males. Ethnic minorities face the added variable of culture to this psychological phenomenon. Past studies, such as Chang (2000), have shown that ethnic minorities often focus on non-weight related body image issues, such as dissatisfaction with race-defined eye shape and skin color.

As an understudied group of individuals who battles these issues, Asian American men face a unique set of stressors. Being male, they most likely encounter family, media, and societal messages that emphasize male strength, physical prowess, and attaining the ideal shape in order to appeal to women. Being Asian American, they may find it difficult to balance the values and beliefs of the Asian and American cultures. The few studies conducted on Asian American male body image have yielded many inconclusive results. Past research have examined the phenomenon by comparing the body image of Asian American men to European American men, men in Asian countries, other U.S. ethnic minorities, and even women. Because the nature of body image has not been closely examined and understood with the Asian American male population, it may not be

appropriate to use traditional measures to investigate this complicated issue of gender and culture.

This study attempted to elucidate the phenomenon of Asian American male body image by using a methodology that allows for in-depth exploration. The phenomenological approach of qualitative research allowed the researcher to learn from the personal stories and experiences of participants in order to better understand the phenomenon. The present study examined the life stories of ten Asian American men attending Colorado State University. Because this study was exploratory in nature, its results are not meant to represent all Asian American males but to gain a better understanding of how certain individuals experience body image. The methodology relies on participants to tell their personal stories rather than confirming or disconfirming an imposed theory. The interviewer used a set of questions designed to semi-structure the interview but relied mostly on prompts and cues provided by the participant. Research questions that were explored in this study were: 1) How important is physical appearance to Asian American men, 2) How do Asian American men feel about their bodies, 3) What has influenced their current views and attitudes about their own body image, 4) Has their body image remained the same over time, and 5) What impact does ethnicity have on their body image.

## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

#### Participants

The key aspect of phenomenology is to describe the meaning of a phenomenon from the point of view of a small number of individuals (Creswell, 1998). In phenomenological research, the process of data collection involves in-depth interviews with individuals. Because the interviews are so extensive, Dukes (1984) recommends a sample size between three and ten, and Polkinghorne (1989) suggests that a sample size of ten represents a reasonable size. The sample for this study consisted of ten Asian-American men from Colorado State University. Participants were recruited from a flier posted at the Asian/Pacific American Student Services office on campus (See Appendix A).

#### Measures

The participants completed three brief questionnaires in order to obtain demographic, acculturation level, and ethnic identity data (See Appendix B). The demographics questionnaire was given to gather information on age, ethnicity, generation, place of birth, and, socioeconomic status. The participants then completed the acculturation measure SL-ASIA (Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987) and ethnic identity measure Orthogonal Cultural Identification Questionnaire (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990-1991).

### Procedure

At the beginning of the meeting, the interviewer introduced himself, explained the rationale and procedures of the study, and invited any questions that the participant may have had. The interviewer then explained the informed consent information sheet and had the participant initial a copy for himself and for the study's records. It was hoped that by being open and respectful to the participant, the interviewer would begin to establish rapport with the participant. Once the informed consent sheet was signed, the interviewer then asked the participant to fill out the three questionnaires in order to gain more information about his cultural background. The interviewer was trained to answer questions that the participants may have had regarding the questionnaire or interview. The quantitative questionnaire portion lasted approximately twenty minutes. The qualitative portion followed immediately after the participant finished the last questionnaire and had no further questions.

### Semi-Structured Interview

Each of the participants was individually interviewed, and with permission from the participant, each interview was audio taped for later analysis. The goals of the interviews were to explore how Asian American men feel about their bodies, what factors have influenced their current body image, and the role of ethnicity and gender in their body image. A set of standard questions was asked of each participant, but these questions served only as a guideline for the interview (See Appendix C). This type of semi-structured interview format allowed the interviewer to ask any spontaneous questions that were specifically relevant to that participant's experiences and deepen the level of processing and sharing. The interviews ranged from twenty to forty five minutes.

Qualitative interviewing relies on probes, rather than questions, per se (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). Unlike questions that elicit a particular response or event, probes draw forth an elaborative and associative response. Probes are a unique type of question designed to explore a given topic more in depth, and are particularly useful in phenomenological research. There are five types of interviewer-cued probes. Clarification probes allow the interviewer to obtain more information about and to confirm a previous response. For example, if the interviewee states that his classmates teased him, the interviewer will try to obtain more details of this incident. Questions such as “why?” and “in what ways?” are considered critical awareness probes in that the interviewee is asked to reflect upon, evaluate, or give an example of a particular topic. The participant might say, for example, that his father was hypervigilant about his own weight. The interviewer might ask him to give some examples or reasons for this particular behavior. When the interviewer needs more information about a topic from different perspectives and dimensions, he may use amplification probes with the participant. The interviewer might ask the participant whether he thinks his parents or friends have the same perception of a particular event. Refocusing probes allow the interviewee to compare and contrast his response to another topic or idea, as well as develop causal reasons or alternative solutions to a certain topic. When a participant seems to have contradicting views or opinions, the interviewer can ask him to compare the two statements and reflect upon the differences. Probing for the level of intensity that the interviewee feels is an important piece to understanding the depth of the interviewee’s experiences. For instance, the participant may begin to tear during a description of a

childhood teasing incident. Seeing the power of this experience allows the interviewer to better understand the participant's words and incorporate it into the analyses.

#### Research Assistance

The interviewer for this study was an Asian American male who was a recent graduate of this university and a former member of the Asian/Pacific American Student Services organization. It was believed that participants would be more willing to share and open up to someone with whom they can identify and feel comfortable. The interviewer was trained initially by reading literature on the philosophy, procedure, techniques, and style of qualitative interviews. The primary researcher then met the interviewer several times to discuss his role and answer any remaining questions. To verify his readiness, the interviewer conducted a mock interview, which was supervised by the researcher and her advisors. Throughout the progress of the study, the researcher listened to each of the audiotaped research interviews to ensure the quality of the interviews.

Once the interviews were completed, an undergraduate female psychology major assisted the researcher in transcribing the audio taped interviews. The researcher verified that the transcriptions were recorded accurately by reviewing each interview and transcript.

#### Personal Biases

Many phenomenological researchers regard the social interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee as key to fully understanding the participant's point of view. It is important for researcher, the research assistants, and the faculty advisors to take time to reflect on their own beliefs and biases about the given phenomenon. Being

more aware of these preconceived biases will hopefully yield a more neutral and open-minded stance during the interview. For example, by remaining unaware of his biases, the interviewer may unknowingly guide the interviewee towards his bias or ignore statements made by the interviewee that are not consistent with his bias.

The core concept of phenomenological research is to understand the phenomenon from the participant's point of view, not that of the researcher or her assistants. This process of setting aside one's prejudgments is termed bracketing (Creswell, 1998). Before the individual interviews begin, the researcher carefully bracketed the biases of the researcher, her assistants, and her advisors, and discussed the meanings and possible implications of these biases with each other. Throughout the process of the study, these individuals discussed their opinions and findings as they emerged, and were made aware when using more subjective than objective findings. For example, the researcher initially believed that height would significantly impact the body image of Asian American men more than their European American counterparts. She shared this bias with the interviewer, assistant, and advisors at the outset of the study. During the analysis process, the researcher was careful to not let her biases interfere with the interpretation of the self-reports of the interviewees.

#### Confidentiality

The researcher provided strict confidentiality for the participants in this study. Throughout the analysis of the data each participant was assigned to and referred by an identification number (such as AAM01), and documents detailing the study contained only identification numbers. All notes, transcriptions, and audiotapes were secured in a locked office cabinet throughout the progression of the study. Again, no identification

traces, such as names or phone numbers, were left available. Upon completion of the study, all audiotapes, notes, and transcriptions will be destroyed.

#### Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptives were calculated for the demographic, ethnic identity, and acculturation measures. These figures were compared to and contrasted with the individual results of the qualitative analysis to examine possible trends. The SL-ASIA scale (Suinn et al., 1987) was scored conventionally to assign the participants to high/low acculturated or bicultural. The Orthogonal Cultural Identification Questionnaire (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990-1991) was scored conventionally to assign the participants to high and/or low identities with the Asian and American cultures.

#### Qualitative Data Analysis

Transcription. Each audio taped interview was transcribed for analysis and verified for accuracy. The individual interviews were transcribed verbatim using audiotape transcription equipment and typed into a word processing software. Tapes were transcribed by the research assistant and checked for accuracy by the researcher.

Procedure. After several careful readings of each transcription, the researcher identified “meaning units,” or significant statements made by the participant that represented a particular concept. After examining the list of meaning units, the researcher then discarded those units that did not pertain to the phenomenon. For example, if the participant shared information about his friend’s part-time job, and the researcher saw no pertinence of this information to the research topic, the researcher then discarded that meaning unit.

The next stage involved transforming the retained verbatim meaning units into conceptual interpretations that were consistent with traditional psychological terminology (See Appendix D for an example). These steps were repeated for each participant until there was a collection of “transformed” meaning units representative of all or most of the participants. The researcher then reflected on all of the meaning units as a whole, and developed a structure of themes that accounted for all of the participants’ experiences. During each stage of analysis it was important for the researcher and her research advisors to actively seek to confirm and disconfirm the meaning units and themes that emerged. Negative case analysis involved continually refining the working hypothesis in light of negative or disconfirming evidence. This process was repeated until all cases conceptually fit the revised and final hypothesis (Creswell, 1998). The end result was a rich interpretative description of the essential features of the phenomenon.

#### Criteria of Soundness

As in traditional quantitative research, qualitative researchers value the importance of evaluating the results of a study according to accepted standards of measurement. Whereas quantitative researchers base their appraisal on the study’s reliability, internal and external validity, and objectivity, many qualitative researchers have chosen to modify these concepts to better fit the qualitative paradigm (Denzin, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The adapted criteria that many qualitative researchers have chosen as a method of standardizing a study’s soundness are based on its dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability, respectively (Denzin, 1994).

Dependability. In qualitative research, dependability corresponds to the quantitative concept of reliability. Reliability refers to the replicability of results from

multiple administrations of a testing instrument, and measures the accuracy of testing instruments such as questionnaires. The inherent assumption in using testing tools to measure a phenomenon is that the phenomenon is constant and unchanging, and that instruments can quantitatively capture the knowable reality. Qualitative researchers challenge these assumptions on the grounds that the phenomenon is always changing and that each individual experiences the phenomenon very differently (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Therefore, qualitative researchers define dependability as an evaluation of the study based on its appropriateness, thoroughness, honesty, and accuracy (Mason, 1996).

Dependability can be established by providing detailed documentation throughout the data analysis process: transcription of data, coding meaning units, and interpretative strategies. By examining the steps of analysis, other researchers should be able to follow the analysis based on the carefully established patterns identified.

Credibility. Credibility in qualitative research is analogous to internal validity in quantitative research. Internal validity measures how well the method used accurately measures what it is purporting to measure. Qualitative researchers have adapted this concept into two components: 1) How accurately was the subject identified and described (Marshall & Rossman, 1995), and 2) Is the interpretation credible and fitting of the data (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The methodology of collecting data from in-depth interviews demonstrates validity through accurately identifying and describing each participant. Therefore, within the parameters of this population in this particular setting, using this theoretical framework, the study in question should be valid (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

To further demonstrate credibility, there must be a rigorous attempt to actively confirm and disconfirm interpretation during all stages of analysis. During the coding process, the researcher and her research advisors will agree upon which statements represent a meaning unit, which meaning units will be discarded, and how the meaning units relate to form themes. This extensive process will help to ensure that the interpretations are correct and fitting for this population's data.

Transferability. External validity in quantitative research is comparable to transferability in qualitative research. External validity refers to how well a study's findings generalize to the general population. Some qualitative researchers believe that the concept of external validity is not even an issue in qualitative research (Glaser, 1992). Whereas quantitative studies draw general conclusions from examining aggregated data, the purpose of qualitative research is to provide a holistic and detailed description of specific individuals (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Like many other qualitative studies, the present study will be more exploratory than generalizable in nature. The goal of this study is to open new pathways for future explorations. Qualitative studies tend to lend themselves to further modification and verification processes.

Although the results obtained from this research are not meant to specifically apply to the general population, there is no reason to believe that this particular population is atypical of other young Asian-American men. Therefore, to the degree that this study's findings can be applied to others in this population, this study should demonstrate a degree of transferability.

Confirmability. Confirmability in qualitative studies is analogous to objectivity in quantitative studies. However, pure objectivity is not the goal of the qualitative approach

(Denzin, 1994). Rather, the concept of phenomenological work is to examine the subjective experience of each of the participants. Qualitative researchers have defined the term confirmability to address the following question: Do the data confirm the general findings (Marshall & Rossman, 1995)? This was achieved through the vigorous data analysis outlined in the previous sections. Namely, with a sound process for collecting and interpreting data, verifying and disconfirming themes, active participation of the researchers and her advisors during each phase of the analysis, the present study's methodology should demonstrate confirmability.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

#### Quantitative Analysis

The age of the respondents ranged from 19 to 24 years, with an average age of 21.2 (SD=2.04). Ethnic backgrounds of Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Chinese, and mixed heritages of Spanish, Indian, Scottish, and German were represented among the participants. They ranged from first to fifth generation with a mean of 3.2 generation (SD=1.69) and a mode of fifth generation. Six were born and raised in Hawaii, while the other respondents were born in the Philippines, Korea, California, and New Mexico. The years each participant has lived in Colorado varied from 1 to 21 years, with an average of 9.0 years (SD=7.80) and a median and mode of 5.0 years. All respondents except two came from average SES backgrounds; the other two came from an above-average SES background. All respondents identified as being heterosexual. Participants ranged in height from 5'1" to 5'10", with 5'6" being the average (SD=2.79). Participants weighed from 117-220 pounds, with an average of 152 pounds (SD=31.88). (See Table 1 for demographic information by participant.)

When examined using the Orthogonal Cultural Identification Scale (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990-1991), all participants scored either a low, medium, or high level of identity with the Asian culture and either a medium or high level of identity with the Western culture. The only participants who scored a low on the level of Asian identity were a participant adopted from Korea into a European American family and a

participant of mixed Chinese, Scottish, and German heritage. There were no particular trends in cultural/ethnic identity by body satisfaction, generation, place of birth, years in Colorado, or ethnicity.

All participants were characterized as either bicultural or moderately acculturated as measured by the SL-ASIA Acculturation Scale (Suinn et al., 1987). The possible scoring range was 1 to 5, and the average score for these participants was 3.5 (SD=.30). The respondents' scores ranged from 2.9 to 4.2, where 3.0 is considered bicultural and 5.0 is considered highly acculturated. There appeared to be a general trend toward greater body satisfaction with higher levels of acculturation. (See Table 2 for ethnic identity and acculturation scores by participant.)

### Qualitative Analysis

Each of the ten interviews was systematically explored according to qualitative phenomenological research guidelines. All ten interviews collectively delineated the following four themes: 1) Limited expressiveness and awareness, 2) Disconnection from emotions, 3) Multiple influences and reinforcers of body image, and 4) "Men are men."

#### **Theme 1: Limited expressiveness and awareness**

Nearly all participants had difficulty fully expressing their feelings, beliefs, and attitudes regarding their body image. Many also seemed to have little insight into the reasoning behind their perceptions or opinions. Surface-level answers, vague responses, and contradictory statements often illustrated this inability to sufficiently elaborate on their experiences:

Interviewer: If you could change anything about your body, what would it be?

Participant #1: I'd say, try to be a little taller.

Interviewer: How might that impact your life?

Participant #1: I don't know why, I just want to be taller.

Interviewer: Was there a time when you were not comfortable in talking about your appearance?

Participant #5: Well, the thing with me is that I don't really care what other people think of my appearance.

Interviewer: Has society influenced how you view your body and appearance?

Participant #5: Yeah, I think so. It's had a big impact. When you go to the gym, you just kind of know that people look at other people and how big they are. I just want to be one of those people who people look at and say, "Dang, that guy is in good shape. He is pretty big... Oh dang, I want to be like him. That kind of body is perfect for me." Something like that.

There are several possible reasons to account for this emotional disconnection in the responses of the participants. First, participants shared that body satisfaction and appearance-related topics were rarely discussed among their family or male friends. They said that it was simply not part of their daily conversation. At times, the participants and their peers joked with each other if someone dressed nicely, shopped often, or appeared "too skinny." Serious discussions on personal satisfaction and related feelings, however, were never mentioned. As a result of not having open dialogues about male body satisfaction, the majority of the respondents did not have an established understanding of their personal opinions and experiences. The research interviews may have been one of the first times they have stopped to query about their own attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with their body image.

Protecting a sense of masculinity was also observed during the interviews, and may be related to the type of responses interviewees gave. One participant stated that talking about looks would make men appear "prissy" because appearance and clothes are topics reserved for women. The one respondent who was able to fully explore his experiences and opinions of body image was a few years older than the other respondents. From participant #3's perspective, men in the U.S. simply are not socialized

to discuss sensitive matters, including body image. He feels that it is not generally considered acceptable for men to share feelings on personal issues as that might threaten their masculinity. On the other hand, observing and commenting on the physique of other men were fairly common behaviors for men at the gym. Statements such as “ I want to have that guy’s body... I want to have his arms, I want to have his pecks, I want to have his abs” exemplified a notion of body envy. It seems that admiring the body build of other men was a more acceptable topic for men than sharing feelings of personal satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This may explain the reason many participants initially stated that their focus was just to be healthy and athletic, but when further probed, expressed much dissatisfaction regarding certain aspects of their physical appearance.

In part this disconnection response style could be due to the age and developmental awareness of the interviewees. There was a trend in age and body satisfaction such that older participants tended to have more positive body images. The responses that the older interviewees gave illustrated a broader perspective of the importance of body image in relation to other aspects of life. Twenty-four year old participant #3 explained that he is comfortable with his physical appearance because “I am just comfortable with what I am and who I am as a person physically, emotionally, spiritually.” It also appears that the older participants were able to elaborate and clarify their viewpoints better than the younger participants. This participant was also able to use references of Japanese history and culture, the role of religion in his life, and gender implications from media pressures. This was in stark contrast to many younger participants who gave vague remarks and were not aware of the origins of their perceptions.

Several respondents stated that there were “obvious” aspects they would change about their body, such as their height, weight, and muscular build. They then followed their statements with rationalizations that since they cannot physically alter their bodies, it is not something they should worry about. While their feelings may appear contradictory, it is plausible that these participants were able to reason through their body dissatisfaction and focus on staying healthy and athletic. Of course, it is not possible to ascertain whether their change in body focus is a result of true relinquishment of uncontrollable factors, merely a statement reflecting protection of insecurities, or a developmental issue of insight and awareness.

Lastly, the seemingly simplistic statements made by the participants may reflect a cultural value of humbleness. Traditionally, the Asian culture emphasizes the importance of others and de-emphasizes focus on the self. It is this value that has maintained a collectivistic orientation in most Asian countries for centuries. Fifth-generation participant #4 stated during his interview that he did not want to appear “boastful” and was not comfortable talking about himself. The interviewee who was adopted from Korea into a European American family at age four also voiced his cultural tendency to stay “humble” when speaking about himself. While not mentioned by the other participants, it is possible that the interviewees' reluctance to delve deeper into their responses is a symbol of modesty from their Asian background.

## **Theme 2: Emotional disconnection in body image**

Overwhelmingly across interviews, there was a distancing between what the participants were sharing about their body image and its emotional relevance to their sense of self. Participants discussed body image in terms of an objective and factual

nature, and seldom related it to their identity. For example, the majority of interviewees regarded themselves as “pretty satisfied” with their bodies, often listing body areas in which they would like changed, but were able to rationalize that “at least I’m healthy.”

Most participants felt “pretty satisfied;” two interviewees admitted they were “dissatisfied,” while one interviewee felt “satisfied for now but not later.” When asked, “If you could change anything about your body, what would it be?” the most frequently requested changes were to be taller, gain more muscle mass, be stronger, lose fat around stomach, and, for most participants from Hawaii, have darker skin. The rationale behind these changes were to attract more women, gain confidence, to be accepted into peer groups, have increased athletic ability, be health conscious, and gain more respect from others. This group of participants, however, did not feel that their physical appearance was the only priority in their life. They pointed to education, personality, and family honor as examples of other important elements in their life. This attitude enabled them to distance themselves from their body image and not feel emotionally vulnerable as a result. Participants often mentioned feeling unmotivated to lift weights in order for the physical changes to occur and never related this lack of effort to guilt. Rather, they were comfortable with “being lazy.” Their cognitive orientation also permitted the respondents to rationalize their body dissatisfaction into an attitude of “there’s nothing I can do about it so I won’t worry about it.”

Participants #5 and #8 described their body satisfaction as “dissatisfied.” These men were the only interviewees to be the first generation to come to the U.S. from an Asian country. They stated that since they were younger, they had always wished for bigger, stronger bodies. One participant idolized Jean-Claude Van Damme, and said that

he wanted to emulate his toned body and martial arts skills. He also mentioned that because Van Damme is not featured in many movies anymore, he has turned to male magazine models as inspiration for working out. The adopted participant noted that he had always wished to be the same body size as his European American father and brother. According to this participant, if he looked more like the majority culture, he would feel less self-conscious about his appearance. Again, as dissatisfied as these men were with their bodies, they reasoned through their “obvious” dissatisfaction by thinking there is nothing that can be done, so the focus should be on health.

Participant #1 epitomized the respondents' ability to detach themselves from their body image. This interviewee said that for the purposes of being in school now, his current body figure is adequate and satisfactory. But when he graduates and begins working with machinery in the fields, his body now would not be satisfactory because having a more muscular body will be better received from employers. “They’ll know you’re stronger, bigger, so you can probably work harder. So you’re more capable of that job,” he said. In this case, there was a purposeful activity that warranted a larger body. This participant was able to separate body satisfaction from self and work in a logical manner. He later mentions, however, that having a larger body would help him attract women, gain confidence, not feel intimidated by other men, and be competitive against others.

### **Theme 3: Multiple Influences and Reinforcers**

Several factors have influenced the interviewees' views on body image. Even in light of subtle or extreme changes in body image attitudes and perceptions, these

elements continued to reinforce and validate their newfound beliefs. The following influences and reinforcers are listed in order of typical sequential occurrences:

Family. All of the participants had parents who de-emphasized the importance of physical appearance. They stated that their parents never focused on appearance or encouraged their children to look a certain way. Most of the respondents said that their parents focused on being happy and healthy. While looking back on what type of messages he received from his parents regarding appearance, participant #1 said, "My dad, body appearance wise, is just an average guy too. And like my mom, she never wore makeup or anything or jewelry. From my parents wise, they were pretty low key about body image."

While parents were influential in the body image development of their children, siblings appeared to have a greater effect on these participants. Predominantly, interviewees with siblings who placed importance on physical appearance were also conscientious about their looks. For example, participant #4 admitted that looks were important to him:

My mom, she's not into expensive clothes. She is all about going to Ross and getting the best deal. My brother is more into it. He has to wear Armani Exchange and really nice clothes all the time. When he goes to work out- most people would just throw on sweats- but he has to wear nice clothes.

Conversely, participants with older siblings who did not emphasize looks and appearance had similar attitudes themselves. Participant #7 recounted the influence of his older brothers on his current satisfied attitude, "I have two older brothers so I kind of look up to them and stuff. It (physical appearance) was never that much importance to them."

Childhood experiences. Participants noted that smaller and shorter boys were often teased and harassed in school. They received the message early on that it is not desirable to be short or small. A few respondents recalled that during elementary school they were the shortest boys in the class and were teased as a result. They were relieved that by high school they had gained enough height to be considered average and were no longer harassed. Furthermore, participants realized that athletic students were much more popular, accepted, and stronger than other students. The participants who had a background in athletics looked upon their school years fondly, as friends and acceptance by peers came easily to them.

Friends. Similar to the influence of siblings, close friends also affected the body image of these participants. Several mentioned that obtaining a certain look is accomplished in order to fit into a certain social group. As explained by participant #2, "If you don't look a certain way, like the people you hang out with, then they won't accept you." He explained that the media shows this as well, "In TV everyone wants to be popular, and they don't want to be a loner and an outcast." Participant #6 recounted his high school experience of lifting weights with peers, "I just didn't want to be the only one who is not lifting and trying to get buffer, so I just did it at one time because everyone else did it." He later admitted that he had no personal investment in lifting weights and only did so in order to fit in with his friends. It seems that peers had a strong influence on the participants, and often dictated what was expected and appropriate behavior for them.

Friends can also support body image perceptions and attitudes. Participants said that often their closest friends or roommates worked out with them and knew what their muscle-building goals were. As described by participant #5:

My friends are who I talk to about everything with: what kind of body I want to have, what kind of body they want to have, and you kind of know what they are looking for, and you kind of shoot for a decent body.

Additionally, friends can validate existing assumptions about body image.

Participant #1 believed that only men who are large and built can attract women and that women are not attracted to smaller, skinnier men. He used this example to confirm his suspicions, “A couple of my friends are football guys- bigger guys- (and they) get chicks and stuff. Me and a couple of my other friends aren’t that big and don’t get all the chicks.” This participant looked to his friends for confirmation of an existent belief.

As much as respondents may rely on friends for acceptance, support, and validation of body image issues, appearance-related topics often are not deemed acceptable discussion material. For instance, one participant was teased by his friends because he often goes to the mall to buy clothes. Other participants noted that it is considered “prissy” to talk about one’s appearance because those discussions are reserved for females only. They further explained that serious body image talks do not take place, and only jokes such as “Why are you so dressed up today?” or “You’re getting skinny” are acceptable. There is almost a paradox in the role of friends and body image. That is, although these interviewees felt the most comfortable sharing their body perceptions and goals with friends, the true feelings surrounding these issues were not permitted to be discussed.

Society. Respondents noted that there is an atmosphere of competition among men which is perpetuated by their social environment. On a daily occurrence they feel there is comparison among men on the basis of body build, confidence, and power to attract women. This competitiveness was most notable in the gyms, but reportedly occur in many situations. Participant #5 noted that he and his friends are usually taken aback when they see an Asian American man who is large and built, and are quick to point out their adulation and envy of him. "Say we see an Asian guy who is kind of toned up. We are like, 'Dang!' You don't see too many Asian guys like that, you know," he explained. This constant comparison results in men who are more self-conscious about their appearance when in public. The hypersensitivity to external validation and approval may subsequently result in a more fragile self-esteem (Johnson, 1998).

In a larger sense, participants feel that there is a societal expectation for men to look and act a certain way. For example, respondents realized that being short is not valued in this society and that taller men gain more respect. Nearly all respondents stated they wished to be taller, either for confidence or enhanced athletic ability. One participant who stands at 5'6" expressed his wish to be taller:

I'd like to be a little taller. Just on a social level, I think. I am always the shortest person in groups. And I think being a little taller might be a little different... I could talk to people at a more eye-to-eye level, rather than having to look up. Maybe it is some kind of inferiority complex.

Unlike muscle building, participants who felt short had to face the reality that their height could not be changed. Frustration was denied by these participants, although their perseverance on the issues indicated otherwise. When asked if he is satisfied with his body, participant #6, who stands at 5'7", said:

I am not! God, I think I am short. Like, oh man, I wanted to be like 5'10". That's the only thing. Oh man, just three inches... But, I mean, now that I think about it, I don't really care. 5'7"- that's good enough. I'm the tallest one in my family (laughs)... As long as I am above 5'4", I didn't care. So it's not really a big deal anymore. [Interviewer: If you could change anything about your body, what would it be?] Oh man, I would be like 5'10"! I have always wanted to be 5 foot and double digits.

The ideal male body to which society has ascribed was described as tall, proportional, clean cut, and well-toned but not too muscular. Not only was there an expectation for attractive and confident men to possess these physical traits, but it was very important for these men to “show” that they have been working out. This "showing" of work outs may be interpreted as proof in the competitive arena of body appearance that one has devoted time and effort to achieve this muscular body, thus yielding more respect and power.

Media. The media was heavily alluded to during the interviews. Participants were very familiar with various forms of media, with television, movies, music videos, and magazines having most influenced their perceptions. Media reportedly provide many examples of the ideal body: Ben Affleck, Tom Cruise, Jean Claude Van Damme, Jet Li, and Bruce Lee. Participants observed that in the media, men who exhibit the ideal body acquire female partners, while smaller and skinnier men do not. One participant interpreted this correlation directly, “In movies and TV you see chicks go for bigger, stronger guys. [Interviewer: How did the movies and TV impact you?] Seeing that they get more chicks, maybe that means I need to be bigger.”

The interviewees who were more critical of media's pressures to obtain an ideal body found the trend disappointing and shallow. They noticed that media are no longer targeting women only, and are deliberately directing the male population to also fit an

ideal mold. The Subway sandwich commercials featuring Jared, who had lost a considerable amount of weight by eating solely their sandwiches, was provided as an example of such a trend.

The role of the media appears to be so powerful that even men who did not think they were susceptible to these pressures found subtle messages intruding in their thoughts. Participant #6, who did not find appearance important and thought society offers superficial messages to look a certain way, was surprised to realize that media has had an impact on him:

Subconsciously, if I watch a TV show or something, and I see all these guys dressed up good and looking good, I am like "Nah, that doesn't influence me." But I think if I really think about it, subconsciously it somehow does affect me.

This participant later shared his surprising dissatisfaction with aspects of his appearance:

Well, there is a lot I can pick out. There is all this little stuff, but it is so little that I am like, "Why do I care about it?" Hair is a good example. It's like my hair is freakin' crooked and stuff like that. I am like, "Oh man, why do I even care about that?"

The Opposite Sex. Perhaps the strongest motivator for participants in this stage of their lives is women, who have an undeniable influence on the body image of these men. "If a woman makes a comment, I will carry that with more weight than a male," explained participant #10. Participant #1 stated quite frankly, "I'd say pretty much all men want to be pretty big and muscular. [Interviewer: Why is that?] Probably just to get chicks." From a developmental and evolutionary perspective, it is expected that men in their late teens and early twenties who are seeking romantic partners in preparation for marriage would have this attitude. Consequently, compliments given to men by romantic partners serve to boost self-esteem and confidence.

Participants shared that the advice and attitudes of their female friends was extremely influential on male body image. Respondents who had female friends who desired the ideal male body learned from them that it is important to achieve the ideal body in order to attract women. Conversely, respondents who had female friends who emphasized the personality and goodness in a partner learned alternative ways to attract women. When female friends do not discuss appearance at all, it can continue to reinforce an attitude that there is more to a person than physical appearance. Participant #3 explained:

Friends of the opposite sex... they don't bring it up as an issue that I have to look a certain way. Or that I look a certain way has reinforced what I have already come to in my own conclusions about that it is not important to worry about body type.

#### **Theme 4: "Men are Men"**

Most of the participants did not conceptualize Asian American men as being notably different from men of the majority culture. When asked to describe body image issues for both U.S. men in general and Asian American men in particular, such as the importance of appearance, comfort in discussing body image, body satisfaction, and the ideal body, interviewees were hard pressed to find differences. "Men are men," "I don't really see Asian men and American (men) as separate," "Asian guys are not too much different from American guys," were common statements. Participants felt that all men who are exposed to the U.S. culture, regardless of ethnicity, want to be perceived as attractive. When asked specifically if their ethnicity were related to their body image, nearly all participants stated that they were unrelated. Nevertheless, the specific body aspects with which participants were dissatisfied were specifically related to their Asian characteristics. For example, nearly all participants wished to be taller and more

muscular. These particular traits are not commonly found in Asian countries but are highly valued in the U.S. culture. Thus, their ethnicity is related to their perceptions and satisfaction of their body, despite a surface-level denial of any connection.

When further probed regarding their ethnic background in relation to attending a predominantly European American university, many participants asserted that their ethnicity made them unique in a positive sense. If anything, they saw their cultural background as something to be proud of and to help them stand out. At the same time, many interviewees admitted that they not only felt most comfortable with their Asian American peers, but often were uncomfortable relating to others outside their cultural background. Participant #7, who is from Hawaii who has been in Colorado from two years, shared:

Sometimes when I go out I feel out of place when there is not any Asian men around. When I am with my friends, I fit in really well. My friends- a lot are Asian people. When I'm around White or Black people, I just don't feel as comfortable. I feel out of place sometimes.

Another participant from Hawaii who has been in Colorado for five years expressed:

You don't see people who look like you, and you don't know how to relate to somebody. Or I felt I couldn't relate because they have no idea where I am from... (Seeing) White kids walking down the hallway- just by looking at them, I think they have no idea what I have been through. They have no idea what I am going through right now. Whereas if I saw someone who was Asian, I could relate to them on some level.

Therefore, respondents, at a core level of their self-concept, do feel different from the mainstream although cognitively they can say there are no real differences. This can be further illustrated by participants mentioning offensive negative stereotypes of Asian

American men that are portrayed in the media, but refuting any effect it has on them. For example, participant #7 also stated:

On TV shows and stuff where there are Asian actors, the Asian people play the role of the weird guy who doesn't get any sex on the show. I heard one comment where someone said in movies Asian men don't get looked at as someone sexy. [Interviewer: How has that affected you?] I don't know. I don't really care. They can say whatever they want to say. It's up to them what they want to think.

Although this participant could cognitively distance himself from such negative stereotypes, at some level the prejudices do affect him as he emotionally does not feel comfortable with those outside his ethnicity. This type of disparity among participants may have a significant impact on their sense of self and body in relation to the outside world.

It is important to mention that six of the ten participants from this study were born and raised in Hawaii. The culture in Hawaii is unique from other U.S. states in that the majority culture is of mixed Asian ancestry. As such, the residents of Hawaii who are of Asian descent have never experienced feeling different as a result of their ethnic background, and ethnicity is not a common construct used to differentiate among people in Hawaii. There are also frequent celebrations of the traditions, rituals, and holidays of various Asian groups. Thus, residents have exposure to, knowledge of, and respect for the Asian culture but still may not feel it defines who they are. In fact, several participants felt they were "more American or Hawaiian than Japanese" simply because the environment in Hawaii does not recognize ethnicity in the same light as on the mainland.

There appear to be generation and acculturation trends in body satisfaction. That is, the greater the generational level, the more likely the interviewee was to report satisfaction with his body. It is important to note, however, that participants who were not

from Hawaii represented first through second generations, and that the other six participants from Hawaii were fourth or fifth generation. It is difficult to discern if this is truly a generational effect or a Hawaii/mainland effect.

The greater the level of acculturation, the more likely the interviewee was satisfied with his body. Because "fitting in" was such an important social factor for these respondents, it is not surprising that the more the respondent could "fit in" with the mainstream environment, the more comfortable and satisfied he was with his appearance. Interestingly, acculturation was not related to place of birth or place of residence.

Although ethnic identity was measured by the Orthogonal Cultural Identity Scale (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990-1991), there does not appear to be a trend regarding body satisfaction. In fact, the SL-ASIA Scale (Suinn et al., 1987) briefly measures ethnic identity and the results were often in contrast to the results from the Orthogonal Cultural Identity Scale (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990-1991). A plausible explanation for this inconsistency is that six participants are from Hawaii, where Asian culture abounds but residents do not feel particularly "Asian," rather, they describe themselves as "American."

<b>PART</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>ETHNICITY</b>	<b>GEN</b>	<b>BIRTH PLACE</b>	<b>YRS IN COLO</b>	<b>SES</b>	<b>HT</b>	<b>WT</b>
1	19	Japanese American	5	Hawaii	1	Avg	5'4"	125
2	19	Filipino-Chinese-Spanish-Indian	2	Hawaii	2	Avg	5'10"	195
3	24	Japanese American	5	Hawaii	5	Avg	5'1"	140
4	23	Japanese American	5	Hawaii	5	Avg	5'5"	140
5	20	Filipino American	1.5	Philippines	12	Avg	5'8"	162
6	22	Japanese American	5	Hawaii	5	Avg	5'7"	220
7	19	Japanese American	4	Hawaii	2	Avg	5'8"	140
8	20	Korean American	1	Korea	16	Above Avg	5'8"	117
9	22	Chinese-Hispanic American	2	New Mexico	21	Avg	5'6"	140
10	24	Chinese-Scottish-German	2	California	21	Above Avg	5'10"	145
<b>AVG (SD)</b>	<b>21.2 (2.04)</b>		<b>3.2 (1.69)</b>		<b>9 (7.80)</b>	<b>AVG</b>	<b>5'6" (2.79)</b>	<b>152 (31.88)</b>

Table 1. Demographics by participant

<b>PART</b>	<b>ORTHOGONAL ASIAN-ID</b>	<b>ORTHOGONAL WESTERN-ID</b>	<b>SL- ASIA ACCULT*</b>
<b>1</b>	High	High	3.3
<b>2</b>	High	Med	3.2
<b>3</b>	High	Med	3.7
<b>4</b>	High	High	3.5
<b>5</b>	High	Med	2.9
<b>6</b>	Med	Med	3.5
<b>7</b>	Med	High	3.9
<b>8</b>	Low	High	3.5
<b>9</b>	High	High	3.7
<b>10</b>	Low	Med	4.2
<b>AVG (SD)</b>	<b>MED-HIGH</b>	<b>MED-HIGH</b>	<b>3.5 (.36)</b>

Table 2. Ethnic identity and acculturation by participant.

\*SL-ASIA Acculturation Measure

Possible scoring range: 1-5

Bicultural= 3, Highly acculturated= 5

Participants' range: 2.9- 4.2

Participants' average: 3.5

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

#### Summary of Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct an exploratory analysis of the body image issues facing Asian American men today. Ten Asian American male students from Colorado State University participated in this study. Each participant was given a brief series of questionnaires and then individually interviewed using a set of semi-structured questions, which allowed for elaboration and clarification of unique personal experiences with body image. Each interview was then transcribed for analysis.

It was during the analysis phase that each interview was carefully examined for meaning units and conceptual elements. This process was repeated for each interview until all interviews were analyzed. The researcher then took a systematic and thorough approach to draw forth the pervasive themes within the interviews. The following themes were delineated across the interviews: 1) Limited expressiveness and awareness, 2) Emotional disconnection from body image, 3) Multiple influences and reinforcers, and 4) "Men are men."

#### Relevance to Literature

##### **Theme 1: Limited Expressiveness and Awareness**

The most prominent aspect of the interviews was the participants' lack of expressiveness in their responses. Most participants gave vague or contradictory

statements. This style of response could be due to developmental issues or the need to protect one's masculinity.

From his qualitative study on masculinity ideologies, Gale (1999) noticed different responses from his participants based on their age. He believed that the younger undergraduate interviewees exhibited attitudes that were traditional and stereotyped due to their lack of exposure to different viewpoints and perspectives. Conversely, his older participants, who had had more experiences with a wide variety of people, were more socially aware and challenging of stereotypes. Indeed, college is often a transition time for adolescents to process their understanding of the world from a new perspective. The participants in the current study who displayed more body satisfaction and personal and social awareness tended to be older than the other participants. They were able to express that that appearance is not a priority in their life, explained that they had people in their lives who also placed less emphasis on looks, and were more critical of media pressures to conform to a certain image.

Salisbury and Jackson (1997) reported that adolescent boys often feel that body-related insecurities are a taboo subject to discuss, and engaging in such dialogues puts them at risk for exclusion and ridicule. The participants in the current study admitted that body image discussions did not exist outside the peer taunting of being called "too skinny" or "dressing too nice." These participants may have only felt safe enough to partially divulge their genuine feelings regarding possible insecurities, thus appearing contradicting or vague. Being at the cusp of adulthood, these men may still feel vulnerable in disclosing their inner feelings to an unfamiliar male interviewer (Salisbury & Jackson, 1997). It is possible that the male respondents were unsatisfied with their

physical appearance but did not want to risk their sense of masculinity by admitting to insecurities. Therefore, traditional body image questionnaires specifically asking, “Are you satisfied with your body?” may be eliciting the more rationalizing and protecting aspect of the male satisfaction.

On the one hand, quantitative questionnaires are easy to administer to a large number of participants, and participants are more comfortable answering questions of a sensitive nature on a sheet of paper rather than face-to-face with an interviewer. On the other hand, these questionnaires tend to address only the surface level issues and are unable to investigate the underlying dynamics behind the responses. While this latter limitation is true for qualitative studies as well, qualitative researchers are able to further use the data to draw forth more elaborate interpretations and conclusions. For example, most respondents did not appear aware of their contradictory statements, cultural influences, and self-consciousness. It was only from an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the quality of their answers that these issues came to light.

### **Theme 2: Emotional Disconnection**

Along with limited expressiveness also came a disconnection between body satisfaction and the personal feelings surrounding it. Most participants reported that they felt “pretty satisfied” with their appearance although most noted “obvious” changes they would like to make if possible. This type of response style and content has not been noted before in the literature, perhaps because structured questions fail to elicit these aspects of male body image. For example, although the participants wanted to increase their muscle mass, they humorously called themselves “lazy” and redirected their focus to other areas in their lives, such as education or work. This form of body image is quite different from

the conventional notion of body image for women, where women frequently feel that their appearance is directly tied to their sense of self and accomplishment (Brownell, 1991). Generally speaking, women tend to perseverate on body image concerns more than men, which may explain the male participants' ease in redirecting their attention to factors within their control. Men's ability to use this cognitive redirection removes the personalization factor, which many female-directed body image questionnaires address. It is possible that the psychological and behavioral nuances of male body image, specifically Asian American male body image, are quite different from female body image. Again, it is not possible to verify the reasoning behind these participant responses with the limitations of qualitative studies. Perhaps the interviewees were reciting socially desirable responses to the male interviewer (e.g., "I'm comfortable with how I look"), or simply did not feel comfortable enough to disclose their true feelings to the interviewer.

### **Theme 3: Multiple Influences and Reinforcers**

Previous studies have reported mixed findings with regard to the effects of childhood experiences on body image (Williamson & Delin, 2000; Hill et al., 1994; Maloney et al., 1988). This qualitative study may have been able to clarify some of these discrepancies. The interviewees in the current study explained that children who are physically different from the average, such as being short, overweight, or wearing glasses, are subjected to being teased or rejected. Consequently, these children become more self-conscious of their appearance. This is in contrast to the other male classmates who do not "stand out" and are able to blend in with the majority. Their early school years are described as fun and playful, without any pressure to look a certain way in order to be accepted. Childhood appears to be the first time boys learn that physical appearance

is related to social status. They see that having a different body appearance from the norm (i.e., not of average height or weight) is not acceptable, and that it is more socially advantageous to fit in with the majority.

Interestingly, none of the participants noted school experiences of being taunted for their physical Asian traits. Kim (1993) stated that in her study of Japanese American women, the participants invariably experienced negative consequences of racial taunting in school. Despite detailed probing on this issue, none of the interviewees stated that they were singled out for their ethnic features. It is possible that the interviewees assumed the interviewer, who is also an Asian American male, understood the childhood issues that most individuals from this group face. Thus, they may have presumed that factors such as racial taunting were implied in their discourse. Another possible reason is that several participants were raised in Hawaii, and therefore did not stand out ethnically from their peers. Lastly, it is possible that the interviewees did not feel comfortable enough to share shameful or embarrassing moments of racial taunting.

During adolescence, boys undergo physical, hormonal, and social/relational changes. In a previous qualitative study, Davison (2000) reported that this period is marked by constant social comparisons of body size and athletic ability. This was further illustrated by many participants in the current study who still emphasize the desire to attain a taller, more muscular body in order to be popular, gain confidence, and attract women. Acceptance by peers becomes critically important at this age, and boys may feel pressured to engage in certain behaviors and attitudes in order to not “look weird.” For example, one participant admitted that in high school he lifted weights with friends only to fit in and had no personal interest in gaining more muscles. Males at this age begin to

learn what is deemed masculine and appropriate behavior. Coupled with media images, they may subscribe to an idealized body that is muscular, toned, tall, and clean cut, and feel pressured to achieve this look for social status, peer acceptance, and sexual appeal.

As these specific participants recognized the unhealthy pressures from the media, media exposure and influence towards males do seem to be increasing at an alarming rate (Pope et al., 1999; Andersen & DiDomenico, 1992; Leit et al., 2000). The cumulative emphasis of muscular body shape may lead to lowered self-esteem and unhealthy behaviors to attain a more muscular physique. This was exemplified by one participant who reportedly “does not care about physical appearance” but admits that he cannot help but compare himself to media images. He finds his new self-consciousness and beauty focus distressing and persistent. The media appears to be quite effective at targeting a wider male audience. With increased pressure from the media and society, body image issues for men may become as critical as body image issues are for women today (Brownell, 1991; Harmatz et al., 1985).

#### **Theme 4: Relationship to the Asian Culture**

Although the media is composed of mostly European American models and celebrities, many of the interviewees from this study felt that all men, regardless of ethnicity, aim to achieve the modern muscular ideal body. Despite noting physical differences between Asian Americans and the majority culture, negative stereotypes against Asian Americans, and often being uncomfortable outside of Asian American groups, most of the participants felt that Asian American men are no different from men in the majority culture. This combination of “men are men” and the lack of personal ease and cultural awareness may place many Asian American boys and men at an increased

risk for body image concerns. By outwardly believing that they are accepted into the mainstream but feeling truly different and misunderstood, these men may not recognize the roots of their body image concerns and thus would have more difficulty overcoming these issues.

As discussed by Sue, Mak, and Sue (1998), ethnic identity is comprised of affective, cognitive, and behavioral components. In sum, these elements measure the degree to which an individual belongs to an ethnic group. There were no apparent trends found between the ethnic identity of the participants in this study and their body image. This may be due largely to the small homogeneous sample used in the current study. As reported by the participants, nearly all were middle- to upper-class, college educated, young, heterosexual, and from Hawaii. It is possible that there exists a relationship between ethnic identity and body image but that it was not able to be verified using a small sample. It is also a possibility that there simply is not a strong effect between ethnic identity and body image.

Acculturation is an ethnic minority's adaptation to the majority-minority group conflict (Osvold & Sodowsky, 1995). The multidimensional approach to acculturation presumes that the acceptance of the dominant culture and the upholding of their cultural roots are independent of each other. Indeed, all of the respondents ranged between the bicultural and moderately high acculturation classifications. Greater levels of acculturation and generations are often associated with higher levels of self-esteem (Sodowsky & Lai, 1997; Padilla, Wagatsuma, & Lindholm, 1985). This trend was exemplified by the participants in the current study. The greater the generation levels and acculturation to the dominant U.S. societal values, the more likely the participant was

accepting of his physical appearance, able to demonstrate a broader perspective in life, and critical of social/media pressures.

Based on the participants who were born overseas but raised in the U.S., it could be hypothesized that first or second-generation Asian Americans have a stronger ethnic identification to their Asian culture and are less acculturated to the dominant U.S. culture and values. Although these particular interviewees displayed the most body image problems, it is not possible to say whether this trend would be true for recent immigrants. On the other hand, multi-generation Asian Americans may feel more acculturated to the dominant U.S. culture and less identified with their ethnic background. These individuals may feel less pressure from external forces to conform, and thus may have healthier body images. Again, this is a hypothesis which was not able to be fully assessed given the limited sample of the current study. It would be interesting to test this hypothesis using a larger group of Asian Americans.

### Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations imposed on this and other phenomenological studies. As with most qualitative studies that utilize a small sample, the rich, descriptive data that emerges often cannot be immediately generalizable to other populations. Therefore the findings of this study may be true only for this particular group of Asian American male participants and may not be applicable to other Asian American men. That is, the themes derived from these interviews may be more common among Asian American males who are also college-educated, middle-to-upper class, heterosexual, young adults who live in a similar region.

Qualitative studies rely on self-reports, which may or may not be a true assessment of the given phenomenon. Studies such as these are based on the perceptions and verbal recounts of the interviewees, and their experiences and opinions may be quite different than those of other individuals. Furthermore, this particular study utilized an Asian American male interviewer, which had advantages and disadvantages. Because he may have been viewed as similar or familiar to the interviewees, it was hoped that the participants would be more comfortable opening up to the interviewer. It is possible, however, that participants also felt the need to maintain a sense of guardedness when being interviewed by another male. Thus the interviewees may have given more socially desirable responses during their interview. Perhaps the interviewees assumed that the interviewer had a similar background and experiences as themselves, and therefore did not mention or elaborate on certain points. Finally, the analysis of the data was performed by the primary researcher and not by multiple researchers. This limits the ability to verify the analysis across researchers. It is important to bear these limitations in mind but contributions of qualitative studies also need to be recognized.

#### Advantages of Qualitative Studies

Quantitative studies from the past report mixed findings with regard to male body image and body satisfaction. Some researchers assert that males feel more satisfied with their bodies than females (Fallon & Rozin, 1985; Leon et al., 1985). Other studies, however, indicate that many men are dissatisfied with their bodies and prefer a more muscular shape to the same extent that many women prefer a more slender figure (Tucker, 1982; Harmatz et al., 1985). Traditional measures such as questionnaires often cannot account for these types of discrepancies between participant responses.

Consequently, the intricacies of male body image remain unknown. Furthermore, there have been insufficient studies on the body image of ethnic minority men to understand the relationship between race/ethnicity and body image. Because qualitative studies are not based on an imposed theory, rather the schemas of certain individuals, the body image concerns of Asian American men were more thoroughly addressed in this phenomenological study. Several factors such as the Asian American male interviewees' response styles, unique body image issues, body satisfaction, and ethnic factors in body image may account for discrepancies within quantitative studies.

Because traditional body image questionnaires are based and normed on predominantly European American female participants, the constructs being measured may not be applicable to other groups. For example, body image questionnaires often focus on weight issues while males tend to be concerned with muscular build. Several participants stated that they wanted to lose and gain weight. Upon clarification, it was understood that the participants wanted to lose fat around their stomach and gain more upper body muscle mass. Many questionnaires would not have been able to distinguish between these contradictory remarks. In fact, researchers such as Drewnoski and Yee (1987) hypothesize that male responses to questions such as "How much weight do you want to lose?" and "How much weight do you want to gain?" produce numbers which negate each other and appear to illustrate that men would not want anything changed. Again, it is important to show that male and female body image concerns may be quite different, thus requiring more sensitive methods of investigation.

The relationship between body image and ethnicity is complex, and it is believed that quantitative measures often neglect the cultural aspects associated with body image

(Altabe, 1998). Although it is believed that their ethnicity is a factor in their body image, most of the participants in this study perceived their ethnicity as being unrelated to their body image. This disconnection between body image and ethnicity may also be due in part to the homogeneity of the group, that is, most participants are young, educated, middle-class Asian Americans. The majority of respondents expressed strong desires to be taller than their family members and to be the same height as men in the majority culture. This aspect of body satisfaction may be particularly attributable to this population as genetically Asians tend to be shorter than other racial/ethnic groups. It is believed that this physical aspect of their ethnic/racial background is a direct source of frustration and dissatisfaction for these participants. Although they may not be aware of the connection between others' perceptions of them and their physical and emotional comfort among others, it is likely that ethnicity plays a larger role in their lives than they are aware. This interwoven relationship between ethnicity and body image may be difficult to assess using measurements created and standardized with people from the dominant group in the U.S. (European American).

#### Future Directions

It is the intention of the researcher to use this study's findings to provide impetus for future studies, in light of the complex and sensitive nature of the phenomenon. Prospective studies should continue to examine the gender-ethnic intricacies of the body image of Asian American males. Researchers should be conscientious regarding the way in which questions are posed, the possible response styles that may be given, and the demographics of the interviewer. Quantitative questionnaires created and standardized with non-Asian males may not be able to fully address the thoughts and feelings that

participants have. Likewise, qualitative interviews with direct questions that risk the preservation of masculinity may be uncomfortable for interviewees, and thus also fail to elicit the issues associated with body image among males. Therefore, developing more culture-specific questionnaires or finding a way to ease the tension of interview formats, such as priming for sensitive topics and encouraging honest but risky responses, may be possible solutions for addressing these concerns.

Researchers may also want to examine the body image themes of more specific groups of Asian American men. Because Asian Americans represent more than forty different Asian subgroups, it is ideal to study each group for its distinction. Therefore, in-depth studies on the body image issues of each group, such as Japanese American, Chinese American, Korean American, or Filipino American men, may help us understand these individuals from a more sensitive cultural perspective. Unfortunately because of the small Asian American population at the current university, such a study was not possible. But the overall Asian American issues and trends that were explored in this study will still be beneficial to future investigators interested in the cultural aspects of body image.

Age is another important factor that should be more thoroughly examined in the body image literature. While many research studies utilize a university student population, it would augment our current knowledge of body image issues by investigating the concerns of young boys, adolescents, young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults. Cross-sectional or longitudinal studies, in fact, would provide extremely rich data on the developmental aspects of body image formation. By following the participants over a certain time period, changes in attitudes, feelings, and behaviors regarding body image can be tracked.

The participants in the current study were fairly homogeneous in their education level and socioeconomic status. Because there are several social implications and constraints related to a university setting or an average to above average socioeconomic level, it would behoove future investigators to examine groups of varying educational and socioeconomic levels outside a university setting. It would be interesting to see if there are significant differences among such groups. For example, individuals of lower socioeconomic status may have different priorities than those of higher socioeconomic status, which may be reflected in how they assess their physical appearance.

Previous studies have documented different ideal body shapes depending on sexual orientation. In general, heterosexual males prefer a larger, broader body shape and homosexual males prefer a thinner, slender shape. These studies, however, do not address homosexual Asian American men. The ten Asian American participants in this study identified as being heterosexual, therefore issues of sexual orientation in body image were not able to be fully examined. Researchers should examine the factor of sexual orientation in the body image concerns of Asian American males in order to determine how homosexual Asian American men compare in body image issues to their heterosexual counterparts. Similarly, religion can play a pivotal role in a person's identity and should be accounted for in future studies. Although only one participant in the present study referred to his religion, it apparently had a significant impact on how he gained more respect for himself and his body.

Lastly, because the majority of the participants in this study grew up in Hawaii, it will be important to see how Asian American men from other regions in the country exhibit body image. In Hawaii, the majority of the residents are of Asian descent, and

these demographics are vastly different from all other U.S. states and regions. It is likely that the subgroup of participants from Hawaii is different in their assessment of Asian American body image concerns because ethnicity is not a focus in Hawaii. For ethnic minorities in the mainland U.S., how they feel about their ethnicity and their presentation to the outside world usually affects their sense of self and body. Researchers should examine regional patterns by comparing the body image issues of Asian American men of varying generations in different areas of the country.

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**APPENDIX A**

**FORMS**

**Flier distributed to interested participants**

**Consent Form**

**Research Information Sheet**

**ATTENTION: ASIAN AMERICAN MEN!**

I am a graduate student in the Counseling Psychology program at CSU and am conducting a study called The Body Image of Asian American Men. As you may be aware, Asian American men are often underrepresented in research studies and misunderstood by others.

I'm interested in learning what you think about physical appearance, based on your experiences and opinions. Your participation is voluntary and completely confidential. Share as much as you feel comfortable sharing. Your insights and opinions will help us learn more about ourselves.

All interviews will be conducted by Noah Dempewolf, a recent CSU graduate. Each interview will be conducted individually and will last approximately one hour. There is a slight chance that Noah may ask a few follow-up questions over the phone at a later time. Again, all of the information that you share is completely confidential and your identity will be secured.

As a thank you gift, each participant will receive a \$10 Blockbuster gift certificate.

Please help if you can!

Lynn Chang, M.S.  
Department of Psychology  
Colorado State University  
970-491-2426 (office)  
moomoo@lamar.colostate.edu

The principle investigators of this study are Kathryn Rickard, Ph.D. and Evelinn Borrayo, Ph.D. of the Department of Psychology.

**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

**TITLE PROJECT:** The Body Image of Asian-American Men

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:** Kathryn Rickard, Ph.D. and Evelinn Borrayo, Ph.D.

**CO-INVESTIGATOR:** Lynn Chang, M.S.

**CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS:**  
Lynn Chang 970-491-2519

**PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:**

We are doing a research study to better understand how Asian-American men feel about body-image issues. You must be an Asian-American male student at Colorado State University to participate.

**PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:**

You are being asked to participate in an individual interview to share your thoughts on Asian-American men's views about body image. You will have an opportunity to share your thoughts and experiences about your own concept of physical attractiveness and ethnicity. Questions may explore how often friends discuss the topic of body image, how you feel about your appearance, and what factors helped shaped your perspectives. Before the interview begins you will be asked to complete a few short questionnaires to gain more information on demographic (such as age, gender, and place of birth) and cultural background (such as ethnicity and generations in US). Noah Dempewolf, a recent CSU graduate, will be conducting the interview. You are free to share as much or as little as you wish. Interviews may last approximately 60 minutes, depending on how much information you share. Location and meeting time will be arranged by a phone call from the interviewer. During the analysis phase of the investigation, the interviewer may phone you to ask some brief follow-up questions for clarification or elaboration.

During the individual interview, Noah would like to take written notes and audiotape your responses. Your name will not be mentioned or recorded on the tape. All written documentation will be kept anonymous, using only an identification number, without names or phone numbers. It is important to us to maintain your confidentiality.

**RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES:**

This topic may be very sensitive for some to discuss. It has the potential to trigger some unresolved issues or show indications of a disturbance in eating. If you feel any discomfort during the interview, you may choose not to discuss or answer the questions at any time. Phone numbers to contact professional support from the University Counseling Center and the Asian/Pacific American Student Services will be made available to you if needed.

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

**BENEFITS:**

There are no known direct benefits to you.

**COMPENSATION:**

As a participant in this investigation, you will receive a \$10 Blockbuster gift certificate.

Page 1 of 2 Participant Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

We have taken careful measures to ensure your privacy in the participation of this study. During the interview, your name will not be mentioned or recorded. All written documentation will be identified with a code number and not names. All notes and audiotapes will be locked in a filing cabinet in a locked and secured office during the study. After the study is completed, all audiotapes will be destroyed and torn.

**LIMITATION OF LIABILITY:**

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about the participants' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at 970-491-1563.

**PARTICIPATION:**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which are you otherwise entitled.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator or Co-investigator signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR**

As parent or guardian you authorize \_\_\_\_\_ (print name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to you by Lynn Chang and you are satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Minor's date of birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian signature

Human Research Committee Application: Protocol Information  
The Body Image of Asian American Men

**1. OBJECTIVES OF PROPOSED RESEARCH AND BACKGROUND**

It was once assumed that those who suffered from body image problems were solely young European American, upper-middle class women. Men, especially, were often overlooked in body image discourses as they were not viewed as being vulnerable to societal beauty pressures. Upon closer examination, though, men appear to be as distressed over their “underdeveloped muscles” as women are over their “overweight bodies.”

Being the “model minority,” Asian Americans are often overlooked in research. Some believe that Asian Americans are immune or less vulnerable to mental disorders and illnesses. However, research has shown that Asian Americans may be more vulnerable to stressors due to the nature of their bi-cultural identity. Being a part of two very different cultures, Asian-Americans struggle with honoring their ethnic heritage and assimilating to the dominant culture.

It is the goal of this study to examine and understand the processes involved in the development of ten Asian American men’s body image. Through the participants’ sharing of personal stories and experiences, the researcher can begin to see what factors affect body image, and from there, begin to evaluate possible prevention and treatment plans for this underserved population.

**2. SOURCE OF PARTICIPANT POPULATION**

Participants will be recruited from the Asian/Pacific American Student Services (A/PASS) at Colorado State University. A flier will be posted in the office to alert students of the study. The exact material in the flier will also be publicized in the A/PASS newsletter and listserve. Participants of all ages are welcomed.

**3. NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS**

Ten participants will be used in this study. For qualitative phenomenological research, 10 subjects have been deemed a sufficient number by leading researchers (Polkinghorne, 1989; Dukes, 1984).

**4. CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS**

All participants will be of Asian American descent, male, and students of CSU. (Any Asian American man will be acceptable, including those adopted by European American families or born in Hawaii.)

**5. RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES**

A recruitment flier will be posted in the A/PASS office. Interested individuals are asked to contact the researcher. The researcher will then discuss with the individual the nature of the study, the rationale and procedures of the study, answer any questions he may have, and give the participant an advance opportunity to decline participation if the subject material appears too sensitive or if the participant is uncomfortable with the subject matter.

**6. RECRUITING MATERIALS**

(see attached)

**7. CRITERIA FOR INCLUDING OR EXCLUDING PARTICIPANTS**

- a) Participants will be included in the study if they are Asian American men attending CSU, and are comfortable with and willing to discuss the research topic.
- b) Participants who do not wish to participate in this study for any reason will be excluded from the study. Reasons may range from being uncomfortable with discussing this subject matter to any other reason offered.
- c) Participants who state that they currently suffer from an eating disturbance or other personal issues related to this topic will be excluded from the study and will be given information regarding services available at CSU.

**8. RATIONALE FOR USING “AT-RISK” POPULATIONS**

n/a

**9. ORIGINAL LETTERS OF HRC AGREEMENT/APPROVAL**

n/a

**10. OTHER MATERIALS PERTINENT TO HUMAN PARTICIPANTS**

n/a

**11. SPECIFY LOCATION OF STUDY**

Interviews will take place in a private office at the University Counseling Center. Although the location is at a counseling center, the interviews will be held after work hours. The room is quiet, private, and comfortable.

**12. LIST VARIABLES TO BE STUDIED**

How do Asian American men feel about their bodies?  
 How important is physical appearance to Asian American men?  
 What has influenced their current body image?  
 Has their body image remained the same over time?  
 What impact does ethnicity have on their body image?

**13. DESCRIBE METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

Because it was believed participants would feel more comfortable disclosing personal information to another Asian American male, the researcher sought out an Asian American male interviewer. The interviewer for this study is a recent graduate of CSU and will be trained and supervised by the primary researcher. The interviewer has completed a literature review of the philosophy, technique, and skills of qualitative interviewing, and will conduct three supervised mock interviews before the study begins. At the start of each interview, the interviewer will further explain the study and ask that the participant read and sign the consent form in order to proceed. Participants will complete brief demographic, acculturation, and ethnic identity questionnaires. The questionnaires will help gather demographic and cultural information while helping the client feel more comfortable with the interviewer, who will answer any questions the participant may have. The participants will then be individually interviewed. Questions are geared specifically towards the objectives of the study. Participants will have the opportunity to share their responses to all of the study's questions as well as contribute any other opinions or experiences they are willing to share. Participants are free to share as much or as little information as they wish. Through an interview approximately 1 hour long, the interviewer will seek to understand the personal experiences of the participant with the current issue. With the permission of the participant, the interviews will be audio-taped for later analysis. Transcription and analysis of the interviews will provide pertinent themes and examples of the variables being studied. During the analysis period the investigator may have additional questions (for elaboration or clarification) at which time the interviewer may conduct some brief follow-up questions over the phone.

**14. DESCRIBE ACTIVITIES INVOLVING PARTICIPANTS**

Participants will complete brief questionnaires on demographics, acculturation, and ethnic identity and partake in an individual interview.

**15. DESCRIBE EQUIPMENT USED WITH SUBJECTS**

The interviewer will be audio-taping and taking notes during the individual interviews. This is necessary in the analysis process of the qualitative study.

**16. SPECIFY WHAT FACTORS WILL LEAD TO STOPPING PROCEDURES**

If, at any time, the participant wishes to stop, he is able to leave the study without any ramifications. If, at any time, the participant appears to be upset by the interview, the interviewer will ask the participant if he wishes to continue. If the level of intensity persists or worsens, the researcher will advise the participant to stop and will give numbers to agencies on campus (such as UCC, A/PASS) who may be able to help him with his concerns.

**17. DESCRIBE BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES TO BE TAKEN**

n/a

**18. PROVIDE DEBRIEFING METHOD AND MATERIALS FOR PARTICIPANTS**

Because no deception is being used in this study, a debriefing letter will not be necessary. Business cards and brochures about the University Counseling Center and the Asian/Pacific American Student Services will be provided if the participants need additional support.

**19. OTHER ASPECTS OF PROCEDURES**

n/a

**20. DESCRIBE POTENTIAL RISKS AND ASSESS LIKELIHOOD, SEVERITY, DURATION, AND EFFECTS OF EACH**

A. PHYSICAL INJURY- none known

B. PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA OR STRESS- Discussion of this topic may potentially trigger unresolved ethnic identity issues or reveal indications of a disturbance in eating or dieting. Prompt support and assistance may remedy the situation. A referral to the University Counseling Center or Psychological Services Center may be made.

C. SOCIAL/ECONOMIC HARM- none known

D. LEGAL RISK- none known

E. LOSS OF CONFIDENTIALITY- Issues of confidentiality are crucial and steps will be taken to ensure complete confidentiality for all participants. On all forms of data (questionnaires, interview notes, audio tapes, and transcriptions) the participant will be assigned an ID# (Participant #01, #02, #03, etc.) so that no trace of their identity will be available.

**21. DESCRIBE METHODS FOR MINIMIZING RISKS**

Before the study begins, each participant will be receive information about what the study will entail and will have the opportunity to decline participation if he wishes. Additionally, if at that time during the course of the study the participant wishes to decline from partaking in the study, it will be permitted without any ramifications. The interviewer, who is trained to be sensitive and attuned to the participants, will make all efforts to make the participant more comfortable. He will direct the discussions so as to minimize the level of discomfort for the participants. If the study does bring up certain issues or concerns by either the participant or the interviewer, then phone numbers of professionals at the University Counseling Center and/or Asian/Pacific American Student Services will be provided.

**22. DESCRIBE OTHER METHODS, IF ANY, THAT WERE CONSIDERED**

n/a

**23. OTHER MATTERS RELATIVE TO RISK TO PARTICIPANTS**

n/a

**24. DESCRIBE THE DIRECT BENEFITS TO THESE PARTICIPANTS**

None, except for the opportunity to openly discuss issues that affect them personally and obtain necessary referrals.

**25. DESCRIBE THE BENEFITS ACCRUING TO CLASS OF PARTICIPANTS THESE INDIVIDUALS REPRESENT**

Asian-Americans in a European-American dominant culture are often overlooked. Making their voice heard and valued is empowering. Other Asian-American students on college campuses can benefit through the potential services and recognition that this research can provide. Each participate will be compensated with a \$15 Blockbuster gift certificate.

**26. DESCRIBE THE BENEFITS ACCRUING TO SOCIETY-AT-LARGE OR OTHER**

The implications for this study are great. Not only will Asian-American men have a better understanding of why they feel the way they do, but men in general can see how the development of their own body images came to be. Researchers and practitioners will be yet another step closer to more successful treatment and prevention programs.

**27. OTHER ASPECTS OF BENEFITS**

n/a

**28. DESCRIBE HOW POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS WILL BE INFORMED ABOUT THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

Interested participants are asked to contact the researcher, who will then inform them about the study's purpose, rationale, and procedure. Before the questionnaires are given or the interview is conducted, the participants will read and sign the consent form. The questionnaires will be described and explained to them, as well as the individual interview portion. The researcher will answer all questions posed to her by the participants.

**29. ATTACH THE CONSENT FORM  
(see attached)**

**30. OTHER ASPECTS OF CONSENT PROCESS**  
n/a

**31. DESCRIBE METHOD USED TO PROTECT THE IDENTITY OF INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS**

During all stages of data analyses, a code number will be assigned to each participant, and solely the code numbers will be used for identification.

**32. DESCRIBE PLANS FOR MAINTAINING DATA AFTER STUDY IS COMPLETE**

All written notes and audiotapes will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in the main researcher's locked office. Once the analysis is complete, the tapes will be destroyed and torn so as to leave no trace of human voice. Written transcriptions, with no identification, will be retained for three years upon completion of the study.

**33. DESCRIBE HOW FEDERAL REQUIREMENT WILL BE MET FOR CONSENT FORMS TO BE RETAINED**

Consent forms will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office for three years after the conclusion of the research.

**34. IF AUDIO- OR VIDEO-TAPING, SPECIFY TAPE STORAGE, USE, AND WHEN AND HOW DISPOSITION OF TAPES WILL TAKE PLACE**

All audiotapes will be locked in a filing cabinet in a secured office. Once analysis is complete, the tapes will be demagnetized and erased.

**35. OTHER ASPECTS OF CONFIDENTIALITY**  
n/a

## APPENDIX B

### MEASURES

Demographics Questionnaire

Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale

Orthogonal Identification Scale

DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years of education have you had? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What generation of living in the U.S. do you represent in your family? (1<sup>st</sup> generation= first immigrated to U.S., 2<sup>nd</sup> generation= first born in U.S., etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Where were you born (city, state) and how long did you live there?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Where do you currently live and how long have you lived here?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What others cities have you lived in and for how long?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Where were your parents born and how long did they live there?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. If you have siblings, please list their gender, age, and place of birth:
10. How would you rate your socioeconomic status background?  
  - High
  - Above Average
  - Average
  - Below Average
  - Low
11. What is your sexual orientation? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What is your current weight and height? \_\_\_\_\_

**SUINN-LEW ASIAN SELF-IDENTITY ACCULTURATION SCALE**  
(SL-ASIA, Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987)

**INSTRUCTIONS:** The questions which follow are for the purpose of collecting information about your historical background as well as more recent behaviors which may be related to your cultural identity. Choose the one answer which best describes you.

*1. What language can you speak?*

1. Asian only (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.)
2. Mostly Asian, some English
3. Asian and English about equally well (bilingual)
4. Mostly English, some Asian
5. Only English

*2. What language do you prefer?*

1. Asian only (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.)
2. Mostly Asian, some English
3. Asian and English about equally well (bilingual)
4. Mostly English, some Asian
5. Only English

*3. How do you identify yourself?*

1. Oriental
2. Asian
3. Asian-American
4. Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Korean-American, etc.
5. American

*4. Which identification does (did) your mother use?*

1. Oriental
2. Asian
3. Asian-American
4. Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Korean-American, etc.
5. American

*5. Which identification does (did) your father use?*

1. Oriental
2. Asian
3. Asian-American
4. Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Korean-American, etc.
5. American

6. *What was the ethnic origin of the friends and peers you had, as a child up to age 6?*

1. Almost exclusively Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals
2. Mostly Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals
3. About equally Asian groups and Anglo groups
4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups
5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups

7. *What was the ethnic origin of the friends and peers you had, as a child from 6 to 18?*

1. Almost exclusively Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals
2. Mostly Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals
3. About equally Asian groups and Anglo groups
4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups
5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups

8. *Whom do you now associate with in the community?*

1. Almost exclusively Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals
2. Mostly Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals
3. About equally Asian groups and Anglo groups
4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups
5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups

9. *If you could pick, whom would you prefer to associate with in the community?*

1. Almost exclusively Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals
2. Mostly Asians, Asian-Americans, Orientals
3. About equally Asian groups and Anglo groups
4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups
5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Asian ethnic groups

10. *What is your music preference?*

1. Only Asian music (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.)
2. Mostly Asian
3. Equally Asian and English
4. Mostly English
5. English only

11. *What is your movie preference?*

1. Asian-language movies only
2. Asian-language movies mostly
3. Equally Asian/English English-language movies
4. Mostly English-language movies only
5. English-language movies only

*12. What generation are you? (circle the generation that best applies to you)*

- 1 1st Generation = I was born in Asia or country outside the U.S.
- 2 2nd Generation = I was born in U.S., either parent was born in Asia or country outside the U.S.
- 3 3rd Generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S, and all grandparents born in Asia or country outside the U.S.
- 4 4th Generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S, and at least one grandparent born in Asia or country outside the U.S. and one grandparent born in U.S.
- 5 5th Generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S., and all grandparents also born in U.S.
- 6 Don't know what generation best fits since I lack some information.

*13. Where were you raised?*

1. In Asia only
2. Mostly in Asia, some in U.S.
3. Equally in Asia and U.S.
4. Mostly in U.S., some in Asia
5. In U.S. only

*14. What contact have you had with Asia?*

1. Raised one year or more in Asia
2. Lived for less than one year in Asia
3. Occasional visits to Asia
4. Occasional communications (letters, phone calls, etc.) with people in Asia
5. No exposure or communications with people in Asia

*15. What is your food preference at home?*

1. Exclusively Asian food
2. Mostly Asian food, some American
3. About equally Asian and American
4. Mostly American food
5. Exclusively American food

*16. What is your food preference in restaurants?*

1. Exclusively Asian food
2. Mostly Asian food, some American
3. About equally Asian and American
4. Mostly American food
5. Exclusively American food





Orthogonal Identification Scale  
(Oetting & Beauvais, 1990-1991)

1. Do you live by or follow the Asian way of life?

A lot \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_ Not much \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

2. Does your family live of follow the Asian way of life?

A lot \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_ Not much \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

3. As an adult, will you be a success in the Asian way of life?

A lot \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_ Not much \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

4. Is your family a success in the Asian way of life?

A lot \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_ Not much \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you live by or follow the White-American way of life?

A lot \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_ Not much \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

6. Does your family live of follow the White-American way of life?

A lot \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_ Not much \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

7. As an adult, will you be a success in the White-American way of life?

A lot \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_ Not much \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

8. Is your family a success in the White-American way of life?

A lot \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_ Not much \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Interview Questions

### Importance of physical appearance

- A. How important is physical appearance to most men in the U.S.?
- B. How important is physical appearance to most Asian American men?
- C. What do you suppose accounts for these differences/similarities?
- D. How important is physical appearance to you?

### An ideal body

- A. Do you feel there is an “ideal body” for men in this country? What does it look like?
- B. Do you feel there is an “ideal body” for Asian American men? In what ways is it different or similar from the mainstream ideal body?
- C. What is your reaction to the “ideal body”? How do you feel about it?

### Discussing the topic of physical appearance

- A. How comfortable are most men in talking about how they feel about their physical appearances?
- B. How comfortable are Asian American men in talking about how they feel about their physical appearances?
- C. What do you suppose accounts for these differences/similarities?
- D. How comfortable are you in talking about how you feel about your physical appearance? Do you discuss it with others?

### Feelings surrounding body satisfaction

- A. How do most men feel about their physical appearances? Are they satisfied with how they look? Why or why not?
- B. How do most Asian American men feel about their physical appearances? Are they satisfied with how they look? Why or why not?
- C. What do you suppose accounts for these differences/similarities?
- D. How do you feel about your physical appearance? Are you satisfied with how you look? Why or why not?

### Factors that shape one’s body image

- A. Has your level of body (dis)satisfaction changed since you were younger? How so or why not?
- B. What factors have influenced how you feel about your physical appearance?
- C. Tap into these areas if not already mentioned:  
Media, Society, Family, Friends or peers, Women or girls, Childhood experiences

### Body Parts

- A. Is your body (dis)satisfaction related to your general appearance or to certain features of your body?
- B. If you could change anything about your body, what would it be? How might that change impact your life?

- C. How do you feel about your...  
Facial features, Height, Weight, Body shape and stature, Skin color

**The Asian culture and body image**

- A. How does the Asian culture influence how you see and feel about yourself?
- B. Do you feel a sense of pride in being Asian? How so or why not?
- C. What influenced how you feel about the Asian culture?
- D. As you were growing up, what type of messages did your family give you about being an Asian American male in a society that tends to be image- and beauty-focused?
- E. Does your ethnicity play a part in how you feel about your body?  
How so or why not?
- F. If you lived in a society where Asian Americans were the dominant culture, do you think your body satisfaction would be different than it is today?

APPENDIX D

EXAMPLE OF ANALYSIS

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIBED VERBATIM	CONCEPTUAL UNIT	DIMENSION/ COMMENT
<p style="text-align: center;">Interview AAM05</p> <p><b>I. Importance of physical appearance</b></p> <p>A. HOW IMPORTANT IS PHYSICAL APPEARANCE TO MOST MEN IN THE US?            I think everyone just tries to have good physical appearance. I guess it is like <u>half and half</u>. Some American men want to have a good body and some don't. Some don't really care and some do.            WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?            I don't know. I just kind of notice that like...I have quite a few White friends, American friends, and like some of them are all into working out and all into lifting and some they <u>just stay at home and just kind of watching T.V. and drinking</u>.</p> <p>B. HOW IMPORTANT IS PHYSICAL APPEARANCE TO MOST ASIAN AMERICAN MEN?            To most Asian American men. I guess for me, <u>I like to look good you know, try to workout, try to not look all flabby and get all fat because I guess it is a healthy thing</u> and I don't know it's just because maybe I was raised that way. Because in like high school I was always doing activities. I was doing sports. I guess it just depends on the type of person you are. If you want to stay in shape or not, how you feel about yourself. Like me, I like to look good, like try to look good by like working out every now and then. But for most Asian guys, I am not sure. I am not sure if a lot of Asian guys, I don't know if they... I see a lot of Asian guys working at the Rec. Center.            DO YOU THINK PHYSICAL APPEARANCE IS IMPORTANT TO THEM?            Well I guess I would have to say yeah... physical appearance. I was going to say, maybe it is <u>half and half for most Asian men too</u>.</p> <p>C. WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE ACCOUNTS FOR THESE SIMILARITIES?            Well maybe because <u>Asian guys are not too much different from American guys</u>. They probably think the same. They probably want to look the same. I mean not look the same. Like as I said they want to... some of them want to look good and some of them don't really care what people think of them. Some Asian guys kind of care like what their appearance is.            SO ARE YOU SAYING THAT REGARDLESS OF CULTURE, HALF WANT TO LOOK GOOD AND HALF DON'T REALLY CARE?  <u>Yeah, I think so.</u></p> <p>D. HOW IMPORTANT IS PHYSICAL APPEARANCE TO YOU?            To me? Since I said before, I like to work out since I grew up, you know like kind of always running around. Like in high school I did track, basketball, cross country. I don't know it just <u>feels good, working out and after, that kind of look good definition</u>.            WOULD YOU SAY THAT WORKING OUT IS MORE RELATED TO THE HEALTH ASPECTS OR THE APPEARANCE ASPECTS?            It's probably a little of both. <u>I do want to look good like if like maybe if I walk around the beach without a shirt on or something like that and then like at the same time I want to feel healthy and not fat.</u></p>	<p>Gen BI Importance</p> <p>Personal BI Importance</p> <p>AA BI importance</p> <p>AAM vs WM</p> <p>Personal BI</p>	<p><u>Not-some-very</u> Half-half</p> <p>Not-some-very Likes looking good, being healthy</p> <p><u>Not-some-very</u> Half-half</p> <p><u>Same-different</u></p> <p>Has always been athletic. Enjoys the results of working out for looks and health reasons</p>



really have a real real idol cause I just like see people's body like in magazines and I am like "oh I want to have his body" or "I want to have his stomach."  
 DO YOU SEE THAT BODY TYPE AS YOUR IDEAL?  
 Yeah. He is not huge. I wouldn't want to be like too big like Arnold Schwarzenegger or Sylvester Stallone. They are like really big.

**III. Discussing the topic of physical appearance**

**A. HOW COMFORTABLE ARE MOST MEN IN TALKING ABOUT HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT THEIR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE?**

Maybe again it kind of depends on... in my experience... I guess most of the people that I know... they are pretty comfortable talking about their bodies cause I don't know, they think they are in shape. They feel like they are in shape. I think that if you have confidence. I mean if you are in shape you have confidence to talk about how you feel about your appearance.

**WHAT TYPE OF TOPICS DO YOU TALK ABOUT?**

We don't just randomly talk about it. Like it comes up like maybe in the gym. Like when we are lifting and then like sometimes I will be lifting with my friends and I will be like "dang, I want to have that guy's body" you know. It doesn't have to be an Asian guy or a White guy. It just could be anybody, a Black guy, Hispanic, White... whatever. It doesn't have to be anybody. One of my friends would just be like "dang, I want to have his arms, I want to have his pecks, I want to have his abs" you know, whatever. "I want to be as strong as him" or something like that. That is how we start talking about it kind of we would just be like "yeah that is kind of cool, that would take forever."

**B. HOW COMFORTABLE ARE ASIAN AMERICAN MEN IN TALKING ABOUT HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT THEIR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE?**

Is it from my experience? I think most Asians feel pretty comfortable talking about their appearance. I don't know because from my experience most of the friends that I have that are Asian they are in pretty good shape. Like \*\*\*\*, like \*\*\*\* is in pretty good shape. He is not too fat or anything, he is just regular. I don't know, just from my experiences, I think most guys, most Asian guys, most Asian American guys are pretty comfortable.

**DO YOU GUYS USUALLY TALK ABOUT APPEARANCE IN THE GYM?**

Yeah, most of the topics come up when we see other... like say like we see an Asian guy who is kind of toned up we are like "dang!" You don't see too many Asian guys like that, you know. Yeah, I think it's when you see it... I don't think it would really just come up like when you are washing the dishes or something.

**SO IT DOESN'T JUST COME UP WHEN YOU ARE JUST SITTING AROUND?**

Not with me at least.

**C. WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE SIMILARITIES?**

I guess it's because there's like no real... nothing that like separates... we basically do the same things and the same activities and we hang out with each other. We see each other walking around. I mean there's like... it's not just the same people you see everyday. It's not just the same Asian guys you see everyday. It's not the same White guys lifting you see everyday. You see like a lot of types, like many

	parts
Gen BI discussion: comfort	Not-some-very If in shape, then confident, then can talk about it
BI discussion: when	At gym or whenever sees admirable bodies
BI discussion: who	With workout partners and friends
BI discussion: topic	Admiring others' bodies. "I want his ____." Regardless of ethnicity.
AA BI discussion: comfort	Not-some-very If they are not fat or in good shape
Surprised when he sees a well-toned AAM b/c it doesn't happen often	

<p>types of people that you want to be like.  <b>SO MOST GUYS THINK ALIKE?</b>          Yeah pretty much. We just think alike. We have maybe the same views on parents.  <b>D. HOW COMFORTABLE ARE YOU IN TALKING ABOUT YOUR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE?</b>          I guess I feel like...even though I have not been working out too much I feel like <u>I am still in pretty good shape</u>. I mean I don't want to...it seems like I am kind of bragging about it but I don't...I feel like if I go out for a jog <u>I won't be like breathing too hard</u>, just things like that. If I go work out or do practice break dancing or something or break dance I will get up and feel like I won't be breathing too hard. Out of breath.  <b>SO YOU FEEL PRETTY COMFORTABLE?</b>          Yeah, I feel pretty comfortable.  <b>HAS THERE BEEN A TIME WHEN YOU WERE NOT COMFORTABLE?</b>          Well, the thing with me is that <u>I don't really care what other people think of my appearance</u>. Before I just thought that...other people think...what am I trying to say...  <b>DO YOU USUALLY DISCUSS YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT YOUR APPEARANCE WITH OTHER PEOPLE?</b>          No. Not with too many people. Maybe just my roommate or people I work out with. Not random people. Just basically close people.  <b>WHY IS THAT?</b>          Because my roommate, I work out with him. I mean <u>we go to the gym and stuff and we like compare bodies with other guys and we're like "dang that guy, he's got a good body."</u> "That guy- aay." Just basically the people I know. Who I work out with. Those who have the same body image as I have.  <b>SO PEOPLE YOU ARE PRETTY MUCH COMFORTABLE WITH?</b>          Yeah.</p> <p><b>IV. Feelings surrounding body satisfaction</b>  <b>A. HOW DO MOST MEN FEEL ABOUT THEIR PHYSICAL APPEARANCES? ARE THEY SATISFIED WITH HOW THEY LOOK?</b>  <u>I don't think most men are satisfied with how they look because they always want to be better, be stronger, maybe look better. Be more toned and more defined.</u> I don't know, I don't think like they are satisfied. Like for me I think, I'd be satisfied to have a body like Jean-Claude Van Dame. Just trying to keep that body. Overall most men would be satisfied with having that kind of body. Like <u>even if they were toned I think they still try to like keep working to get bigger and bigger and bigger.</u>  <b>WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?</b>          In my experience most of the people I know. They <u>are in the gym like constantly</u>. Like regularly. I mean and I don't know <u>I think they are pretty big and they are like "no I still want to get bigger."</u> I guess that is just from my experiences.  <b>SO YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE THEY ARE EVER SATISFIED?</b>          Yeah. I mean they are satisfied, they like it but they want to be... they want to get better, they want to be stronger.</p>	<p>Good shape= not breathing too hard after physical activity</p> <p>Personal BI</p> <p>Personal BI</p> <p>Gen Body Satisfaction</p> <p>Reinforcers: social environment and friends</p>	<p>Says that he doesn't care what others think of his body appearance, but later admits that he wants others to admire and compliment on his body</p> <p>Goes to gym and consciously/actively compares bodies with those around him. Competitiveness? Need to be accepted or admired?</p> <p><u>Not-some-very</u>          Men always trying to look better, be stronger, more toned and defined. Even if toned, it is not enough.</p> <p>Workout regularly and even though are in good shape, still wants to be bigger</p>
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<p>DO YOU FEEL THAT IS THE SAME FOR MOST ASIAN AMERICAN MEN?          I guess it probably depends. I'd say. It depends...like maybe on how busy you are or something I mean how motivated you are to do it.</p> <p>B. DO YOU FEEL ASIAN AMERICAN MEN IN GENERAL ARE SATISFIED WITH THE WAY THEY LOOK?          Yeah. Most of the people are. Most of the people I know, at least. I think they are <u>pretty satisfied</u>. I don't see too many overweight people or overweight Asian men.</p> <p>C. WHAT DO YOU THINK ACCOUNTS FOR THE DIFFERENCES?          Maybe it's because time. Maybe some Asian guys are busier. They are taking harder classes or something. Like maybe they are busier. It depends on the person. I guess how much time they really have to spend in the gym or getting in shape or whatever.</p> <p>SO YOU THINK THAT ASIAN MEN HAVE LESS TIME ON THEIR HANDS?          Yeah. I didn't want to say that. I don't know how to say it. American men can have really busy schedules too and still work out in the gym. I don't know if there is a real reason. I don't know maybe <u>American guys want to get in shape more. Maybe they want to be more defined. Maybe their perspectives are to get bigger... maybe Asian guys don't really care about how they look as long as they are in pretty good shape.</u> I am sure there are some Asian guys that don't really care and they just want to stay at home and chill at home. But I am sure there are White guys who just want to stay at home and not work out at all. I think it is the same for both. It depends on how much time they want to put into it.</p> <p>D. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE?          Like, <u>right now I am not satisfied</u> with how I look. Probably as soon as I reach that stage where I am pretty toned and <u>I put a considerable amount of time into the gym and where I am pretty toned.</u> I would <u>probably be pretty satisfied.</u> I probably wouldn't to take it any further. I would probably just stay there just lift just to keep that same body image.</p> <p>SO YOU FEEL YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED BECAUSE YOU HAVE NOT REACHED THAT GOAL?          Yeah</p> <p><b>V. Factors that shape one's body image</b></p> <p>A. HAS YOUR LEVEL OF BODY SATISFACTION CHANGED SINCE YOU WERE YOUNGER?          I guess when I was younger...<u>when you are young you don't really care about that stuff.</u> When you are 15 or 16 or around there you don't really care because I didn't care. <u>I just did track because I liked doing it.</u> I liked running. I didn't really care about being in shape for it. I just liked doing it. As you <u>get older I think you start paying attention to like your stomach and how you look.</u></p> <p>WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?          Maybe <u>to attract the opposite sex.</u> Maybe <u>the fact of just like looking good and being stronger.</u> That's it just looking stronger, I guess.</p> <p>B. WHAT FACTORS HAVE INFLUENCED HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE?</p>	<p>AA Body Satisfaction</p> <p>AAM vs WM</p> <p>Personal body satisfaction</p> <p>Developmental</p> <p>Purpose</p> <p>Influences: Jean Claude Van</p>	<p>Not-some-<u>very</u>          Not focused on working out as much as WM. Not a priority for AAM. Too busy? Focus on health?</p> <p>Same-<u>different</u></p> <p><u>Not-some-very</u>          B/c right now isn't toned enough. Later says he is satisfied because it's most important to be healthy.</p> <p>In HS ran track b/c liked running, paid no attention to looks until started dating</p> <p>To attract women by looking stronger</p>
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<p>There is a couple. As I said before like <u>Jean-Claude Van Damme</u>. Like his movies. I used to watch a lot of his movies when I was little and I was like “oh cool. I kind of want to have his body.” Just people I see in the gym. People I see there and I see how it looks like and what kind of looks good. They are pretty healthy. <u>I just would rather have a healthy body. It doesn't have to be toned.</u> If I don't get to where I want to get, <u>it doesn't matter as long as I don't get chubby</u> or anything like that, stomach wise.</p> <p>C. HAS THE MEDIA IMPACTED HOW YOU VIEW YOUR BODY AND APPEARANCE?          Yeah. Like most of the movies I watch are martial arts and action movies and so that is the reason I got into martial arts and tae kwon do and that's why I wanted to do it. I figured when I was younger to be better at it you had to be a little bit stronger.</p> <p>HAS SOCIETY INFLUENCED?          Yeah, I think so. It's had a big impact. <u>When you go to the gym</u> people are like...<u>the way they look at other people</u> you just kind of know than people look at other people and how big they are. <u>I just want to be one of those people who people look at and “dang that guy is in good shape. He is pretty big.” Well, not big, but I just want people to kind of go “oh dang I want to be like him. That kind of body is perfect to me.” Something like that.</u></p> <p>HOW ABOUT FAMILY?          My family. Not really. Every now and then I will get a call from my grandma saying “you are always working out and wearing yourself out at the gym.” She'll just notice these little things.</p> <p>HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?          I guess that doesn't play too big of a role. It just is like “cool they kind of noticed it.” It doesn't make me want to leave and go work out.</p> <p>HOW ABOUT FRIENDS AND PEERS?          Yeah I guess they have a...not too big of an impact, but they <u>definitely have an impact because, I don't know, my friends are who I talk to about everything with: What kind of body I want to have, and what kind of body they want to have, and you kind of know what they are looking for, and you kind of shoot for a decent body.</u></p> <p>HAVE WOMEN IMPACTED HOW YOU VIEW YOUR BODY?          I guess now yeah. But when I was younger I didn't care. Now, yeah because. It's not like women really...when girls look at you or me it's not I really care what they think about how I look. I would <u>rather have them look at me and think “he is not fat or anything like that he is regular, you know.”</u> Than like walking into the gym like big or fat. I would just rather be healthier</p> <p>CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES?          No. I don't think anything ever really happened.</p> <p><b>VI. Body Parts</b>          A. IS YOUR BODY SATISFACTION RELATED TO YOUR GENERAL APPEARANCE OR TO CERTAIN FEATURES?          Probably my <u>upper body</u>. I just want my <u>arms a little bigger</u>, not too big <u>my pecks and my stomach</u>. <u>Basically everything that is upper body like the back.</u></p>	<p>Damme and people at gym</p> <p>Personal BI</p> <p>Influences: social environment</p> <p>Personal BI</p> <p>Influences: friends</p> <p>Influences: women</p> <p>Personal body satisfaction</p>	<p>Doesn't feel toned enough but if he refocuses on health, says that he doesn't care about looks</p> <p>Everyone compares body size</p> <p>Wants to be admired by others as having the “perfect body” (like women's constant comparison, low self esteem, need for external validation?)</p> <p>Talk about what kind of bodies they want</p> <p>Wants to be perceived as average guy and fairly fit</p> <p>General-specific          Upper body, mainly (arms, pecs, stomach, back)</p>
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<p> <u>no matter where we lived like no matter how big or how small the house is they tried to keep like Filipino calendars up and Filipino pictures up.</u>          DO YOU HAVE THE SHIELDS WITH THE SWORDS?          (laughs) Yeah that and we have like this wooden thing with Jesus Christ sitting in the middle of the table. We have like a big carpet on the wall and a whole bunch of plants everywhere and porcelain figures everywhere. Stuff like that.          D. AS YOU WERE GROWING UP, WHAT KINDS OF MESSAGES DID YOUR FAMILY GIVE YOU ABOUT BEING AN ASIAN AMERICAN MALE IN A SOCIETY THAT TENDS TO BE IMAGE AND BEAUTY FOCUSED?          I don't think <u>my mom</u> really cared about that kind of stuff. She <u>doesn't really care about image</u>. I mean she does but it's not really, really like a main priority. That is what influenced me to not care about what other people think <u>as long as I am happy with myself</u>.          E. DOES YOUR ETHNICITY PLAY A ROLE IN HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR BODY?          I guess it does cause like I know when I <u>went to the Philippines</u> to visit one summer I noticed that like a lot of Filipino guys are little and skinny and short, and I was like "that is weird." I was like "<u>how come I am like tall?</u>" <u>It just kind of made me feel good inside. It made me want to keep going with it. Like try to stay in shape no matter how busy.</u>          F. IF YOU LIVED IN A SOCIETY WHERE ASIAN AMERICANS WERE THE DOMINANT CULTURE, DO YOU THINK YOUR BODY SATISFACTION WOULD BE DIFFERENT THAN IT IS TODAY?          I think it would. Like I don't know I guess in America, a lot of Americans think...they kind of go by appearance. Like in high school you would probably be popular if you look good, if you know a lot of girls and things like that. But if it were an Asian culture I think it wouldn't really matter because like I think a lot...it wouldn't matter how many girls because like girls...or how many girls you get because I think <u>Asian girls don't just go for appearance. They go for attitude. How nice you are to them and how you treat them and things like that. I think it would really make a big impact.</u>          WOULD YOU BE MORE SATISFIED?          Yeah. I would be a lot more satisfied. I wouldn't be as...          MINDFUL?          yeah, I wouldn't think as much of it.          WHY IS THAT?          Because I guess most Asian people...Asian guys don't really care about their physical appearance, I guess from my point of view. But I am sure there is a lot of like Asian guys that still...most don't care about their physical appearance.          WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?          I think it is because the way we were raised or <u>most Asian people were raised like not to care about how you look like as long as you work hard, you will get through</u>. I mean appearance I guess back to what <u>my mom was telling me like that doesn't really matter. As long as you are a good person</u>. I guess that really influences it. <u>The way they were raised or who raised them I guess, their background.</u> </p>	<p>Being AA: messages</p> <p>Ethnicity and BI</p> <p>Ethnicity and BI</p>	<p>Mom focused on being happy, not on outward appearances</p> <p><u>Related-not related</u>          Felt better when considered "tall" in the Philippines, encouraged and motivated him to continue working out</p> <p>Asian culture emphasizes being goo, hard work. If you have that background, you will also place less emphasis on looks. Ironically has very strong desires to look more muscular, like Jean Claude Van Damme</p>
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