



Costing the Invisible

A review of the evidence examining the links between body image, aspirations, education and workplace confidence

ANY BODY



University of the West of England



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In the five years since Lynne Featherstone and I set up the Campaign for Body Confidence, there has been an explosion of public interest in the subject. Barely a day goes by without media stories on the problem with body image, albeit often flanked by column inches about celebrity beach bodies. And I am constantly impressed by how outspoken and motivated young people are on the subject – from girl guides to radical bloggers – and how clearly they recognise the burden and the expectation of the cultural pressures that bombard them. As I write, a revamped national body image campaign – *Be Real* – has roared into life, so the public debate will not disappear any time soon.

And yet, for all the popularity of this debate, its scope has been curiously limited, focusing mainly on teenage girls' anxieties about body shape and weight. Important though that is, it minimises the enduring impact of poor body confidence throughout life, and throughout all areas of life. Body image is not just an issue of personal anxiety, but of real lived experience, of aspirations blunted and opportunities blocked. Not just once, but systematically and enduringly. Framing body image as an issue of personal and individual anxiety – with the suggestion that women can somehow be jollied or reassured out of it – tends to absolve us from acknowledging what it is we are doing to women when we allow them to feel scrutinised, judged and objectified from such a young age. It allows us to think that poor body image is something young people are doing to themselves, rather than something that is being done to them.

There is, after all, nothing wrong with ideals of beauty, or with enjoying fashion. But personal presentation should be a source of creativity, self-expression and joy – not of uniformity, self-loathing and shame. Above all, it should be voluntary. The concept of the 'double burden' of working women is well known; but surely it is a triple burden if they are expected to also spend time and money in continuous and unnecessary

self-maintenance? The women I talk to describe a constant effort of self-discipline, vigilance and self-awareness. What are the effects of all that vigilance? What mental energy does it demand, and what else could women be doing with that energy?

With these questions in mind, we commissioned a report from three highly esteemed experts in the field: Drs Emma Halliwell and Phillippa Diedrichs, both based at the Centre for Appearance Research, and Dr Susie Orbach, whose seminal book, 'Fat is a Feminist Issue' ignited this area of debate over 30 years ago.

We asked them to look for evidence on the links between body image, confidence and aspirations. We thought there might also be research showing links with educational and workplace achievement, and from there we could start addressing a question begging to be answered: what are the opportunity costs to the economy, and to civic life, of poor body image?

This is the resulting report. The authors assert that there is evidence associating poor body image with girls' reduced educational and social participation, with reduced confidence and performance levels, and with levels of cognitive functioning. Given the high levels of poor confidence revealed in a growing body of research, that is extremely worrying. Inevitably, it raises the question of consequences: what more could women and girls achieve if they were set free from constant self-vigilance and self-judgement? What further contribution could they make to our world?

This report makes an impassioned case for the importance of pursuing this line of enquiry, of discovering how we can help all young people to be their best selves and contribute their full potential.



This report was commissioned and funded by the British Government Equalities Office.



**Government
Equalities Office**

The report was prepared by Dr Emma Halliwell & Dr Phillippa Diedrichs, Centre for Appearance Research, University of the West of England and Dr Susie Orbach, Psychoanalyst and writer. Full biographies can be found at the end of the report.

It should be cited as

Halliwell, E., Diedrichs, P. C. and Orbach, S. (2014) Costing the invisible: A review of the evidence examining the links between body image, aspirations, education and workplace confidence. Discussion Paper. Centre for Appearance Research, University of the West of England <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/24438/>



The Centre for Appearance Research (CAR) is based at the University of the West of England, Bristol. CAR strives to make a real difference to the lives of the many hundreds of thousands of people with appearance-related concerns both in the United Kingdom and across the world. CAR is internationally regarded as a centre of excellence for psychological and interdisciplinary research in appearance, disfigurement, body image and related studies.

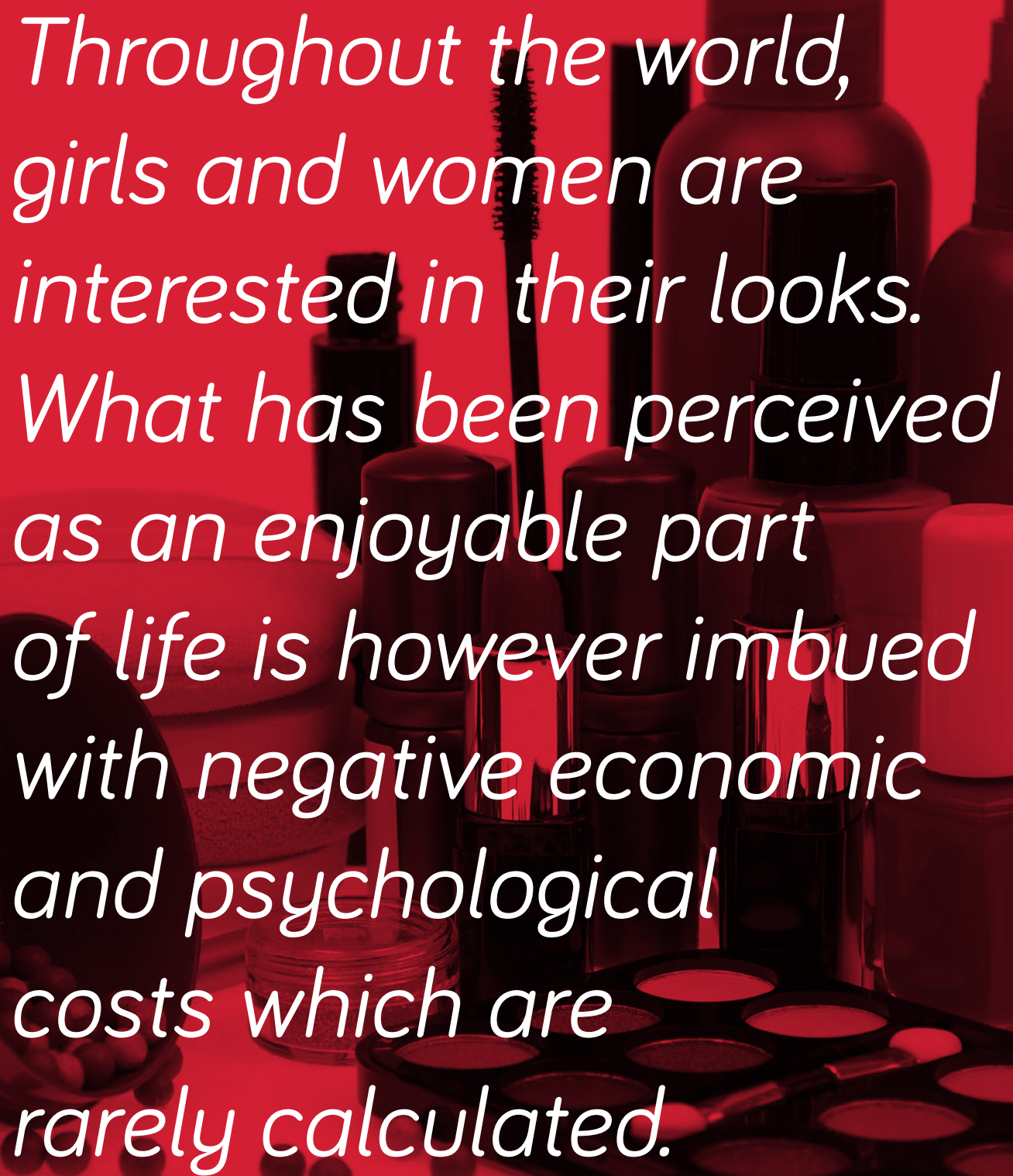
ANY  BODY

Anybody is a website and activist group giving voice to groups and individuals challenging our devastating acceptance of body hatred as normal. We collect evidence, raise awareness, and speak out to contest the commercial forces that stimulate body distress and we challenge government policy and complacency.

www.endangeredbodies.org

COSTING THE INVISIBLE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Throughout the world, girls and women are interested in their looks. What has been perceived as an enjoyable part of life is however imbued with negative economic and psychological costs which are rarely calculated.
- International studies confirm the disturbing trend that body dissatisfaction and the perception that one is too large (even if this is not the case) undermine adolescent girls' academic achievement. It doesn't lead to failure, but to a diminishing in confidence and hence in performance.
- The marketing of beauty aimed at girls as young as five and at women in their seventies has made the idea of beauty more accessible but simultaneously, the narrowing of the ideal standard to very young women with one body type, one look, one shape, one colour, one breast or buttock size whose images are then photo-shopped to create bodies that rarely exist in real life - and are frequently unrecognizable to the model herself - has had many unfortunate consequences. The beauty ideals which saturate all media from facebook, to tumblr, to instagram, to mainstream magazines, music videos and billboards, create anxiety and shame around personal appearance.
- Concern about looks, size, weight, shape and attractiveness filch girls' and women's minds, passions and bodies.
- There is an urgent need for multi-level intervention to reverse the trend of poor body image and poor body confidence. The silent self-attacks are thwarting girls' ambitions at exactly the time when society is apparently opening up to them. Programmes and social policy that can interrupt the cycle of undermining that is intensifying need to be underpinned by robust research, which can demonstrate the economic and psychological case for underpinning girls' capability and can demonstrate the effectiveness of such strategies.
- The substantial economic costs of clinical eating disorders and obesity have been assessed in terms of present and future expenditure to the NHS and opportunities lost for young women. However, no costing exists of the ubiquitous breeding of body insecurity which takes form in the growth of appearance anxiety, body dysmorphias, bulimic behaviours, compulsive eating, and confidence issues, many of which are now normative and widespread among adults and young people. It is urgently required.



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INTRODUCTION TO THE RAPID EVIDENCE REVIEW

The review team brings together leading authorities on body image from academic, clinical and theoretical perspectives. It capitalises on the Centre for Appearance Research's expertise in the academic and empirical literature, and Dr Orbach's expertise in clinical research and social theory in relation to the body. As such, the review synthesises evidence from empirical research, clinical expertise and experience, and social theory.

CONTEXT: COSTING THE INVISIBLE

Throughout the world, girls and women are interested in their looks. What has been perceived as an enjoyable part of life is however imbued with negative economic and psychological costs which are rarely calculated.

Democratizing beauty

Today women take for granted the notion that they should and can be beautiful, pretty, sexy and attractive. The idea is conveyed from the cradle, through the 'pinking' of clothes and toys, through observing older sisters and mothers who concern themselves with appearance, and through the blandishments of the style industries which permeate our visual field, inviting girls and women to imagine that they will enhance their personal identity and sense of belonging by using their products.

The marketing of beauty to girls as young as five through to women in their seventies has made the idea of beauty more accessible. Simultaneously however, the narrowing of the ideal standard to very young women with


one body type, one look, one shape, one colour, one breast or buttock size whose images are then photo-shopped to create bodies that rarely exist in real life - and are frequently unrecognisable to the model herself - has had many unfortunate consequences.

Beauty has become a goal, an aspiration, and is frequently perceived as essential to whatever one is doing. There is much delight in the decoration of self as a source of pleasure and playfulness. It is an entry ticket into the world of girls and women. It is a prized value and a way of being. But clashing against the delight is a dark seam of worry and concern which manifests as appearance anxiety.

Visual culture

Visual culture is the pre-eminent means of communication these days. Images and computers are the daily bread of experience. While we might experience them as essential, for younger people they are almost 'natural', like running water. We don't apprehend their impact at a particular age and understand the many ways in which they influence our world. They are part of the environment into which children are welcomed and they are the tools used for communication and entertainment. They are not experienced as passive devices but as the means by which to activate and express personal desire. They are where life and a great deal of economic exchange occur (Beeban Kidron, 2013).


Through smart phones and digitization come thousands of images a week which focus on the 'look'. The airbrushed bodies writhing on music videos and still photos insinuate themselves into the most intimate details of girls', boys', women's and men's lives. They are not 'external' images. They are not ersatz. They constitute part of their world. Yet the uniformity of images militates against the individual finding a match of herself within the plethora of depictions that are as indistinguishable from one another as containers of detergent.



At the same time as they are being encouraged by their teachers and families to achieve to their potential, countervailing commercial forces, presented as fun but predicated on creating insecurity, have already been clipping their wings. The resultant tendency to spend a great deal of time on appearance related anxiety is curtailing their intellectual performance and confidence about achievement.

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We have included findings from 25 empirical studies with a total sample of over 49,000 girls and women aged 10-60 years across the studies.

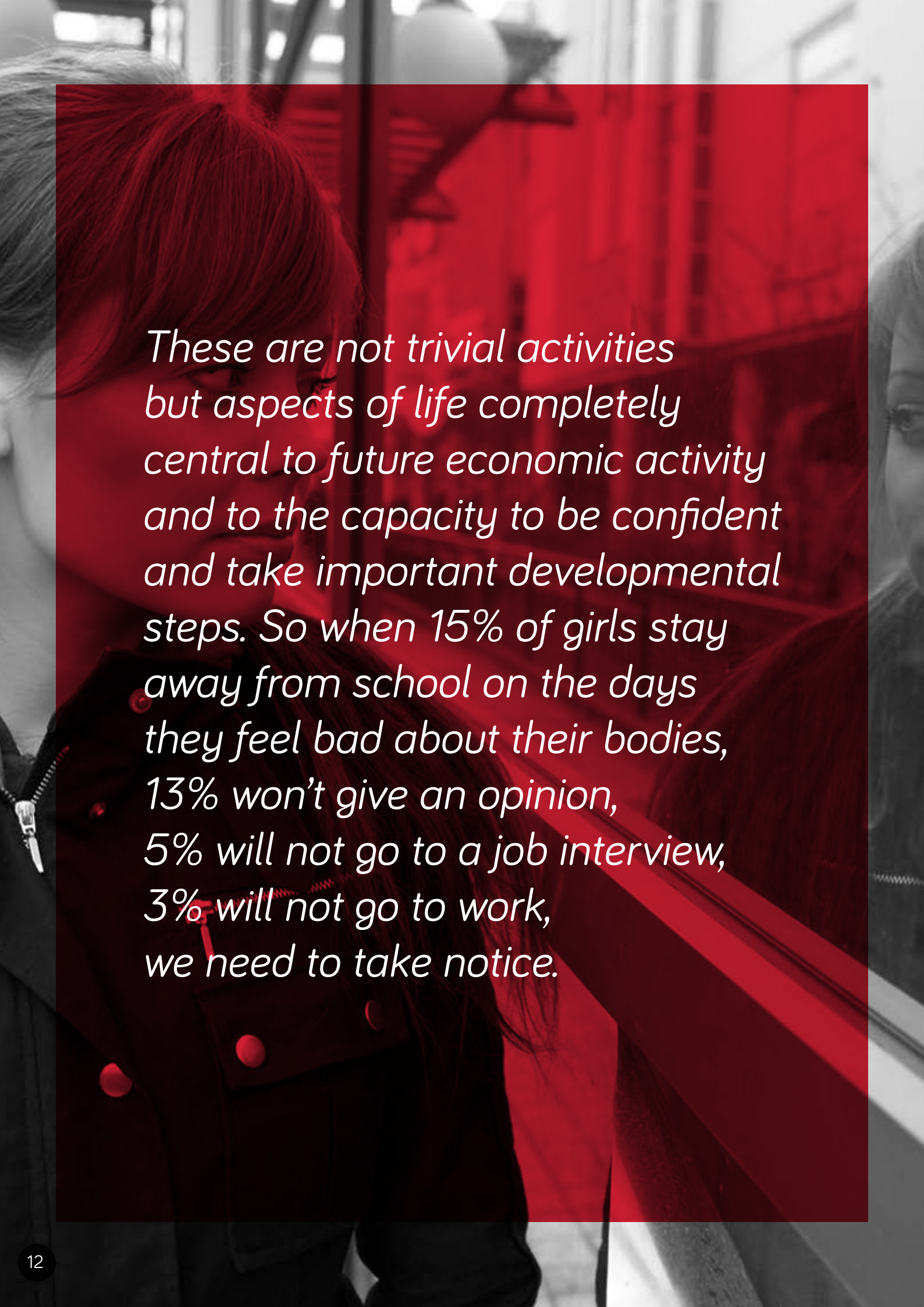


Whether doctoring, engineering, looking after the family, teaching, or working in a shop, women have come to scrutinise themselves from the outside. They believe their physical presence and the way they might be seen as crucial to their well-being (Berger 1972, Orbach 1978).

The research shows unequivocally that in this habitual assessment, the evaluation is more than likely to be negative. The beauty ideals which saturate all media from facebook, to tumblr, to instagram, to mainstream magazines, music videos and billboards create anxiety and shame around personal appearance. The style industries' offer of 'beauty' as a way to belong and thrive is elusive.

Leaning in while holding back

Over the last thirty years, social, educational, political and economic initiatives have focused inter alia on the changing roles of women and men. To this end there has been attention to enabling girls' attainment. School results have improved and women's entry into the professions and business has greatly increased. On many levels girls are seeing school as the gateway to their futures. However, the research shows disturbing trends among girls and women. At the same time as they are being encouraged by their teachers and families to achieve to their potential, countervailing commercial forces, presented as fun but predicated on creating insecurity, have already been clipping their wings. The resultant tendency to spend a great deal of time on appearance related anxiety is curtailing their intellectual performance and confidence about achievement.



These are not trivial activities but aspects of life completely central to future economic activity and to the capacity to be confident and take important developmental steps. So when 15% of girls stay away from school on the days they feel bad about their bodies, 13% won't give an opinion, 5% will not go to a job interview, 3% will not go to work, we need to take notice.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

We collected empirical studies for this review through searches of the published academic literature, via requests to academic and practitioner networks, and through industry contacts. Although it is customary to include and prioritize systematic reviews and meta-analyses there are none in this area. We have included findings from 25 empirical studies with a total sample of over 49,000 girls and women aged 10-60 years across the studies.

A notable strength of the empirical research reviewed here is that the studies span five continents. The bulk of this research has been conducted with adolescent girls and young women in the USA, Finland, China, Hong Kong and a global study which included women from Russia, UK, USA, Germany, Brazil, India, Canada, Japan, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Italy, France and Argentina. In addition, the sample sizes tend to be large, with several representative samples in the research on perceived weight.

Participation

In the last 10 years several studies have revealed girls' diminishing participation in secondary education because of concern about the way they look. 31% of adolescents in the UK do not engage in classroom debate for fear of drawing attention to their appearance, and 20% say they stay away from class on days where they lack confidence about their appearance (Lovegrove & Rumsey, 2004).

These results mimic an international study, involving 3,300 girls and women aged 15 to 64 years in 10 countries (Dove, 2006). This study found that on the days when they feel bad about their looks, 20% of 15 to 17 year old girls will not give an opinion and 16% will avoid school. In a six country study (USA,

Canada, UK, Germany, Brazil and Russia) involving 1,200 girls aged 10-14 and 15-17 years the disturbing result is that 60% of girls have avoided an activity because they felt bad about the way they look. These are not trivial activities but aspects of life completely central to future economic activity and to the capacity to be confident and take important developmental steps. So when 15% of girls stay away from school on the days they feel bad about their bodies, 13% won't give an opinion, 5% will not go to a job interview, 3% will not go to work, we need to take notice. Social isolation is mitigated to some extent because 25% of girls feel more confident when interacting with people online than in person (Dove, 2010) but nevertheless these results are disturbing.

School and University Performance and Achievement

If we turn to Finland, which has greater equality between the sexes than the UK and greater educational attainment in general, we discover that in the crucial two years from age 14 to 16 before girls chose vocational or academic high schools, satisfaction with one's weight, that is to say, not weight per se but the perception of weight and thus body acceptance or body dismay, is associated with academic grades and marks that are achieved. The study looked at approximately 30,000 girls. They reported weight dissatisfaction in all weight categories – no matter their actual weight or size – revealing that 68% of underweight girls, 42% of normal weight girls and 87% of obese girls felt bad about their weight. If girls reported weight dissatisfaction, their marks were lower (Mikkila et al., 2003).

We can internationalise this result by looking at the study of 6,863 Chinese adolescents including 3,551 girls (Xie et al., 2006). Again, actual overweight had no effect on academic performance, but girls who perceived that they were overweight reported significantly lower grade point average and academic

These international studies, and there are others in the table at the end of this paper, confirm the disturbing trend that body dissatisfaction and the perception of being too large undermine adolescent girls' academic achievement. It doesn't lead to failure, but to a diminishing in confidence and hence in performance and a great deal of mental energy being expended to overcome felt disability.

performance than girls who did not perceive themselves to be overweight. This wasn't the case for boys. Interestingly, perceived overweight contributed to school-related stress including concern that desired academic goals could be reached in both girls and boys.

Similarly, a nationally representative sample of 11,012 USA adolescents aged 14-17 years again found that students who perceived themselves as overweight had lower academic performance than those who did not, regardless of medically defined overweight status. The perception of being overweight was a more significant determinant of academic performance than medically defined obesity (Florin, Shults, & Stettler 2011).

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Focusing on mathematics

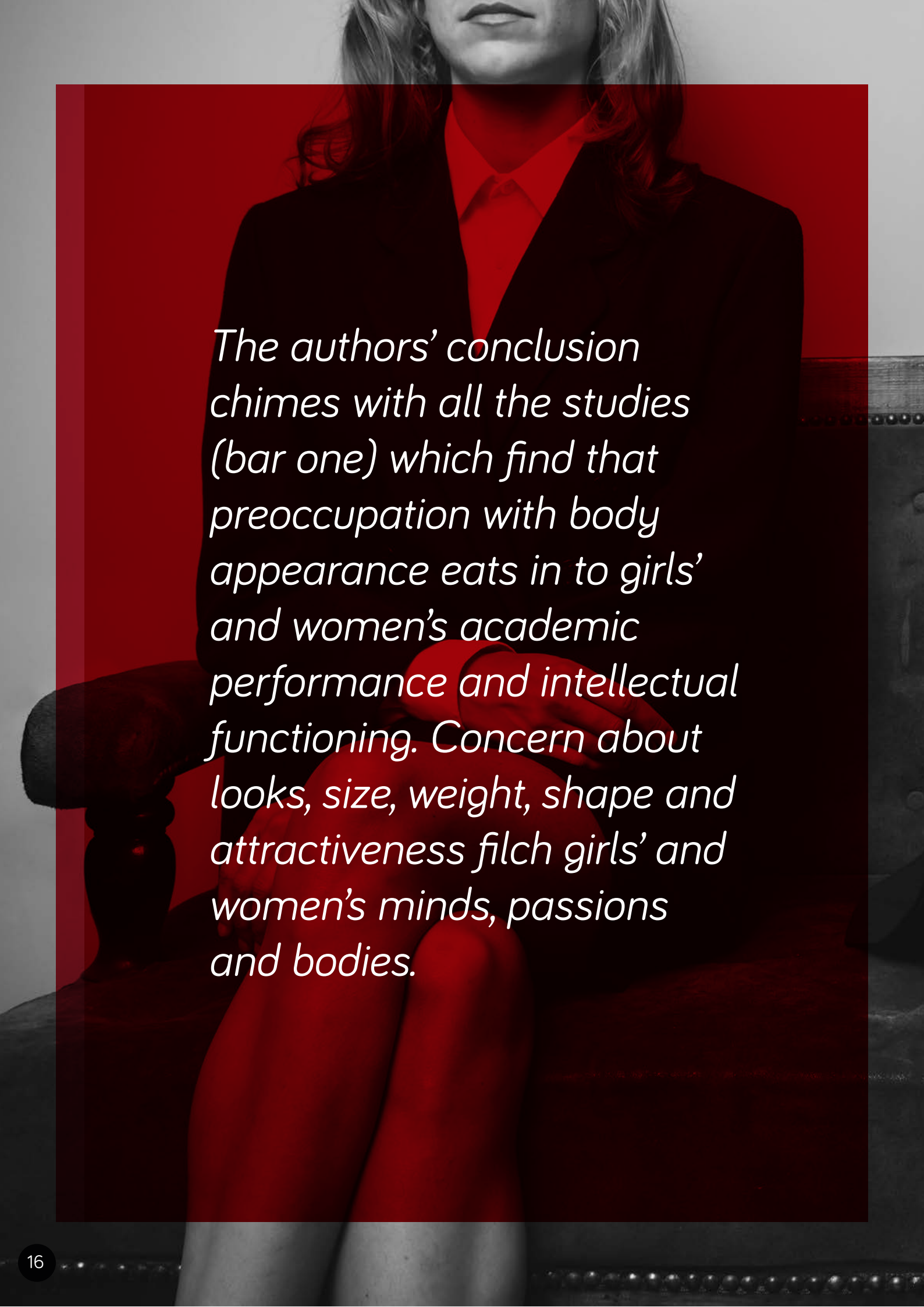
An encouraging result is that adolescent girls who scored well in body esteem in a study by Grabe & Hyde (2009) had greater confidence about their ability to do maths. Gay & Castano (2010) report similar findings among young women. Also, a recent study by Schrick et al. (2012) showed that college aged women in the USA who were able to reject the imperative to pursue societal norms in relation to appearance did better academically.

A set of ingenious experiments were designed to look at maths performance through the lens of self-objectification theory. Self-objectification theory argues that because women frequently encounter objectifying situations in which their appear-

ance is treated more importantly than any of their other characteristics, some women become socialised to view themselves from this perspective (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The term self-objectification refers to viewing one's body from the perspective of an observer, as an object to be looked at, or, as a collection of body parts (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Generally, levels of self-objectification are high amongst women (Calogero, 2011). Experimental research has temporarily induced even higher levels of self-objectification to investigate the consequences of taking this perspective on the self. Fredrickson et al. (1998) randomly assigned undergraduate men and women to try on a swimming costume or a baggy jumper. All participants then completed a maths test. The women who were assigned the challenge of wearing swimsuits performed worse than women in jumpers. The prompt to focus on appearance by wearing a swimsuit reduced the women's mathematical performance. This finding is robust and has been replicated in other studies.

Intelligence testing

When women's self-objectification is heightened and they are prompted to be self-consciousness around appearance by being filmed for 2 minutes by a man and then asked to watch the video back compared to being filmed by a women, they then take longer to answer questions on an ensuing intelligence test. Self-objectification – the viewing of oneself as an object to be looked at, and often failing to meet social norms for appearance – leaves women vulnerable to reduced cognitive capacity to perform in the world. The authors of this study Gay and Castano (2010) concluded that if just 2 minutes of the experience of objectification reduces the cognitive capacity of women who self-objectify, it “stands to reason” that cognitive capacity for these women over a lifetime will be severely limited by objectification.

A woman with long, wavy hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a black blazer over a red collared shirt. She is sitting in a dark chair. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text is written in a white, italicized serif font, centered on the page.

The authors' conclusion chimes with all the studies (bar one) which find that preoccupation with body appearance eats in to girls' and women's academic performance and intellectual functioning. Concern about looks, size, weight, shape and attractiveness filch girls' and women's minds, passions and bodies.

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In the work place and the cost to the economy

Society has been complicit with the notion that women's appearance is an essential aspect of their lives. Teasing out the levels of appearance anxiety and their impact on economic performance has therefore been neglected. A listening exercise by The Women's Unit at the Cabinet Office as far back as 1999 showed that concern about the body and eating problems was the number one issue for girls and women aged from 11 to 80 years (if not about themselves then about their daughters or grandchildren). This exercise is about to be repeated by the Shadow Minister for Equality. The repeated finding of distress in how this plays out in the workplace has yet to elicit robust research, but the Dove (2006) global study in which 17% of women said they would not go to a job interview and 8% would not go to work if they were feeling badly about their looks is salient. Body confidence is a more or less stable state. It allows the individual to feel confident in other activities (Jackson et al., 2011). However, a lack of body confidence means that a girl's or a woman's experience of her body is erratic, unstable and not predictable. It is this inconsistent sense of one's body (Orbach 2009) that constitutes a chilling effect on girl's and women's economic, social and psychological capacities. This is not to say that women don't perform extremely well at work. They do. But they do so burdened by not just being among the first generations coming into all occupations with everything that is entailed in terms of psychological

entitlements and psychological pressures, but by being burdened by appearance concerns which are not about job performance per se except in a very few jobs.

Interestingly, when a study conducted in Hong Kong with 166 Chinese adults mirrored research in the West showing that body weight is related to illness-related absenteeism amongst women but not amongst men, the investigators discovered that this relationship only existed for women who perceived themselves to have a high body weight (Lam et al., 2010). So if "overweight" (based on Body Mass Index) women perceive themselves to be overweight they are more likely to be absent from work for illness. If overweight women do not rate themselves as overweight they are no more likely to be absent from work than 'normal' or 'underweight' women. For women, but not men, perceiving oneself to be overweight is damaging and is associated with missed work days. This highlights again the damaging consequences of women learning to focus on and worry about their appearance.

There is only one piece of research that makes direct claims about the cost of low self/body-esteem in women to the UK economy. This was commissioned by Dove and conducted by the Future Foundation¹. 11 to 17 year old girls in the UK with low self/body-esteem are less likely to report that they would be competent at professional occupations than do girls with high self/body-esteem. The impact of self/body-esteem on girls' expectations for success is particular strong among high-achieving girls (The Future Foundation, 2012). Modelling the longer term consequences of this low self/body-esteem in girls, they posit that "it could deprive the country of 200,000 business professionals and 40,000 female entrepreneurs by 2050". Their report



The impact of managing emotions in such a way that one does not disclose thoughts and feelings to intimate others is well known to be detrimental to mental health and a destabilizing factor within personal relationships.

concluded that the impact of low body/self-esteem is most damaging to high-ability girls (The Future Foundation, 2012).

Costing personal relationships

Body insecurity and appearance anxiety are often an unseen and thus unconsidered when conceiving or costing social policy initiatives. Governments are concerned on the one hand with relationship breakdown and on the other hand with the conditions necessary to encourage stable relationships and durable families.

In the development of practice around emotional intelligence and emotional literacy (Goleman, 1995; Orbach 1994, 2000) and Early Intervention (Allen, 2011), the significance of girls' and women's troubled attitude towards their bodies is largely left out of the picture. There are interventions and funding streams which relate to eating disorders. However, there has been a change in what is seen to constitute eating disorders. Behaviours that are now deemed sub-pathological sat within the diagnostic criteria for eating disorders two decades ago. Thus quite severely troubled eating, appearance anxieties and body dysmorphias which beset so many causing tension at meal times, tension in relationships and tension from chaotic eating patterns which affect mood without this being recognised, are contributing to family stress. There may be bewilderment as to where the stress is coming from. Schrick et al. (2012) demonstrated that internalising society's appearance ideals and thin aspiration as a personal goal is associated with silencing aspects of experience to both self and others. The impact of managing emotions in such a way that one does not disclose thoughts

and feelings to intimate others is well known to be detrimental to mental health and a destabilizing factor within personal relationships. While the literature is sparse on daily interactions, Neziek (1999) reports that body satisfaction promotes feelings of increased intimacy for women and more confidence in feeling potent and confident with others. By contrast, Mills et al. (2014) found, as have the global Dove studies, that body dissatisfaction caused women undergraduates to avoid engaging in social interactions and to experience less enjoyment or control when they did engage. In Forand et al.'s (2010) study, body dissatisfaction led to perceiving others as more confident or more dominant in interactions.

¹ The Future Foundation devised a measure of self-esteem for this study. The measure had strong emphasis on body image and 3 out of the 10 items were body satisfaction items – hence we refer to this as a measure of self/body-esteem, although in the report they use 'self-esteem'. It is not a validated measure of self/body-esteem – so the results should be treated with caution. However, they did have a representative sample of 500 girls.



Maternal anxiety in relation to the body is revealing body anxiety in adult daughters, suggesting that without interventions these women will go on to inadvertently transmit body anxiety to the next generation. The economic cost of this cannot be estimated, but we can make the supposition that a combination of an insecurely attached body which then meets societal pressure through media and the style industries will compound the intellectual and psychological forces which already negatively affect girl's and women's performance.

EVIDENCE FROM CLINICAL EXPERIENCE AND ATTACHMENT THEORY

Secure attachment and secure bodies

Secure attachments are the basis for secure families and secure individuals (Main, 1995). A secure attachment does not mean that an individual is never in conflict, never worried, never unconfident. It means that the individual has the capacity for reflective functioning (Fonagy & Target, 1997). She or he can therefore draw on experience to learn and to adjust behaviours and modify emotional responses. The capacity for secure attachment is set in the very early years and provides for emotional resilience with flexibility (Allen, 2011). Secure attachment breeds secure attachment in the next generation. When attachment is insecure, leading to behaviours which are compulsive, withdrawn or highly inconsistent, this too is passed on (Steele & Steele, 2008).

Recent attention has focused on the issue of attachment theory in relation to bodies (Orbach 2003, 2009; BODI, published, 2014). The argument is parallel to the argument about secure attachment. Children apprehend their sense of body stability or body instability within the context of their family of origin. The main relationship for the transmission of this has been the mother child relationship. There is intense pressure on women to perfect bodies even during pregnancy and post-partum. This means that


as the mother is engaging with her baby, the developing relationship can be freighted with concerns that the mother has about her own body. This operates in several distinct ways.

- (1) How she relates to her baby's body.
- (2) The mother's availability to help the baby and her develop a rhythmic attachment.
- (3) It impacts on how she feeds her baby.
- (4) It influences how she feeds herself.
- (5) The pressure to attain a 'perfect' body is central to the manner in which she inhabits her own body (Orbach, 2012).

The Body Observational Diagnostic Interview (BODI, published, 2014) have preliminary findings showing the intergenerational transmission of body attachments from mothers to daughters. Maternal anxiety in relation to the body is revealing body anxiety in adult daughters, suggesting that without interventions these women will go on to inadvertently transmit body anxiety to the next generation. The economic cost of this cannot be estimated, but we can make the supposition that a combination of an insecurely attached body which then meets societal pressure through media and the style industries will compound the intellectual and psychological forces which already negatively affect girl's and women's performance. The circle of appearance anxiety and body distress goes from societal pressure to mother to baby to child to woman to mother and round again.

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² The "Body and Attachment" group, brings together senior clinicians from a range of interests to investigate intergenerational transmission of body representations from mothers to daughters. Initiated by Susie Orbach and Miriam Steele at the New School for Social Research in New York, this group comprises psychotherapists from The Womens' Therapy Centre Institute, William Alanson White, and experts in non-verbal communication. Two studies are currently being conducted: one involving mothers and their toddler daughters and another involving undergraduate students in a study of the body and objectification.



Today there is a cultural rhetoric of girls and women 'having it all' and 'going out there'. These exhortations impinge on girls and on mothers in ways that create excitement and anxiety. They make it sound as though women can have it all at all times. This is entirely unrealistic and sets up expectations in complex ways within the mother daughter relationship and in women in general.

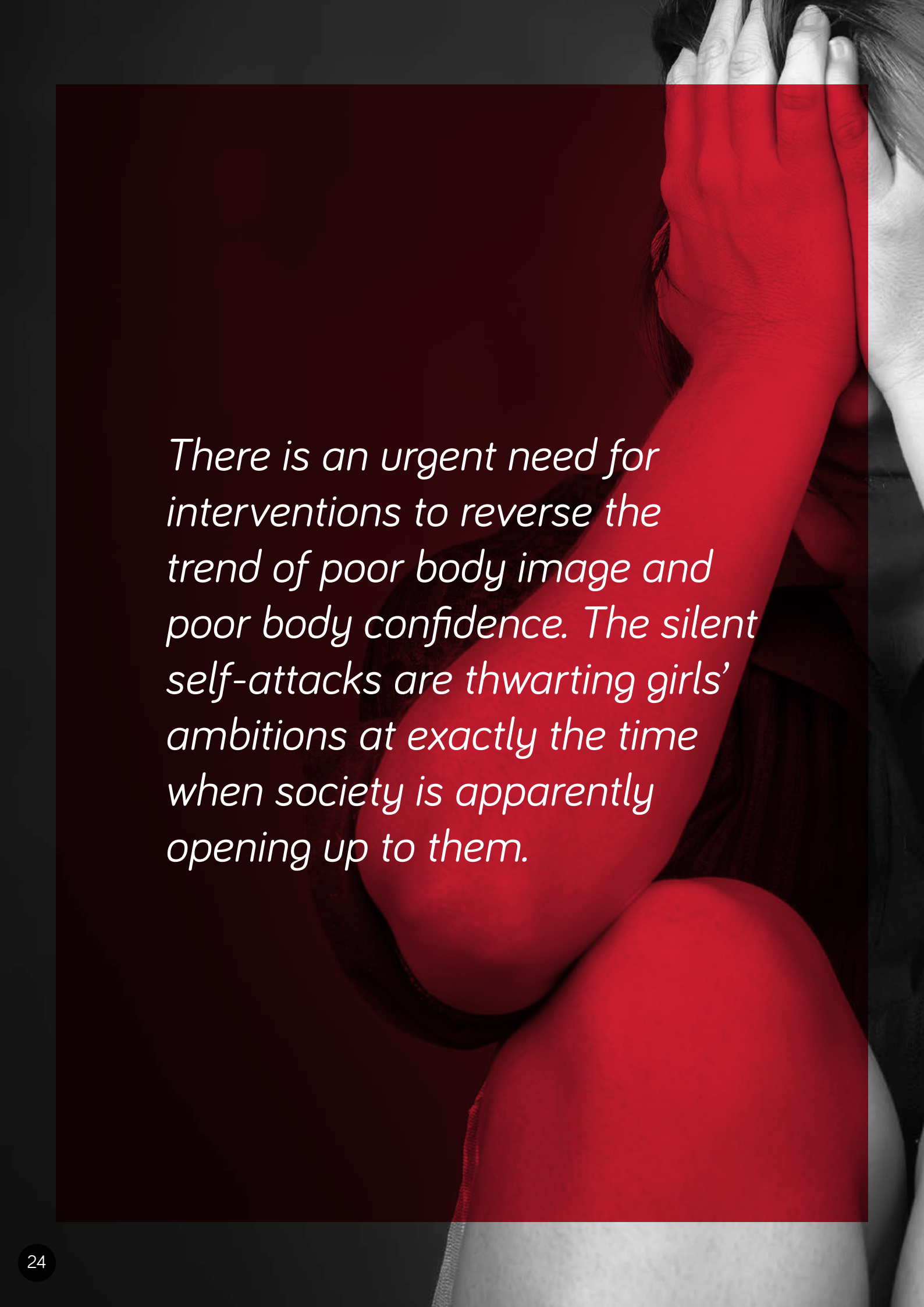
Interrupting the intergenerational transmission of body distress and maximizing women's economic contributions.

By and large women become mothers. In their role as carers and nurturers they are vested with introducing the next generation to the norms of the family and of the wider society. They prepare their children purposefully and unconsciously to take their place in the world. They do this through instruction, through the shape and emotional ambience of the mother child relationship and by representing in their own person the expectations and experience of being an adult woman. The mother is the model for all future relationships and whoever she is, whether she is kindly or cruel, encouraging or constraining (and most mothers are a combination of many different attributes), will form a template for the taking on of self on the part of the child. When mothers raise daughters, they do so drawing on their own experience of being mothered and with the desire to enhance what was good for them in their growing up and lessen what was not so good. At the same time they may be unaware of the many ways in which mothering evokes the patterns of their own babyhood and childhood and the fact that their emotional, intellectual, and bodily ways of being are wittingly and unwittingly passed on, preparing girls in particular to find their way in a society that is still unequally divided by gender.

In developing social policy, it is important to support parents and mothers in particular to find ways to enable women to recognize the personal struggles they face in their own lives which may differ from the conditions which give rise to conflict in their daughters. Today there is a cultural rhetoric of girls and women 'having it all' and 'going out there'. These exhortations impinge on girls and on mothers in ways that create excitement

and anxiety. They make it sound as though women can have it all at all times. This is entirely unrealistic and sets up expectations in complex ways within the mother daughter relationship and in women in general. It may include a mother's inadvertent foisting on a daughter, ambitions that, for the mother, remains personally unfulfilled. Such ambitions may not sufficiently arm the next generation for the realities of the world and so when young women fail to meet the ambition they can feel shame and confusion, which in turn inhibits their economic activity. This argument is evidenced from clinical practice working with women.

In regards to bodies, as mothers live their own embodied experience, they may do so with limited awareness of the impact on their children. In the case of girls who have female bodies, the points of identification are profound. A daughter may experience in the very essence of her physical being, anxiety about her own body. This may be so habitual that she feels it as her normality as she has sensed it as her mother's normality too. Interrupting this 'normality' is essential if we are to break the transmission of body anxiety from one generation to the next and enable girls and women to 'take their bodies for granted' so that they can make their contribution to society unburdened by appearance anxiety and body instability.

A woman wearing a vibrant red dress is shown from the chest up. She has her hands pressed against her face, completely obscuring her eyes and nose. Her hair is dark and pulled back. The background is dark and out of focus. The overall mood is one of distress or self-harm.

There is an urgent need for interventions to reverse the trend of poor body image and poor body confidence. The silent self-attacks are thwarting girls' ambitions at exactly the time when society is apparently opening up to them.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: COMMISSIONING RESEARCH

The costs of eating disorders and obesity have been assessed in terms of present and future expenditure to the NHS and opportunities lost for young women. No costing exists of the ubiquitous breeding of body insecurity which takes form in the growth of appearance anxiety, body dysmorphias, bulimic behaviours, compulsive eating, and confidence issues, many of which are now normative and widespread. These combine to plunder girls' and women's educational and work opportunities and latent contributions.

Research is required to cost the extent to which women's mental capacity is deflected into appearance anxiety and body distress, and represents hours lost from potential economic activity.

Research is required into the opportunity cost of women's self-silencing and absence from work due to appearance anxiety and body distress as it impacts on women putting themselves forward or being chosen for promotion at work.

There is an urgent need for interventions to reverse the trend of poor body image and poor body confidence. The silent self-attacks are thwarting girls' ambitions at exactly the time when society is apparently opening up to them. We see absenteeism and underperforming due to appearance anxiety and body distress. Programmes and social policy that can interrupt the cycle of undermining that is intensifying, need to be buttressed by robust research which can demonstrate the economic and psychological case for underpinning girl's capability, and can demonstrate the effectiveness of such strategies.

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Table: Summary of empirical research evidence

Authors	Participants	Method / Design	Results	Strengths / Limitations
Calogero (2013). Objects Don't Object Evidence That Self-Objectification Disrupts Women's Social Activism	Study one: 50 American undergraduate women Study two: 78 American undergraduate women	Experimental	Correlational: Self-objectification is related to gender specific system justification (GSSJ) and gender based social activism (GBSA). Also GSSJ mediated relationship between SO and GBSA. Experimental: GSSJ & GBSA higher after state SO induced. Same mediation found.	+Validated measures +The experimental study strengthens the causal inferences made in the correlational study -Student sample is not representative
Dove (2010). The Real Truth About Beauty: Revisited Extending the Conversation To The Next Generation	Girls (n>1,200) from 6 countries (USA, Canada, UK, Germany, Brazil and Russia) aged between 10 and 17 years. Two age groups 10-14 and 15-17 between July and August 2010	Cross-sectional	60% of girls aged 10-14 and 15-17 globally (USA, CAN, GER, BRA, UK, RUS) have avoided an activity because they felt bad about the way they look, such activities include going to the beach, pool, sauna or spa (23%), go to school (15%) give an opinion (13%) or an interview (20%), a social event, party or club (19%), go to the doctor (12%) 15 - 17 year old girls only go on a job interview (5%) go to work (3%), 25% of girls feel more confident when interaction with people online than in person	+Large, representative sample +Cross-cultural study +Identifies prevalence of social avoidance that girls attribute to body image concerns -Measures not validated
Dove (2013). Optimally Landing Dove Social Mission in Key Global Markets	300 girls aged 10-17 in each market - data collection 2010 (Brazil and Russia) and 2013 (Germany, Italy, China, Japan, Russia, Thailand, India, Argentina, Canada, France, Indonesia, UK, USA)	Cross-sectional	Avoidance behaviour - average across all sample = 57% avoided an activity because they felt bad about the way they look (UK 53%)	+Cross-cultural study +Identifies prevalence of social avoidance that girls attribute to body image concerns -Measures not validated
Etcoff, Orbach, Scott, & D'Agostino (2006). Beyond stereotypes: rebuilding the foundations of beauty beliefs.	3,300 girls and women aged 15-64 in 10 countries.	Cross-sectional	66% of girls and women globally have avoided an activity because they were dissatisfied with the way they looked. 20% of girls (aged 15-17) and 16% of women (aged 18-64) have avoided giving an opinion, 13% of girls and 17% of women have avoided a job interview, 16% of girls and 11% of women have avoided going to school and 7% of girls and 8% of women have avoided going to work.	+Large, representative sample +Cross-cultural study +Identifies prevalence of social avoidance that girls attribute to body image concerns -Measures not validated

Authors	Participants	Method / Design	Results	Strengths / Limitations
Florin, Sjults, & Stettler (2011). Perception of Overweight is Associated with Poor Academic Performance in US Adolescents	USA Nationally representative 2003 survey 11,012 14-17 year olds	Correlational	<p>35.3 % of those who perceived themselves as overweight were actually not overweight</p> <p>US adolescents who perceived themselves as overweight have lower academic performance than those who do not, regardless of medically defined overweight status.</p>	<p>+Large, representative sample</p> <p>-Based on self-report of academic grades</p> <p>-Cross-sectional so cannot draw strong conclusions about causality</p>
Forand, Gunthert, German & Wenze (2010). Appearance Investment and Everyday Interpersonal Functioning: An Experience Sampling Study	<p>American undergraduate women (n=92)</p> <p>Ethnicity: 72% Caucasian (n=66), 12% Asian American (n=11), 3% African American (n=3) and 13% other (n=12)</p>	Experience sampling	<p>High appearance invested women reported a stronger relationship between personal communion of the interaction and negative mood and self-esteem.</p> <p>Women with low body satisfaction reported lower average perceptions of communion and self-esteem as well as higher average negative mood compared to women with higher body satisfaction.</p>	<p>+Validated measures</p> <p>+Experience sampling give a detailed picture of day-to-day experiences</p> <p>-Student sample is not representative</p> <p>-Very demanding on participant time which may impact on quality of the data collected</p>
Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn & Twenge (1998) That Swimsuit Becomes You: Sex Differences in Self-Objectification, Restrained Eating and Math Performance	<p>American undergraduates (n=82, of which 40 were male and 42 were female)</p> <p>Ethnicity: 83% Caucasian, 6% African American, 5% Asian, 2% Hispanic and 4% 'other'</p>	Experimental	<p>Women in the swimsuit condition (self-objectified) performed worse on the math test than did women in the sweater condition.</p>	<p>+Validated measures</p> <p>+The experimental study strengthens confidence in causal inferences</p> <p>-Student sample is not representative</p>

Authors	Participants	Method / Design	Results	Strengths / Limitations
<p>The Future Foundation (2012). Girls Self-Esteem: Potential consequences for the future. A Speculative analysis of self-esteem among 11-17 year old girls and their prospective career choices.</p>	<p>Representative sample of 500 girls in the UK 11-17</p>	<p>Cross-sectional</p>	<p>Developed 10 item self-esteem measure for this study, 3 items were body esteem items. Created 3 categories low SE 25% of girls, average 50%, high 25%.</p> <p>14% of girls with low Self/body esteem didn't go to school because they were worried about their looks (compared to 2% high self/body esteem)</p> <p>Nine out of ten girls with high self/body-esteem are confident they will have a successful career in the future, compared to just one in three girls with low self-esteem.</p> <p>Girls with high self/body esteem were more likely to think that they would be good at professional jobs than low self/body esteem girls. There were no differences in expectations for being good at cleaner, hairdresser, childcare worker and fashion designer. Comparing girls in the top and bottom half of a self-assessed educational attainment scale: Self/body esteem has a stronger impact on girls' expectations about job competence amongst high achieving girls than amongst low achieving girls. So low self/body esteem has a much more negative impact on expectations for job competence amongst high achievers.</p> <p>These ratings are used to model the potential cost to the economy in the future. The bases for the predictions could be debated, however, they authors conclude that low self/body - esteem in girls aged 11-17 could deprive the country of 200,000 business professional and 40,000 female entrepreneurs by 2050. With the impact of low body/self-esteem being most damaging to high-ability girls.</p>	<p>+Large, representative sample -Measures not validated -Extrapolation of this data to future economic impact is speculative</p>

Authors	Participants	Method / Design	Results	Strengths / Limitations
<p>Gapinski, Brownell & LeFrance (2003). Body Objectification and “Fat Talk”: Effects on Emotion, Motivation and Cognitive Performance</p>	<p>American undergraduate women (n=80) between the ages of 17 and 21, with a mean age of 18.69</p> <p>Ethnicity: 61% European American, 14% Asian, 10% African American, 6% Hispanic and 9% ‘other’</p>	<p>Experimental</p>	<p>Trait associations - lower trait SO was associated with higher self-efficacy and higher intrinsic motivation. Self-objectifying is associated with lower feelings of capability and purposefulness.</p> <p>Experimental manipulation – women wearing swimsuits reported decreased self-efficacy compared to jumpers</p> <p>Failed to replicate Fredrickson et al., on maths test performance.</p>	<p>+Validated measures +The experimental study strengthens confidence in causal inferences -Student sample is not representative -Demanding on participant time which may impact on quality of the data collected</p>
<p>Gay & Castano (2010). My Body or My Mind: The Impact of State and Trait Objectification on Women’s Cognitive Resources</p>	<p>Study 1</p> <p>American graduate and undergraduate women (n=25), who were aged 18-35</p> <p>Study 2</p> <p>American graduate and undergraduate women (n=50, n=23 in high-objectification & n=28 in low objectification)</p>	<p>Experimental</p>	<p>Study 1</p> <p>Women who were high on trait self-objectification and who were in the objectifying condition took longer on the letter number sequencing task for difficult sequences.</p> <p>There was no experimental effect on performance but trait SO was associated with performance at high levels of task difficulty.</p> <p>Performance on a maths test was worse in the highly objectifying condition than the low objectifying condition – but no interaction with trait SO</p> <p>Study 2</p> <p>Results replicated Study 1, high objectification condition led to longer latencies on the LNS task, but only among high TSO individuals at high levels of task difficulty.</p> <p>No effects were found for the role of anxiety and self-esteem as possible mediators of the effect of TSO and SSO.</p>	<p>+Validated measures +The experimental study strengthens confidence in causal inferences -Student sample is not representative -Possible that specific experimenter characteristics had an impact</p>

Authors	Participants	Method / Design	Results	Strengths / Limitations
Grabe & Hyde (2009) Body Objectification, MTV, and Psychological Outcomes Among Female Adolescents	American female adolescents (n=195) mean age = 13.2 Ethnicity: 89.4% White (n=174), 3.4% American Indian/Alaskan Native (n=7), 2.8% Asian American (n=6), 2.2% Black (n=4), 1.7% Hispanic (n=3), and 0.6% 'Other' (n=1)	Cross-sectional	Body esteem was positive correlated with confidence in maths ability $r = .25$ Self-surveillance negatively contributes towards maths ability	+Validated measures -Cross-sectional so cannot draw strong conclusions about causality -Student sample is not representative
Hebl, King & Lin (2004) That Swimsuit Becomes Us All: Ethnicity, Gender and Vulnerability to Self-Objectification	American undergraduates (n=400, of which 44% were male and 56% were female) Ethnicity: 130 Caucasian, 88 Hispanic, 89 Asian American.	Experimental	In a self-objectifying situation men and women of every ethnicity experiences negative outcomes, e.g. lower math performance.	+Validated measures +The experimental study strengthens confidence in causal inferences -Student sample is not representative
Jackson, Madewell & Kennison (2011) The Relationships Between Body Image and Job Satisfaction	289 students (136 men & 153 women) mean age 19. 80% White, 97% heterosexual, 93% working, mean time at work 1.58 years	Cross-sectional	Body-as-process (but not body-as-object) predicted general job satisfaction standardised beta .34 Neither body image predicted satisfaction with pay, satisfaction with opportunity for promotion or satisfaction with current pay Body-as-process (but not body-as-object) predicted satisfaction with the work itself (b = .31) Body-as-process predicted satisfaction with supervision (b=.40, and trend for body-as-object predicting satisfaction with supervision (b = -.16, p = .07) and satisfaction with coworkers (b= .17, p = .06)	+Validated measures -Cross-sectional so cannot draw strong conclusions about causality -Student sample is not representative -Student sample, paid employment may be less significant to this group than academic work
Kiefer, Sekaquptewa & Barczyk (2006) When Appearance Concerns Make Women Look Bad: Solo Status and Body Image Concerns Diminish Women's Academic Performance	American Caucasian female undergraduates (n=106), mean age 18.85	Experimental	Women performed more poorly when given a stigmatized appearance (when body image concerns were induced) and placed under solo status compared to when only one of these factors were present. Social identity threat mediated the effect of solo status for women given a stigmatized appearance	+Validated measures +The experimental study strengthens confidence in causal inferences -Student sample is not representative -It is not clear how the photo manipulation is perceived by participants and may have been viewed as different rather than stigmatized appearance

Authors	Participants	Method / Design	Results	Strengths / Limitations
King & Manaster (1977) Body Image, Self-Esteem, Expectations, Self-Assessments, and Actual Success in a Simulated Job Interview	American female undergraduates (n=98), mean age 21.07	Simulated job interviews and questionnaires	<p>Job interview self-ratings as well as the tendency to over/under rate how well one actually performed were significantly related to self-esteem but not to body satisfaction.</p> <p>Expectations for achieving job interview success related significantly to body satisfaction, but even more closely to self-esteem.</p> <p>Actual quality of interview performance was not related to either self-esteem or body attitudes.</p>	<p>+Validated measures</p> <p>+The stimulated interview represents a realistic experience</p> <p>-Student sample is not representative</p> <p>-The interview was for work in a school, results may be different for occupations where appearance is more or less salient</p>
Lam, Huang & Chiu (2010). Mind over Body?	162 adults between 18 - 60, 70 women	Cross-sectional	If "overweight" (based on BMI) women perceive themselves to be overweight they are more likely to be absent from work for illness. If overweight women do not rate themselves as overweight they are no more likely to be absent from work than 'normal' or 'underweight' women	<p>+Non-student sample appropriate for this research question</p> <p>-Cross-sectional so cannot draw strong conclusions about causality</p> <p>-The reasons why perceived weight is linked to absenteeism not clear</p>
Lovegrove & Rumsey (2005). Ignoring it doesn't make it stop.	600 UK adolescents	Cross-sectional	<p>31% did not engage in classroom debate because of body image concerns.</p> <p>20% stay away from class when they are concerned about appearance.</p>	<p>+Demographically diverse school sample, although not representative</p> <p>-Cross-sectional so cannot draw strong conclusions about causality</p>
Mikkila, Lahti-Koski, Pietinen, Virtanen & Rimpela (2003) Associates of Obesity and Weight Dissatisfaction Among Finnish Adolescents	Finnish adolescents (n=60,252, of which n=29,718 were boys and n=30,534 were girls) aged 14 to 16.	Cross-sectional	<p>Only 54% of girls were satisfied with their weight.</p> <p>Among dissatisfied normal-weight adolescents, 81% thought they were overweight.</p> <p>Weight dissatisfaction was significantly associated with poorer school performance especially among girls. This relationship was still evident when actual weight category was controlled.</p>	<p>+The sample was large and results can be generalised to same-aged adolescents across the country</p> <p>-Self-reported height and weight may have led to misclassification into weight categories.</p> <p>-Cross-sectional so cannot draw strong conclusions about causality</p>

Authors	Participants	Method / Design	Results	Strengths / Limitations
<p>Mills, Fuller-Tyszkiewicz & Holmes (2014) State Body Dissatisfaction and Social Interactions: An Experience Sampling Study</p>	<p>Australian female undergraduates (n=121), mean age 24.63</p>	<p>Experience sampling</p>	<p>Cross-sectionally, state body dissatisfaction and social interaction quality were negatively associated.</p> <p>Prospectively body dissatisfaction predicted subsequent avoidance of social interactions.</p> <p>With avoidance of social interactions came worsened body dissatisfaction, engaging in social interactions improved body satisfaction.</p> <p>The relationship between state body dissatisfaction and positive perceived social interactions become increasingly strong (positively) for individuals with lower BMI and trait body satisfaction levels.</p> <p>State body dissatisfaction is higher in social situations than when alone and it also co-occurs with poorer perceived quality of interaction. Social situation predicts subsequent state body dissatisfaction.</p>	<p>+Validated measures +Experience sampling give a detailed picture of day-to-day experiences +Clear support for relationship between body dissatisfaction and quality and frequency of social interactions -Student sample is not representative -Very demanding on participant time which may impact on quality of the data collected</p>
<p>Miner-Rubino, Twenge & Fredrickson (2002) Trait Self-Objectification in Women: Affective and Personality Correlates</p>	<p>American undergraduate women (n=98), mean age was 18.6.</p> <p>Ethnicity: 73% White, 6% Black, 5% Hispanic, 11% Asian and 5% other</p>	<p>Cross-sectional</p>	<p>Trait self-objectification showed significant positive correlations with each of the measures of negative affect (body shame, depression and Neuroticism/anxiety)</p> <p>Trait self-objectification was also negatively correlated with the personality traits Agreeableness and Intellect.</p> <p>Women showed no correlations between body dissatisfaction and any of the affective or personality variables, except body shame.</p> <p>Body dissatisfaction and Agreeableness both served as significant predictors of negative affectivity.</p>	<p>+Validated measures -Student sample is not representative -Cross-sectional so cannot draw strong conclusions about causality</p>

Authors	Participants	Method / Design	Results	Strengths / Limitations
Nezlek (1999) Body Image and Day-to-Day Social Interaction	American psychology students (n=124, 66 females and 58 males).	Experience sampling	Self-perceptions of body attractiveness and of social attractiveness were positively related to the intimacy they found in interaction for women and men. (Self-perceptions of attractiveness to other) positive body image were positively related to women's confidence in social interaction and their perceived influence over interaction	+Validated measures +Experience sampling give a detailed picture of day-to-day experiences -Student sample is not representative -Very demanding on participant time which may impact on quality of the data collected
Quinn, Kallen, Twenge & Fredrickson (2006) The Disruptive Effect of Self-Objectification on Performance	American women (n=79), mean age 21.3. Ethnicity: 18 African Americans, 20 European Americans, 21 Asian Americans and 20 Latina Americans.	Experimental	Women in the self-objectification condition took longer to respond to all types of Stroop words, therefore showing that self-objectification interfered with performance.	+Validated measures +The experimental study strengthens confidence in causal inferences +The stroop task is independent of gender stereotypes, so not confounded by stereotype threat -Student sample is not representative
Schrick , Sharp, Zvonkovic & Reifman (2012) Never Let Them See You Sweat: Silencing and Striving to Appear Perfect among U.S. College Women	American undergraduate women (n=149), mean age 20.63.	Cross-sectional	Silencing was directly, negatively related to Academic Engagement Other Focused women showed highest levels of distress and lowest levels of academic engagement, while those who Reject Appearance Norms showed the lowest distress and the highest academic engagement. Engagement in academics appears to offer some protection against silencing and distress alike.	+Validated measures -Student sample is not representative -Cross-sectional so cannot draw strong conclusions about causality -Relatively long questionnaire may have introduced bias

Authors	Participants	Method / Design	Results	Strengths / Limitations
Xie, Chou, Spruijt-Metz, Reynolds, Clark, Palmer, Gallaher, Sun, Guo & Johnson (2006) Weight Perception, Academic Performance and Psychological Factors in Chinese Adolescents	<p>Participants were from the longitudinal smoking prevention and health promotion program in China (n=6,863, of which 3,312 were males and 3,551 were females) and their parents.</p> <p>Participants were from grades 7, 8 (middle school), 10 and 11 (high school)</p>	Cross-sectional	<p>Overweight perception (accurate and inaccurate) was related to school-related stress and depression in boys and girls.</p> <p>Perceived overweight (accurate and inaccurate) was related to lower GPA (grade point average) in girls only.</p> <p>Both boys and girls who perceived or misperceived themselves as overweight reported more frequent experience of perceived stress, stress from school work and depressive symptoms than those who did not perceive or misperceive themselves as overweight.</p> <p>Girls who perceive or misperceive themselves as overweight have a significantly lower perceived academic performance, however no effects were found for actual overweight status.</p>	<p>+The sample was large and results can be generalised to same-aged adolescents across the country</p> <p>-Few items measuring each construct</p> <p>-Cross-sectional so cannot draw strong conclusions about causality</p>
Yanover & Thompson (2008) Self-Reported Interference with Academic Functioning and Eating Disordered Symptoms: Associations with Multiple Dimensions of Body Image	<p>American undergraduates (n=1,583, 401 male and 1,182 female), mean age 20.43.</p> <p>Ethnicity: 63.4% Caucasian Non-Hispanic, 12.8% Hispanic, 11.4% African-American Non-Hispanic, 5.2% Asian, and 6.6% other.</p>	Cross-sectional	<p>For women overweight preoccupation, self-classified weight and appearance evaluation were associated with academic interference. But appearance orientation and body areas satisfaction scale did not.</p> <p>Overweight preoccupation was the variable that predicted the largest unique variance (had the highest effect size).</p>	<p>+The sample was large</p> <p>-Student sample is not representative</p> <p>-Cross-sectional so cannot draw strong conclusions about causality</p>
Yanover & Thompson (2008b) Eating Problems, Body Image Disturbances, and Academic Achievement: Preliminary Evaluation of the Eating and Body Image Disturbances Academic Interference Scale	<p>American undergraduates (n=1,584, 397 male and 1,181 female), mean age 20.43.</p> <p>Ethnicity: 63.4% Caucasian Non-Hispanic, 12.8% Hispanic, 11.4% African-American Non-Hispanic, 5.2% Asian, and 6.6% other.</p>	Cross-sectional	<p>Body dissatisfaction positively correlated with interference scale BUT not positively correlated with GPA among women.</p> <p>The correlation between academic interference and GPA was substantially higher for a subsample of individuals who scored in the elevated range on eating and body dissatisfaction.</p>	<p>+The sample was large</p> <p>-Student sample is not representative</p> <p>-Cross-sectional so cannot draw strong conclusions about causality</p>

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Susie Orbach

Dr Susie Orbach is a psychoanalyst and writer. She co-founded The Women's Therapy Centre in 1976 in London and The Women's Therapy Centre Institute in New York in 1981. She is UK convener of (www.endangeredbodies.org), the organisation campaigning for body diversity. She has written 13 books including *Fat is a Feminist Issue*, *Hunger Strike*, *On Eating*, *What's Really Going on Here*, *Towards Emotional Literacy*, *The Impossibility of Sex*, *Bodies* (which won the APA Women Prize in 2011) and recently co-edited *Fifty Shades of Feminism*.

She has been keynote speaker at the UK Body Image Summit, she is an expert advisor to the Government on this issue and with Holli Rubin produced the Government Report *Two for the Price of one* in 2014. She spoke at UN women in 2012 for the British Government. She has lectured in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Peru, Brazil, Columbia, Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, China, India. She is a Trustee of the Freud Museum and recent Chair of The Relational School. She has several honorary doctorates from different universities. She was visiting Professor at The London School of Economics for 10 years. She also had a column in *The Guardian* for 10 years. She is the recipient of the 2014 APPG award to the organisation or individual who has made a real and inspirational difference to self-esteem and body confidence.

BE REAL

BODY CONFIDENCE FOR EVERYONE

Be Real is campaigning to change attitudes to body image and help all of us put health above appearance and be confident in our bodies. It is a national movement made up of individuals, schools, businesses, charities and public bodies. CAR and AnyBody are stakeholders for the Be Real campaign. Find out more at www.berealcampaign.co.uk



ANY BODY



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