

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BODY IMAGE AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH AMONG BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS

Meghan H. McDonough, Catherine M. Sabiston, Valerie Hadd, & Peter R.E. Crocker.
The University of British Columbia

Qualitative evidence suggests there are relationships between physical self-perceptions and positive psychological growth among breast cancer survivors participating in a dragon boat physical activity program (Sabiston, McDonough, & Crocker, 2005). Tedeschi and Calhoun's (2004) post-traumatic growth (PTG) model provides a framework to explain how struggling with distressing incidents such as breast cancer can involve a process of change in self-perceptions that contributes to positive psychological growth. The purpose of this study was to examine whether body image perceptions among breast cancer survivors predicted PTG, and whether mastectomy status moderated this relationship. 470 survivors involved in a dragon boat program completed a survey (M age = 57.10 ± 7.95 ; M BMI = 25.79 ± 4.13) that included measures of body image (MBSRQ; Cash, et al, 1986), PTG (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996), and treatments received for breast cancer. Participants reported a variety of treatments including whether they had undergone a mastectomy (41%). Results revealed that appearance orientation ($\beta = .19$) and self-classified weight ($\beta = .19$) predicted PTG among participants who had a mastectomy, $F(5,170) = 5.51$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .14$. Appearance orientation ($\beta = .15$) predicted PTG among survivors who had not had a mastectomy, $F(5,253) = 2.74$, $p = .02$, $R^2 = .05$. These results demonstrate that mastectomy status moderates the relationship between body image and PTG among survivors in a physical activity program. Physical activity programs and psychological interventions aimed at promoting positive psychological growth among breast cancer survivors should account for variations in treatments.