

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 22 (Social Work and Social Policy)</p>
<p>Title of case study:</p> <p>Promoting healthy body image through evidence-based body image interventions in real-world settings.</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Negative body image affects 60-70% of children and adults in developed countries and is recognised as a significant public health issue. UWE research has influenced national parliamentary policy debate and advocacy campaigns, including the report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image. It has also directly shaped the global social mission agenda of Dove, Unilever's largest personal care brand. It has convinced Dove's key business stakeholders of the viability of evidence-based approaches to improving body image in educational settings, and subsequently underpinned Dove's body image education curriculum, which is delivered in more than 20 countries worldwide.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Negative body image is now normal in developed countries with 50-70% of children and 60% of adults feeling ashamed of their looks. Due to evidence that it is associated with multiple physical and psychological health problems (e.g. depression, eating disorders, substance misuse) body image is recognised as a public health issue. To date, however, there has been a lack of empirical evidence on how to best develop brief psycho-social interventions that can improve body image among young people. Historically, interventions have been delivered by educational authorities, community organisations and industry without evidence to support their effectiveness. Due to an increasing need for accountability and evidence of real and measurable impact, governments, policy makers, and industry in Europe, USA, and Australia have called for evidence-based information on what they need to do to improve body image and what existing interventions work best with children, particularly in education settings.</p> <p>Staff from UWE's world-renowned Centre for Appearance Research have conducted a programme of research that has answered these calls and addressed critical gaps in knowledge on effective body image interventions in real-world settings.</p> <p>The research team at UWE was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Phillippa Diedrichs (UWE start date 4 January 2010, Research Fellow 2010-2011; Senior Research Fellow 2012-present) • Dr Emma Halliwell (UWE start date 4 January 2004; Lecturer 2004-2006, Senior Lecturer 2006-present) • Professor Diana Harcourt (UWE start date 1 September 1994; Research Psychologist 1994-1997; PhD Student 1997-2000; Lecturer 2000-2004, Senior Lecturer 2004-2006, Reader 2006-2012; Professor 2012-present) (submitted to UoA3). • Professor Nichola Rumsey (UWE start date 1 October 1990; Lecturer 1990-1992, Senior Lecturer 1992-1997, Reader 1997-2002; Professor 2002-present) (submitted to UoA3). <p>This research was conducted by Diedrichs in collaboration with Halliwell, Harcourt and Rumsey. It comprised two strands: (1) establishing best practice standards for developing interventions that aim to improve young people's body image; and (2) developing and evaluating the impact of classroom-based body image interventions that have potential for dissemination nationally and internationally in primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>The first strand of research systematically reviewed existing research on school-based body image interventions, in turn creating new knowledge by establishing which interventions have been most effective to date in school settings, and identifying the key elements of effective interventions (Diedrichs & Halliwell, 2012; Yager <i>et al.</i>, 2013a; 2013b). The research identified three interventions that were most effective in improving young people's body image, including media literacy and cognitive dissonance approaches. It also identified key ingredients for intervention</p>

success. These included the optimal intervention length (2-6 sessions), the type of facilitators who are most effective and preferred by participants (female teachers and external providers), and the most effective intervention content (activities that develop media literacy and skills to resist sociocultural pressures). This research collectively established best practice standards and methods for evidence-based school body image interventions.

The second research strand included innovative studies (**Halliwell & Diedrichs**, 2013; Bird *et al.*, 2013), which were the first internationally to examine how two existing evidence-based interventions for older adolescents (*The Body Project* and *Happy Being Me*) might be adapted for use with early and pre-adolescents. Despite evidence suggesting that body image concerns often develop in childhood, the majority of existing research on body image interventions has overlooked this age. These UWE studies addressed this gap. Each study successfully validated the effects of a brief body image interventions with children aged 10-13 years, and observed sustained improvements in body image at least up to three months later.

3. References to the research

1. Yager, Z., **Diedrichs**, P.C., Ricciardelli, L.A. & **Halliwell**, E. (2013a). What works in secondary schools? A systematic review of classroom-based body image programs. *Body Image: An International Journal of Research* **10** (3), 271-281.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2013.04.001>.
2. Yager, Z., **Diedrichs**, P.C. & Drummond, M. (2013b). Understanding the role of gender in body image research settings: Participant gender preferences for researchers and co-participants in interviews, focus groups, and interventions, *Body Image: An International Journal of Research* **10** (4), 574-582. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2013.06.004>.
3. **Diedrichs**, P. C. & **Halliwell**, E. (2012) School based interventions for body image and appearance concerns. In: Rumsey, N. and Harcourt, D., eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Psychology of Appearance*. Oxford University Press, pp. 531-550. ISBN 9780199580521.
4. **Halliwell**, E. & **Diedrichs**, P.C. (2013). Testing a dissonance body image intervention among young girls. *Health Psychology*. Advance online publication.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0032585>.
5. Bird, E.L., **Halliwell**, E., **Diedrichs**, P.C. & Harcourt, D. (2013). Happy Being Me in the UK: A controlled evaluation of a school-based body image intervention with pre-adolescent children. *Body Image: An International Journal of Research* **10** (3), 326–334.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2013.02.008>.

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4. Details of the impact

Parliamentary and Policy Impact

Diedrichs’ and colleagues’ research outlined in Section 2 has informed and influenced national political and parliamentary debate and policy in the UK. Based on the research output, **Diedrichs** was invited as the only academic to join the steering group for the UK Campaign for Body Confidence in 2011. The Campaign at the time was led by MP Jo Swinson (now Minister for Women and Equalities), and the steering group involves politicians, charities, and community organisations who meet regularly in the British Houses of Parliament. It aims to promote positive body image by influencing the advertising, fashion, beauty and media industries, and the Government. In her capacity as a steering-group member, **Diedrichs** shaped political and public debate by directly embedding her research into the proceedings of the Campaign.

A specific example of the research’s impact on parliamentary debate occurred in 2011, when the Campaign steering group decided to lobby Government for the inclusion of body image

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interventions in school curricula. **Diedrichs** was invited to submit her research examining school-based interventions to the steering committee. This ultimately led to Swinson making a submission in Parliament about the need to teach evidence-based body image interventions in schools, including cognitive dissonance approaches that were evaluated in **Diedrichs**' research (see Source 1).

In Parliament, Swinson stated: "*The University of the West of England's Centre for Appearance Research will soon publish its evaluation of different types of body image lessons. It suggests that the technique of cognitive dissonance—putting young people in a position in which they challenge the stereotypical, ideal body themselves—is the most successful in changing attitudes, and can reduce body dissatisfaction and the likelihood of developing eating disorders...I hope that the Government will conclude that body image should be taught in all schools...we need to encourage teachers and schools to use those resources by sharing best practice..*" (see Source 1)

Diedrichs was subsequently invited as the only academic to co-author the All Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image's 2012 *Reflections on Body Image Report* (Source 2). This report summarised the results of a national parliamentary inquiry into the causes and consequences of body image concerns. It included policy recommendations for evidence-based body image interventions to be made mandatory in schools nationally. **Diedrichs**' research directly informed, and was cited as providing the underpinning evidence for, these policy recommendations.

Industry Impact

Diedrichs' research has influenced industry strategy for developing and delivering evidence-based body image interventions globally. It directly informed and shaped the social mission agenda for Unilever's leading personal care brand Dove (see Source 3), which delivers body image educational interventions to girls in over 20 countries. Between 2008 and 2013, Dove has delivered body image education to 8.7 million girls worldwide.

In June 2012, **Diedrichs** was invited to advise on the re-launch of Dove's new psychosocial body image interventions. In relation to their educational programs, Dove states that **Diedrichs**' research has been "*instrumental in formulating our approach, development and design*" (Source 3). They also say that "*Collectively, these pieces of research have influenced Dove's social mission strategy, bringing clarity to the evidence base, convincing key business stakeholders of the viability of evidence-based approaches and contributing to the evidence underpinning the curriculum themes that guide the Dove Self Esteem Project in totality...*" (Source 3).

More specifically, **Diedrichs**' research has helped Dove to identify the most effective school-based programme known to date, which they are now launching in at least 20 countries. Highlighting the impact of **Diedrichs**' research, Dove has said that "*Without this research, our level of confidence in achieving the tangible impact we set out to achieve would be significantly lower... Our choice of school intervention to use as a basis of our re-launched program was reinforced by the results of a further study of Dr Diedrichs' evaluating a version of the recommended program in a younger audience, providing new evidence in an area less well understood to date...*" (Source 3).

Additionally, **Diedrichs**' research has informed the content of a new Dove education intervention that is delivered in partnership with the World Association for Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. Dove has said "*Dr Diedrichs' research has been key to the development of this non-formal intervention program. Specifically, her paper evaluating the well-regarded 'Body Project' with 12-13 year olds in the UK, has directly informed the creation of our new youth leader education tools which will reach over 3.5 million girls in the next 3 years.*"

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Excerpt from House of Commons Parliamentary Debate Transcript 19 July 2011
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110719/debtext/110719-0004.htm>
 - See Column 894: 6.17 pm. Jo Swinson (MP East Dunbartonshire) for references to **Diedrichs** and colleagues at UWE's Centre for Appearance Research.

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2. All Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image. (2012). Reflections on Body Image. Report available for download from:
http://issuu.com/bodyimage/docs/reflections_on_body_image?e=5210515/2698118
 - See Page 6 for acknowledgment of **Diedrichs**' contribution to writing the report.
 - See Pages 12, 14, 74-76 for references to research conducted by **Diedrichs** and colleagues at UWE.
3. **Testimonial available from UWE** from the Global Brand Development Manager, Dove Social Mission, Unilever, dated 30 October 2013.