

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

**THE IMPACT OF BODY IMAGE CONCERNS
ON PHYSICAL & PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH
IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS:
DEVELOPING A EUROPEAN AGENDA FOR
RESEARCH**

Glumslöv (Sweden), 9-11th June 2011

Convened by:
**Professor Nichola Rumsey, Dr Martin Persson & Dr. Phillippa
Diedrichs**

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

1. Executive Summary

Societal interest in appearance has a long history, but has never been more prevalent than now. Children, teenagers and adults are bombarded with overt and covert messages from the media, from parents and families, from teachers and from their peers associating physical attractiveness with success and happiness. For teenagers and young adults in developed countries, debilitating levels of body dissatisfaction are now 'normative'. Body dissatisfaction negatively influences self-esteem, anxiety and depression. Appearance concerns also contribute negatively to many health-compromising behaviours including smoking, disordered eating and the avoidance of exercise. These psychological and physical effects disrupt education and social functioning and impact in a variety of ways on the daily lives of young people. Research in this area is well established in the UK, USA and Australia and there is a growing awareness of the pressing need to tackle levels of body image dissatisfaction among teenagers and young adults, however, currently in Europe, there is no coordinated approach to research or to the development of interventions to address body image concerns.

This workshop "The Impact of Body Image Concerns on Physical and Psychosocial Health in Education Settings: An ESF Exploratory Workshop to Develop a European Agenda for Research" was held at Orenas Slott, Glumslöv, Sweden, from June 9th – June 11th, 2011. The convenors of the workshop were Professor Nichola Rumsey (University of the West of England, UWE), Dr Martin Persson (University of Bristol) & Dr Phillippa Diedrichs (UWE) – all members of the UK Centre for Appearance Research (CAR). CAR is an international centre of excellence for appearance research and the only centre of its kind in the world.

There were 17 participants in this workshop (unfortunately, one delegate was unable to attend at the last moment, due to illness) from 10 countries. The delegates were invited on the basis of their track record of research and/or practice in relevant areas, including health promotion, public health, education, social inclusion and psychology.

The overarching objective of this workshop was to engage key European researchers and practitioners in order to establish an on-going collaboration and to create a pan-European agenda for research and training in this area. The specific aims were to:-

- Raise awareness in key European researchers, educators and health promoters about the pervasive effects of body image concerns
- To establish an agenda for research and training
- To initiate a pan-European collaboration to deliver this agenda

The programme for the workshop was designed to encompass a mixture of formal presentations, plenary discussions, small group work and informal interaction. Participants exhibited high levels of enthusiasm for the topic of the workshop and a commitment to establishing and taking forward an agenda for research and training. Plenary discussions and group work were lively, generating excellent debate, and ultimately, a consensus for the potential activities of the group going forward.

The outcomes included the following:-

- plans to develop a cross cultural study of appearance related concerns, and the impact of these on psychological wellbeing and health behaviours

- a group to consider the potential for training workshops for educators and health professionals
- the development of one or more funding applications to underpin the further activities of the collaboration
- a group to consider the relevance of body image interventions in public health in European settings
- a forum to exchange ideas about activism in relation to government policy in this field
- the development of a symposium for submission to an international conference to be held in the UK, July 2012.

2. Scientific Content of the event

(presentations slides can be accessed on <http://hls.uwe.ac.uk/research/esf-workshop.aspx>)

9th JUNE, 14.00pm – 18.30pm

Following a welcome to all delegates by the convenors, the ESF Representative at the workshop, **Dr. Rifka Weehuizen**, added her welcome to all attendees, and outlined the mission and work of the European Science Foundation, with a particular emphasis on the Standing Committees for Humanities and for Social Sciences. **Professor Nichola Rumsey** set the scene for workshop participants by describing the extent of appearance-related dissatisfaction for children, young people and adults, and by summarising the evidence relating to the negative impacts on psychological wellbeing, and also on physical health of these concerns, including disordered eating, smoking, avoidance of or over-engagement in exercise.

Dr Philippa Diedrichs outlined the evidence base for successful interventions and for those which had not achieved the desired changes, extrapolating the common elements of successful programmes. She articulated her view of current research priorities, and invited the group to discuss these.

Helmut Kronika described the work of the organisation BEST, which offers programmes for disadvantaged people with the aim of increasing their chances of achieving employment. The biggest client group are young people and young adults of 16-25 years, however, there is a growing market of people aged 50 years and over, and women who want to return to the employment market. Helmut discussed the importance of exercise within these programmes and the potential benefits of an increased emphasis on body image, considering this to be an important and relevant issue for this client group. He emphasised the importance of engaging key stakeholders, including funders and policy makers.

The **GROUP DISCUSSION** following the opening session highlighted additional examples of current initiatives from several countries and also potential settings for interventions, including primary care health checks (Lithuania); primary schools (The “Happy Being Me” programme) and whole school approaches (Austria; UK). Discussion also considered whether body image should be a focus for intervention in isolation or whether this issue should be integrated into broader mental and physical health interventions and research. Participants discussed the potential to include body image related material more broadly across the curriculum, and emphasised the importance of understanding the principles of

education and learning. It was agreed that a participatory approach is preferable to an 'expert' delivering the content without active engagement of the audience.

The convenors summarised the themes emerging from the opening session and the group continued its discussion over dinner.

June 10th 09.00-17.30

The convenors opened the session on Day 2 by outlining the programme ahead and the focus for small group work. **Nicole Paraskeva** then outlined the research evidence relating to gender specific issues in relation to appearance concerns. **Dr Martin Persson's** presentation focussed on the relevance of body image issues for people in socially disadvantaged groups and the challenges of developing programmes to meet their needs. He also invited discussion on ways of reaching these groups.

A **DISCUSSION** session then followed in which each delegate offered an opinion about the extent and nature of appearance concerns in his/her own countries, the the differences in these issues between urban and rural communities, and levels of concerns in different generations. The group agreed on the need for cross-cultural studies of body image. Delegates also focussed on how to achieve an appropriate balance between evidence, evaluation and practice. The issue of physical disability as a form of social isolation was also raised, together with differing societal approaches to integration or isolation.

Buzz groups were then used to elicit individual and group opinions concerning the current priorities for research and practice. Attendees were asked to focus on the following 'big questions' to guide the future activities of the group – Who should be the prime target(s) for prevention and intervention? What form should the interventions take? In what settings should prevention and interventions take place? Individuals and groups then shared their ideas, and an exercise to synthesise and prioritise the responses was undertaken, with the following outcomes, rank ordered by the perceived priority ascribed to them by delegates.

WHO should the prime target group for prevention/interventions be?

- Young people aged 14-18 years
- Children and their parents
- Key players in public health, educational arenas and associated industries (fashion magazine editors; fashion and food industries)
- Young adults (18 -25 years)
- Adults (25 – and above)

WHAT form should the interventions take?

- Positive approaches focusing on the promotion of positive body image; body satisfaction; self esteem
- Provide tailored training sessions for staff and key players in education, health and community settings.

STRATEGIES for interventions should include

- Assessing levels of concern, types of need, risk factors in different countries first
- Media literacy

- Legislation & a code of ethics for advertisers (promoting corporate responsibility)

TOPICS should include

- Social skills training
- Strategies to enhance self esteem; happiness/wellbeing
- The impact of body image in relation to psychosocial wellbeing, health issues, quality of life and educational performance

APPROACHES should include

- Prevention (rather than treatment)
- Focus on positive body image and body satisfaction (rather than a focus on problems and difficulties)
- Sustainable change; multidisciplinary approaches

WHERE should the interventions take place?

- In educational settings
 - Compulsory schools
 - Universities
 - Vocational schools
 - Lifelong learning settings
- Within local communities (community centres; gyms and fitness centres)
- Health settings
- Through the medium of social networking technologies, including Facebook & internet sites

During the afternoon session, **DAISY TOWNSEND** addressed the group on the topic of body image and exercise, outlining that many people exercise to improve their body image, but that body image can also act as a barrier to exercise. She discussed the need to increase the focus on health (rather than appearance) as a motivator for exercise and for the need for interventions to promote diversity of appearance in exercise settings.

HELMUT KRONIKA described the 3 year 'Golden Goal' project implemented in Austria and elsewhere in Europe, which uses sports as a medium to promote skills such as team building and conflict management, together with social skills and IT training, initially in disadvantaged young male adults, and latterly in young females and mid-life women. Helmut explored the relevance of appearance concerns in this context.

GROUP DISCUSSION then revolved around how to tackle change at a societal level. Micheala Langer offered the example of a competition recently initiated in Vienna, titled "We Like Every Body" in which schools were challenged to develop an advertising and social marketing campaign. This campaign was used as an opportunity to raise attention amongst teachers about body image issues.

INGEMAR ANDERSSON & ÅSA BRINGSÉN presented their research on promoting salutogenesis in the context of public health. They explained that in Sweden, girls have become increasingly inactive. They have a tendency to worry more and to report themselves as being less happy than previous generations. Ingemar and Åsa emphasised the relevance of this approach to body image and extolled the benefits of focussing on achieving positive outcomes, rather than attempting to 'fix' existing problems.

GROUP DISCUSSION then focussed on the appearance concerns and social anxieties of girls in exercise contexts. The desirability of promoting empowerment through interventions was also raised, as was the potential of using theatre and drama as a medium for skill acquisition. It was agreed that the issue of body image would be particularly relevant in this context.

GOOF BUIJS & PETER PAULUS offered the group an overview of the advantages of using schools as a focus for intervention in the context of public health. They summarised the work of SHE (Schools for Health in Europe), and the impacts of this approach on health education and the school environment and climate.

DISCUSSION highlighted recent research that points to the high levels of appearance concerns and disordered eating in teachers of physical education, and the need for interventions with this key group. The group also considered the relative merits of individual and societal approaches to body image interventions and concluded both were needed.

The convenors closed the session with a summary of the themes from the second day. They invited delegates to consider the key stakeholders who should be engaged in future plans for training and research, in discussion over dinner. They also asked attendees to share ideas about possible funding sources for future activities in preparation for the discussions on the final day.

June 11th 09.00-12.00

The convenors (**Nichola Rumsey, Martin Persson & Phillipa Diedrichs**) opened the final session by summarising the results of the group discussions concerning priority activities from the previous day. All delegates affirmed their wish to continue to contribute the newly formed collaboration. **DISCUSSION** was then invited about the shape and focus for future funding applications in order to take the emerging collaboration forward and to fund training and research activities.

Dr. Weehuizen from ESF suggested to the group that an appropriate umbrella for these initiatives might be one of 'promoting wellbeing', as this is likely to be a priority for research funding within Europe in the immediate future. There was also discussion around the possibility that 'body image' alone might be too narrow a focus, and that the broader spectrum of appearance concerns and the impacts of these on psychological and physical health might be more useful. The group should emphasise the extensive and harmful nature of distress related to appearance, and the spread and depth of its effects. Dr Weehuizen outlined some possible sources of European funding, and ideas were exchanged amongst the group about possible sources of funding to consolidate the network and to prepare bids for programmes of training and research.

GROUP DISCUSSION then ensued in which delegates exchanged ideas about possible sources of funding.

The Convenors then led delegates in a further **GROUP SESSION** to agree a series of **ACTIONS & OUTCOMES** from the workshop. These are outlined in Section 3 below.

Finally, the Convenors closed the workshop, thanking the delegates for their hard work and enthusiasm and conveying thanks to ESF, via Dr. Weehuizen for the opportunity to establish this new collaboration.

3. Outcomes of the Workshop

The following **actions and outcomes** were agreed:-

All participants agreed that as a matter of urgency, it should be a priority to spread knowledge and understanding of the potential negative impacts of body image dissatisfaction on educational performance, psychological wellbeing and social functioning to key policy makers and providers of health care and education across Europe.

Delegates also agreed that a multi-disciplinary approach (as represented amongst delegates at the workshop) was desirable to produce effective body image interventions.

Body image research and interventions should focus on a range of target audiences including children, young people and adults of all ages, and those from socially disadvantaged groups.

All delegates reaffirmed their wish to continue to contribute to the newly formed collaboration. The convenors undertook to explore possibilities to achieve funding to further the work of the group. The following possibilities for collaborating projects were agreed;

- A cross cultural study of appearance related concerns, and the impact of these on psychological wellbeing and health behaviours, to include culture-specific factors contributing to risk or protection (Lead: Phillipa Diedrichs)
- A consideration of the potential of a project to develop training workshops under the umbrella of the Lifelong Learning Program (Lead: Martin Persson; Helmut Kronika)
- The development of one or more funding applications to underpin the further development of the collaboration (Leads: Nichola Rumsey & Martin Persson)
- A consideration of the relevance of body image interventions in public health in European settings (Leads: Martin Persson, Arnoldas Jurgutis, Ingemar Andersson)
- A forum to exchange ideas about activism in relation to government policy in this field (Michaela Langer; Phillipa Diedrichs)
- The development of a symposium for Appearance Matters 5, an international conference to be held in the UK, July 2012 (Leads: Phillipa Diedrichs & Nichola Rumsey).
- Applications for funding to underpin the future activities of the newly formed collaboration will be prepared for submission to one or more of the following funding bodies
 - Lifelong Learning Program
 - COST network
 - Framework 8,
 - BUPA Foundation (for international research)
 - Leverhulme (international networks)

Whether or not future funding applications are successful, the Convenors Nichola Rumsey, Martin Persson and Phillippa Diedrichs undertook to ensure that the newly established network will be maintained through regular communication about the following agreed topics ;

- Sharing of information and research findings relating to approaches to intervention
- Attendance by delegates and possibly a symposium at the conference Appearance Matter 5, July 2012 Bristol, UK
- The exchange of ideas about suitable advocates to draw attention to the negative impact of appearance concerns in a variety of educational, health and social environments
- A forum to exchange ideas about activism in relation to government policy in this field.

4. Final Programme

(see next page)

FINAL PROGRAMME

Thursday 9 June 2011

- 13.30-14.00 *Arrival & coffee (Orenas Slott, Glumslov)*
- 14.00-14.10 **Welcome by Convenors**
Nichola Rumsey (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)
Martin Persson (Bristol University, Bristol, UK)
Phillippa Diedrichs (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)
- 14.10-14.30 **Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)**
Dr Rifka Weehuizen (Social Sciences ESF)
- 14.30-15.45 **Introductions and brief presentations**
All
- 15.45-16.15 **Presentation 1 "Body image, physical and psychosocial health: What do we know so far?"**
Nichola Rumsey (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)
- 16.15-16.45 *Coffee & networking*
- 16.45-17.15 **Presentation 2 "Impact of body concerns in educational settings"**
Phillippa Diedrichs (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)
- 17.15-17.30 **Presentation 3 "Delivering interventions in Europe: Target groups"**
Helmut Kronika (BEST institute, Wien, Austria)
- 17.30-18.00 **Summary of day 1**
Nichola Rumsey (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)
Martin Persson (Bristol University, Bristol, UK)
- 19.00-20.00 **Group Discussion (Informal): The relevance of body image concerns to physical and psychosocial health**
All
- 20.00 *Dinner*

Friday 10 June 2011

- 09.00-12.30** **Morning Session**
- 09.00-09.10 **Summary of Day 1 and goals for Day 2**
Nichola Rumsey (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)
- 09.10-09.30 **Presentation 1 "Gender specific issues in relation to body image"**
Nicole Paraskeva (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)
- 09.30-9.50 **Presentation 2 "Promoting social inclusion: Reaching socially disadvantaged groups"**
Martin Persson (Bristol University, Bristol, UK)
- 09.50--10.30 **Culture specific issues: Informal presentations from workshop representatives**
All
- 10.30-11.00 *Coffee / Tea Break*
- 11.00-12.00 **Group work: Focusing upon the issues of social inclusion, gender issues and cultural aspects: how do we ensure that we understand and meet the needs of our European society?**
All

12.00-12.30	Feedback and summary of group work All
12.30-13.30	<i>Lunch</i>
13.30-17.30	Afternoon Session
13.30-14.00	Presentation 1 "Body image, exercise and motivation" Daisy Townsend (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)
14.00-14.30	Presentation 2 "Golden Goal-Case study: An exercise intervention with disadvantaged young adults in a European setting" Helmut Kronika (BEST institute, Wien, Austria)
14.30-15.00	Group discussion All
15.00-15.30	<i>Coffee / tea break</i>
15.30-16.00	Presentation 3 "Public health approaches" Ingemar Andersson (Kristianstad University, Kristianstad, Sweden)
16.00-17.00	Group work: Identifying methods of raising awareness in key stakeholders/players All
17.00-17.15	Feedback from group discussion All
17.15-17.30	Summary of Day 2 Nichola Rumsey (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK) Martin Persson (Bristol University, Bristol, UK)
19.00-20.00	Group Discussion (Informal): Development of research collaborations All
20.00	<i>Dinner</i>

Saturday 11 June 2011

09.00-12.30	Morning Session
09.00-09.10	Summary of Days 1 & 2 and Goals for Day 3 Nichola Rumsey (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)
09.10-09.30	Presentation 1 "Putting it all together: Body Image, Education, Public Health and Health Promotion" Phillippa Diedrichs (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK) Martin Persson (Bristol University, Bristol, UK) Nichola Rumsey (University of the West of England, UK)
09.30-10.15	Group work: The way forward: Methods of ameliorating the impact of body image concerns on physical and psychosocial health in educational settings All
10.15-10.30	Feedback from group discussions All
10.30-10.45	<i>Coffee</i>
10.45-11.15	Presentation 2 "Research/collaborative funding opportunities" Nichola Rumsey (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK) Martin Persson (Bristol University, Bristol, UK) Helmut Kronika (BEST institute, Wien, Austria)

11.15-12.00	Group work: Establishing research collaborations; identifying key stakeholders in the research agenda and interventions; ideas for interventions/activities All
12.00-12.15	Feedback from group work All
12.15-12.30	Overall summary: The way forward Nichola Rumsey (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK) Martin Persson (Bristol University, Bristol, UK)
12.30-13.30	<i>Lunch</i>
Afternoon	<i>End of Workshop and Departure</i>

5. Final Participant list

Convenor:

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6. Statistical information concerning participants

	Name	Age	Gender	Country
1	Nichola Rumsey	50 - 59	Female	United Kingdom
2	Martin Persson	30 - 39	Male	United Kingdom
3	Phillippa Diedrichs	20 - 29	Female	United Kingdom
4	Nicole Paraskeva	20 - 29	Female	United Kingdom
5	Ingemar Andersson	50 - 59	Male	Sweden
6	Åsa Bringsén	40 - 49	Female	Sweden
7	Goof Buijs	50 - 59	Male	Netherlands
8	Arnoldas Jurgutis	50 - 59	Male	Lithuania
9	Andrej Klapica	40 - 49	Male	Slovakia
10	Christine Knauss	30 - 39	Female	Switzerland
11	Helmut Kronika	40 - 49	Male	Austria
12	Michaela Langer	40 - 49	Female	Austria
13	Gemma Lopez- Guimera	20 - 29	Female	Spain
14	Peter Paulus	50 - 59	Male	Germany
45	Theodor Porojan	40 - 49	Male	Romania
16	Rachel Rodgers	20 - 29	Female	France
17	Daisy Townsend	20 - 29	Female	United Kingdom

Country representation

<i>Austria</i>	2	<i>France</i>	1
<i>Germany</i>	1	<i>Lithuania</i>	1
<i>Netherlands</i>	1	<i>Romania</i>	1
<i>Slovakia</i>	1	<i>Spain</i>	1
<i>Sweden</i>	2	<i>Switzerland</i>	1
<i>United Kingdom</i>	5		

Gender Representation

Male:	8
Female:	9

Nichola Rumsey
 Martin Persson
 Phillippa Diedrichs
 July 2011