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Predictors of Future Anxiety about Male Pattern Baldness

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Abstract

This exploratory study examined potential predictors of future anxiety in young men about Male Pattern Baldness (MPB). The participants were 173 men aged between 18 years and 35 years who had not yet experienced significant personal hair loss. Participants completed a self-report questionnaire which measured psychosocial independent variables using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory – Trait scale, the Appearance Orientation subscale and the Body Areas Satisfaction Scale of the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire, the Locus of Control Scale, the Revised Self-Consciousness Scale, Texas Social Behavior Inventory – Short form A. A stable and consistent scale of future anxiety specific to Male Pattern Baldness was developed for the present study to measure the dependent variable. Of the psychosocial variables, trait anxiety, appearance orientation, private self-consciousness and powerful others locus of control, together accounted for 22.8 % of the variance in future anxiety about MPB in this sample. Four proposed determinants of future anxiety in general were also evaluated for their predictive power of future anxiety specific to MPB. These were perceived likelihood of personal hair loss in the future, imminence of expected hair loss, subjectively perceived undesirability of MPB, and confidence in personal ability to cope with MPB. When added to the pool of potential predictors a new combination with additional predictive power was produced which included confidence in personal ability to cope with MPB, undesirability of MPB, trait anxiety, and powerful others locus of control. In combination these variables accounted for 45.3 % of the variance in future anxiety about MPB in this sample.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In Western culture the last decade has seen an increasing emphasis on male physical appearance which is reflected in an unprecedented wealth of interest, knowledge, and variety of choice in methods to alter appearance (Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1986; Davis, Brewer, & Weinstein, 1993). This type of societal focus provides reason for concern about the production of body dissatisfaction through heightened discrepancies between mens' own bodies and their perception of what constitutes ideal physical appearance. While a substantial body of research has examined female body image often because of its role in eating disorders, male body image has received considerably less attention. Although much of the research which does exist on male body image is specific to attitudes about body shape and weight, it is clear that men experience body dissatisfaction (Tucker, 1982; Davis et al., 1993; Pope, Gruber, et al., 2000; Cohane & Pope, 2001), indicating that physical appearance is important to men.

The ideal muscular male body has been associated with perceptions of the highly valued qualities of masculinity and youth in Western society (Mishkind et al., 1986; McCaulay, Mintz, & Glenn, 1988; Grogan, 1991; Grogan & Richards, 2002), and full heads of hair have similarly been associated with greater perceived physical attractiveness (Roll & Verinis, 1971; Cash, 1990; Muscarella & Cunningham, 1996). Like certain body weights and shapes, the advent of personal hair loss or hair line

recession introduces hair as another possible source of a self/ideal discrepancy in men because balding deviates from what men often regard as the ideal appearance (Franzoi, Anderson, & Frommelt, 1990; De Muro-Mercon et al., 2000). This type of hair loss is called Male Pattern Baldness (MPB), or the broader term androgenetic alopecia which describes this hair loss with age in men and women (Ellis, Stebbing, & Harrap, 2001). MPB can occur at any time after puberty (Bertolino, 1993; Sinclair, 1998; Hogan & Chamberlain, 2000), and in Caucasian men over half will experience noticeable hair loss by the time they are 50-years-old, however individual men lose their hair in different patterns and at different rates (Norwood, 1975). For example, no sequence of hair loss pattern is uniformly experienced by men losing hair, and the rate of hair loss may be rapid, sporadic, or gradual (Norwood, 1975; Sinclair, 1998).

Only since the 1980s has research turned to consider MPB and the effects it has on men's experiences and wellbeing. Not only is MPB highly prevalent (Norwood, 1975), the sparse findings to date have painted an uninviting picture of MPB in terms of impressions and experiences of baldness (Roll & Verinis, 1971; Cash, 1990, 1992; Franzoi et al., 1990; Cash, Price, & Savin, 1993; Wells, Willmoth, & Russell, 1995; Muscarella & Cunningham, 1996; Venneman, 1997; Budd et al., 2000). Amongst the numerous appearance enhancement products and strategies few are effective in treating MPB (Bertolino, 1993). The time of onset and the rate and extent of hair loss are determined by age, genetics, and androgens (Norwood, 1975), and therefore are unpredictable, and without specific maintained medication to act on the process triggered by androgens MPB is progressive and permanent (Sinclair, 1998). In comparison, other sources of body dissatisfaction such as body weight, body shape, and muscle tone, can be relatively easily controlled through particular diet and

exercise techniques. According to Cash (1999), most men with androgenetic alopecia will suffer at least moderate distress associated with their hair loss. With these characteristics a degree of anticipatory distress in some men prior to baldness could be expected, so it is surprising that consideration has not yet been given to this possibility. The current study will address this gap in the existing literature.

Future anxiety occurs in anticipation of a subjectively perceived threatening occurrence which is expected in the future (Zaleski, 1996). This study seeks to explore psychosocial characteristics of men which predict future anxiety about MPB and to evaluate the use of four proposed determinants of future anxiety in general (Eysenck, 1992; Zaleski, 1996). A scale to measure future anxiety specific to MPB will be developed for use in this study, facilitating the first step of research towards sifting out useful predictors of future anxiety about MPB in young men. With reference to this specific future event, the recently conceptualized emotion of general future anxiety will be able to be further examined.