

Boys' use of video game magazines studied

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U.S. researchers have found a surprising cultural influence on some boys' drive for muscularity: video gaming magazines.

University of Illinois researchers discovered exposure to video gaming magazines has a stronger influence on pre-adolescent boys' drive for muscularity, or desire for muscle mass, than does exposure to magazines depicting a more realistic muscular male-body ideal.

However, the relationship between video gaming magazines -- "where characters are drawn with extreme muscularity and much more realism than in video games themselves" -- and the drive for muscularity was found only for Caucasian boys, not for African-American boys.

Professor Kristen Harrison and doctoral student Bradley Bond say theirs is the first study to link the gaming magazine genre to boys' body ideals.

"In a nutshell, we found that exposure to video gaming magazines, which are immensely popular, increased boys' subsequent drive for muscularity, more than exposure to other, more realistic 'ideal-body' magazines like sports, fashion and fitness," Harrison said.

The effect, she said, was significant regardless of how thin or fat boys perceived themselves to be.

The study is to be published this summer in the journal *Body Image*.

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