

The Psychology of Appearance

Martin Persson
Centre for Appearance Research
University of the West of England



University of the
West of England

Where is UWE?

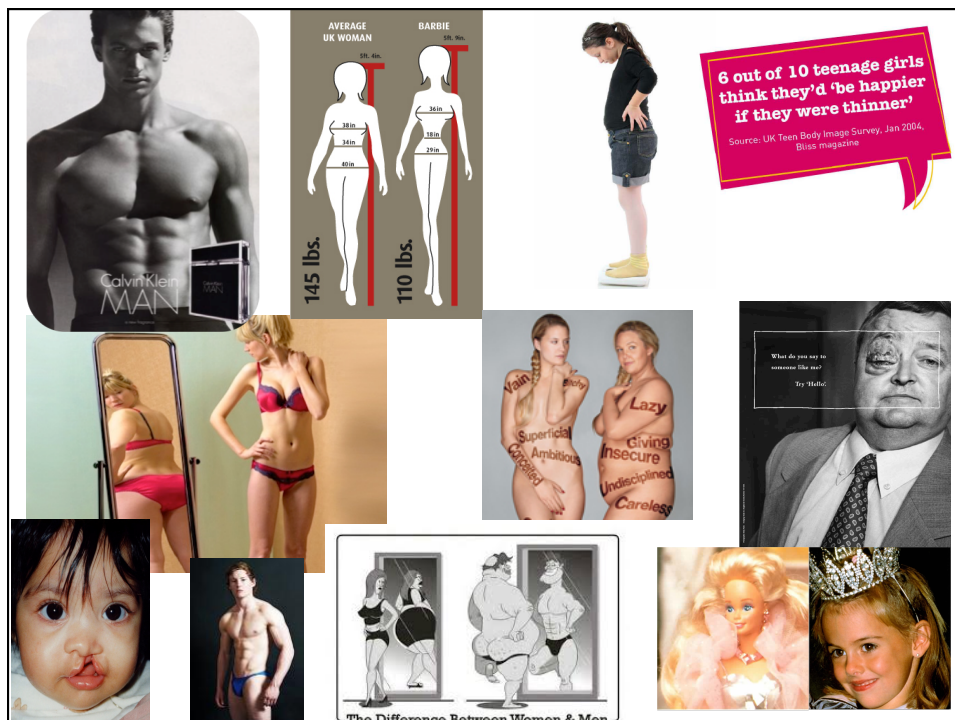


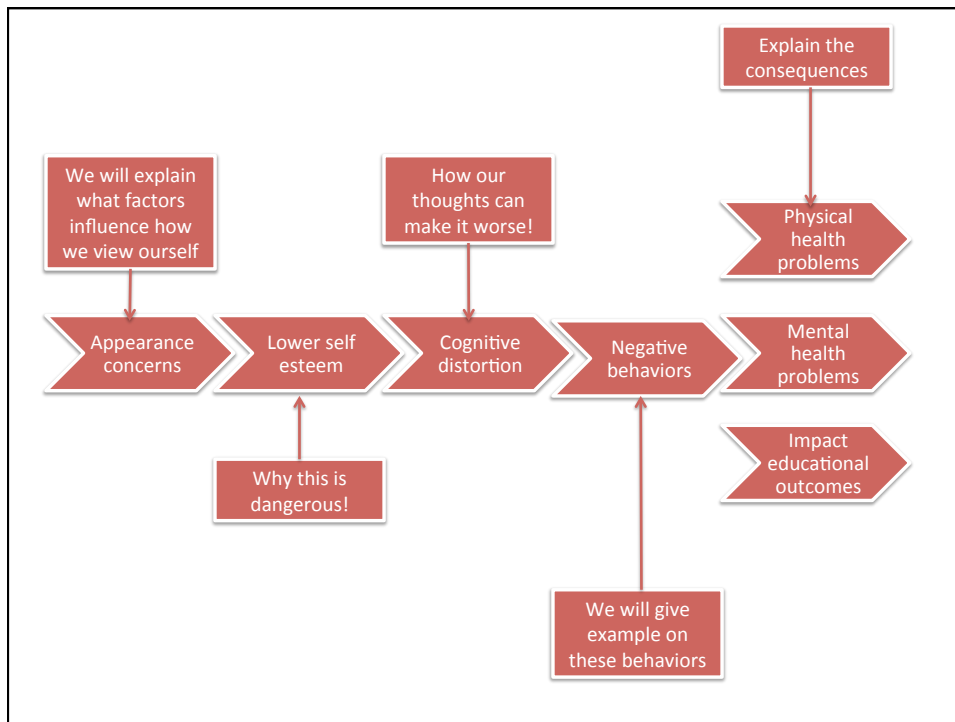
bettertogether



Centre for Appearance Research

- Est. 1992; 27 psychologists
- Wide range of research into the psychological aspects of appearance
 - Appearance dissatisfaction in the general population
 - Disfigurement (visible difference)
- Focus on applied research
 - Interventions
 - Influencing practice in educational & health care settings
 - Influencing policy





What do you see when you look in the mirror?



'Appearance' is a topic that everyone can associate with in some way.



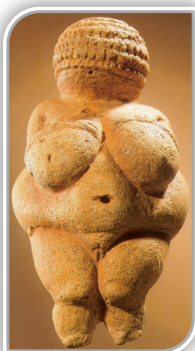
Historical

- For example:

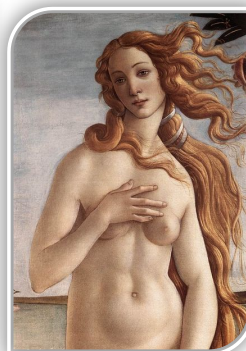
- Cleopatra is believed to have used make-up
- In Elizabethan times, both men and women used powder to make their faces look very pale, which was considered a sign of beauty. However, the ingredients in the powder they used resulted in lead poisoning.
- Tight corsets have been used for centuries to create the illusion of a smaller waist.



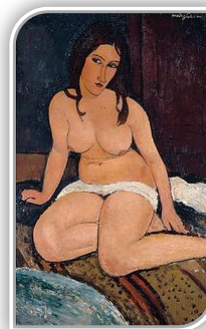
Historical Images of Beauty



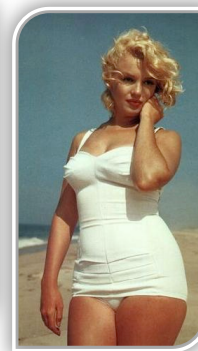
13th Millennium BC



Botticelli
1482



Modigliani
1916-1918



Marilyn
1950s

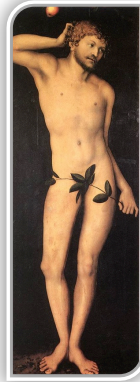
Historical Images of Male Beauty



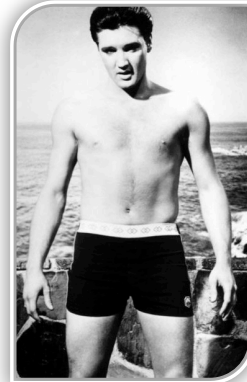
Tutankhamen
(1323-1341 BC)



David
(1501-1504)



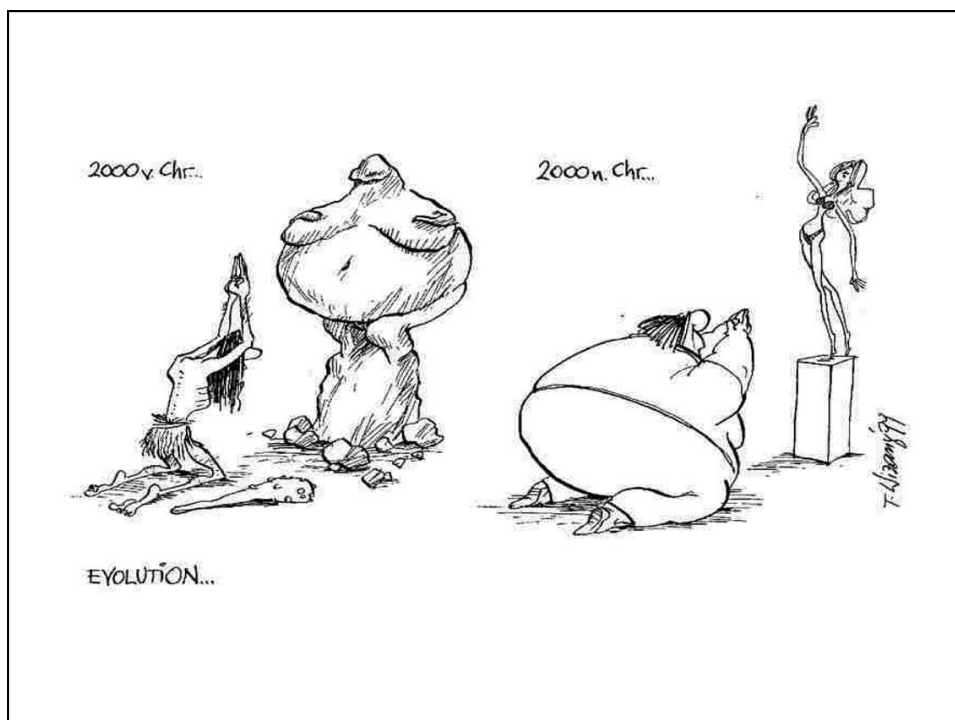
Adam
(1528)



Elvis
(1916-1918)



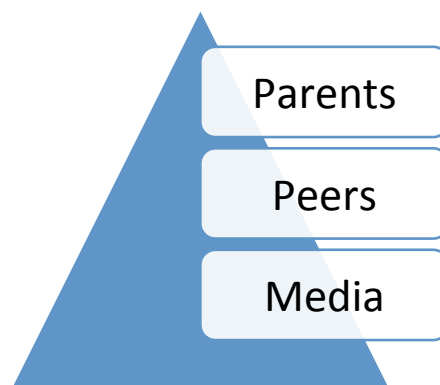
<http://time.com/65901/how-men-and-women-differ-when-drawing-up-the-perfect-body/>



WHERE DO CURRENT NORMS COME FROM?

Tripartite Influence Model

Keery H, van den berg P, Thompson JK. An evaluation of the Tripartite Influence Model of body dissatisfaction and eating disturbance with adolescent girls. *Body Image*. 2004;1:237-51.





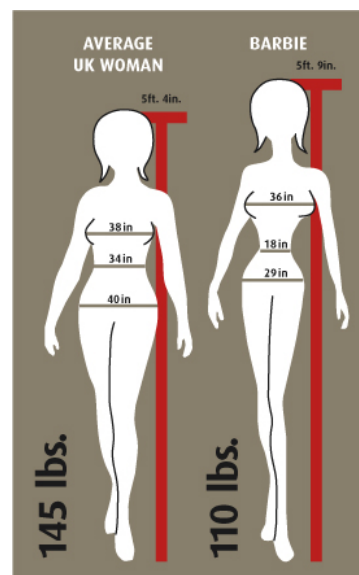
Family and Peers

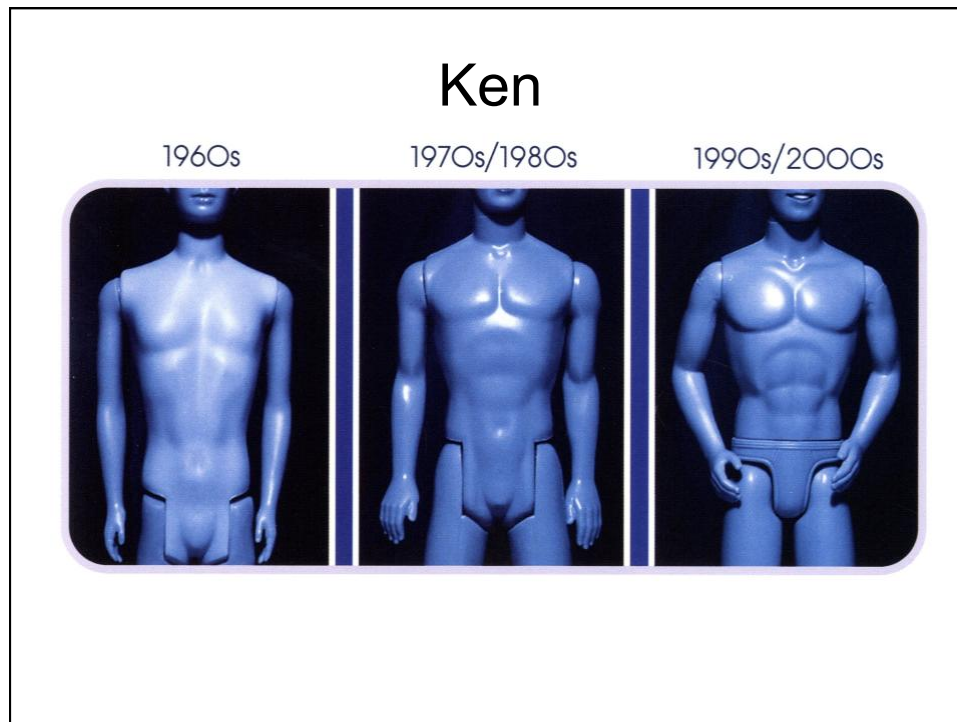
- Pressure to look a certain way
 - (e.g., wear certain clothes, lose weight, have surgery, wear makeup, cover up their visible difference)
- Modelling body dissatisfaction and internalised beauty ideals



1980

2010

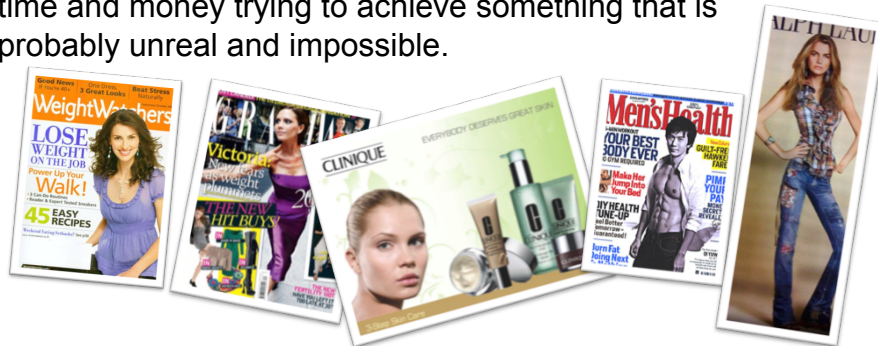




Contemporary Socio-cultural Influences

Media images

Many images in the media have been air-brushed, yet people aspire to look like these images and spend a lot of time and money trying to achieve something that is probably unreal and impossible.



Teenager's Magazines



Women's Magazines



"The SEXY STOMACH (and BUM and THIGHS) plan"

"Get the body you want"

"Get a bikini body – Lose pounds, banish cellulite"

"Cleo Best Body Challenge – Bikinify your bod! – Join & win \$33 000"

Men's Magazines



"Great abs made easy"

"Your best body ever"

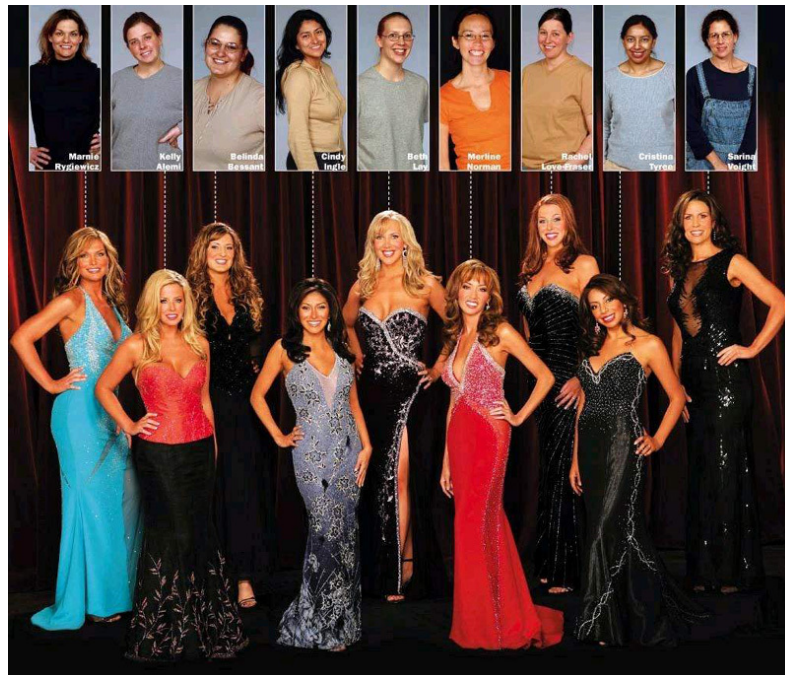
"Flat belly foods"

"Burn fat doing next to nothing"

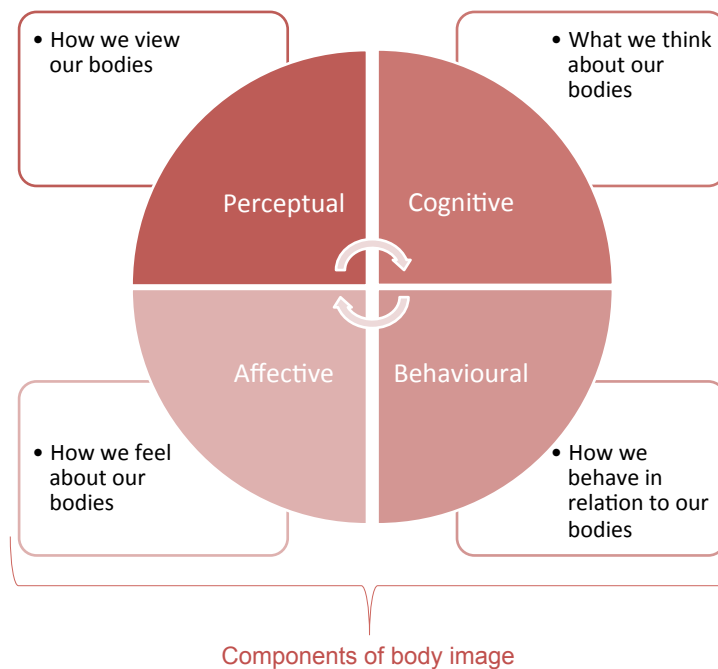
Facebook

- Currently with over 1.3 billion regular users
 - 10 million new photographs are uploaded to Facebook every hour
- Research has demonstrated a positive correlation between Facebook usage and body dissatisfaction.

Facebook (2014). Timeline. Retrieved from <http://newsroom.fb.com/Timeline>
 Mayer-Schönberger, V., & Cukier, K. (2013). Big data: A revolution that will transform how we live, work and think. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.
 Fardouly, J., & Vartanian, L. R. (2015). Negative comparisons about one's appearance mediate the relationship between Facebook usage and body image concerns. *Body Image*, 12, 82-88.
 Meier, E. P., & Gray, J. (2014). Facebook photo activity associated with body image disturbance in adolescent girls. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 4, 199-206



**“Improving looks, changing lives...”
(www.BurfordMedical.com)**



CHILDHOOD



CHILDHOOD

- “Want hair like Barbie” (aged 2)
- Dissatisfaction has high prevalence in girls from 8 years; ? 5years
- Boys show preference for muscular shape from 8 years

Grogan S. Body image: Understanding body dissatisfaction in men, women, and children (2nd ed.). East Sussex: Routledge; 2008.
Williamson S, Delin C. Young children's figural selections: accuracy of reporting and body size dissatisfaction. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2001;29(1):80-4.





In a study of more than 4,000 girls aged 10-11, 1 in 13 (around 7%) said they '**never like my body**' and many felt pressure to have a '**perfect body**'



Austin, S. Bryn, Jess Haines, and Paul J. Veugelers. 2009. Body satisfaction and body weight: Gender differences and sociodemographic determinants. BMC Public Health 9: 313

ADOLESCENCE



Adolescence

47% girls are unhappy with their looks (11 to 16)
(Girls' Attitudes Survey 2013)



Adolescence

1 in 2 adolescent girls
don't feel comfortable
leaving the house
without makeup on

(Centre for Appearance Research)



Adolescence

Research often show that up to about 45% of boys would like to be larger, while a somewhat lower percentage wanting to be thinner



Smolak L. Appearance in Childhood and Adolescence Chapter 12. In: Rumsey N, Harcourt D, editors. The Oxford Handbook of the Psychology of Appearance. Milton Keynes: Oxford University Press; 2012.

Adolescence

- 18% 'no good features'



Lovegrove E, Rumsey N. Ignoring it doesn't make it stop: adolescents, appearance, and bullying. The Cleft palate-craniofacial journal : official publication of the American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association. 2005;42(1):33-44.



ADULTS

Women

- 93% of British women have negative thoughts about their appearance every week
- 1 in 3 have these thoughts several times a day
- 30% of British women told us that they would trade at least one year of their life to achieve their ideal body weight and shape

Diedrichs, P., Rumsey, N., Halliwell, E., & Paraskeva, N. (2012). *The prevalence of appearance concerns among 77,630 adults*.

78% of men wish they were more muscular and 40% would trade a year of their life to achieve their ideal appearance



Diedrichs, P., Rumsey, N., Halliwell, E., & Paraskeva, N. (2012). *The prevalence of appearance concerns among 77,630 adults*.

In a study of 77,000 UK adults, 60% reported feeling ashamed of how they look, and 73% felt pressure from the media to have a perfect body



Diedrichs, P., Rumsey, N., Halliwell, E., & Paraskeva, N. (2012). *The prevalence of appearance concerns among 77,630 adults*.

ADULTS

“Physically attractive people have it all, men, money...the whole world at their feet”

(Female, 26ys; Liossi, 2005)



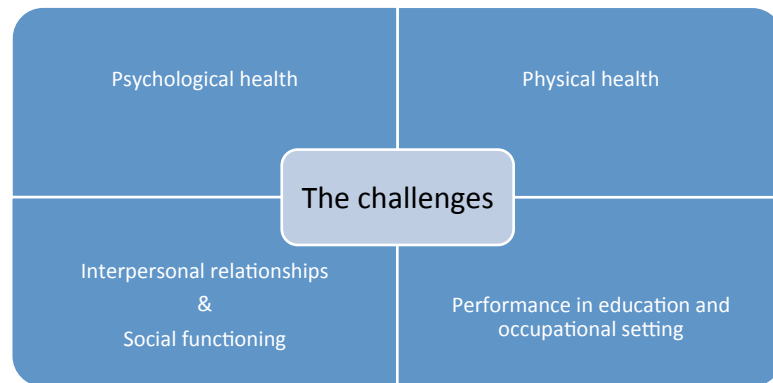
**Children as young as 5
and adults as old as 80
say that they are worried
about their appearance**



Williamson S, Delin C. Young children's figural selections: accuracy of reporting and body size dissatisfaction. *Int J Eat Disord.* 2001;29(1):80-4.
Baker L, Gringart E. Appearance in Later Life. Chapter 14. In: Rumsey N, Harcourt D, editors. *The Oxford Handbook of the Psychology of Appearance.* Milton Keynes: Oxford University Press; 2012. p. 160 - 71.

THE IMPACT

Impact of having a visible difference or negative body image



Psychological Wellbeing/ Mental Health

- The mental health of young people is a major cause of concern in Europe. In recent studies, negative body image was cited as a principal component and predictor of:
 - Lowered self esteem
 - Negative thinking about appearance becomes a habit
 - Anxiety; depression

Cash TF. The Encyclopaedia of Body Image and Human Appearance. London: Academic Press; 2012.
 Stice E. Risk and maintenance factors for eating pathology: A meta-analytic review. Psychol Bull. 2002;128(5):825-48.
 Verplanken B, Velsvik R. Habitual negative body image thinking as psychological risk factor in adolescents. Body image. 2008;5(2):133-40.

Smoking

- Smoking used as an appetite suppressant by teen boys and girls
- Young women may be more likely than young men to use smoking to try to lose weight
- Stop smoking attempts hampered by concerns regarding weight gain
- Teenage girls with body disturbances significantly more likely to initiate smoking

Amos, A., & Bostock, Y. (2007). Young people, smoking and gender--a qualitative exploration. *Health Educ Res*, 22(6), 770-781.
 Lowry, R., Guluska, D.A., and Fulton, J.E. (2002). Weight management goals and practices among US high school students; Associations with physical activity, diet and smoking. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 31, 133-144
 King, T.K., Matarin, M., White, K.S., and Marcus, B.H. (2005). A prospective examination of body image and smoking in women. *Body Image: An International Journal of Research*, 2, 19-28
 Stice E, Shaw H. Prospective relations of body image, eating, and affective disturbances to smoking onset in adolescent girls: how Virginia slims. *J Consult Clin Psychol*. 2003;71(1):129-35.

Physical health

- There are now well established links between appearance concerns and several health-compromising behaviours:
 - Including drug and alcohol misuse
 - Associated with self harm
 - Appearance dissatisfaction predicted an earlier initial age of first sexual intercourse in a study of Norwegian girls

Kanayama G, Barry S, Hudson JI, Pope HG. Body image and attitudes toward male roles in anabolic-androgenic steroid users. *Am J Psychiat*. 2006;163(4):697-703.
 Muehlenkamp JJ, Brausch AM. Body image as a mediator of non-suicidal self-injury in adolescents. *J Adolesc*. 2012;35(1):1-9
 Kvaalem IL, von Soest T, Traeen B, Singaas K. Body evaluation and coital onset: a population-based longitudinal study. *Body Image*. 2011;8(2):110-8.

Diet

- 71% women & 45% men diet to change body shape
- Steady increase in teen use of diet pills, laxatives & diuretics

Diet to change body shape, Unpublished study, Centre for Appearance Research, UWE, 2011
Neumark-Sztainer D, Wall M, Eisenberg ME, Story M, Hannan PJ. Overweight status and weight control behaviors in adolescents: longitudinal and secular trends from 1999 to 2004. Preventive medicine. 2006;43(1):52-9.



Girlguiding. Girls' Attitudes Survey 2013. 2013.

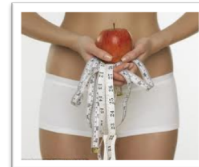
Disordered eating behaviours

Includes 'crash' **diets**, purging (fasting, laxative use, vomiting) taking unhealthy food supplements and diet pills

As well as being unhealthy, any weight loss is often short-term and yo-yo dieting can lead to **low self-esteem** and **weight gain**.

A survey of 290 women aged **45-60yrs** found 14.8% reported disordered eating

Midlarsky, E., & Nitzburg, G. (2008). Eating disorders in middle-aged women. *J Gen Psychol*, 135(4), 393-407.



Eating Problems

- Increase in eating disorders
 - 1.6 million in UK
- Schoolgirl competitions to eat least calories
- Increase in eating disorders and unhealthy eating behaviours in teens
 - 21.8% of sample of nearly 14,000 girls aged 13-18 in US had fasted, self-induced vomited, taken laxatives or used diet pills; boys 11.2%



BEAT (beating eating disorders). Available from: <http://www.b-eat.co.uk/>.
 Pisetsky EM, Chao YM, Dierker LC, May AM, Striegel-Moore RH. Disordered eating and substance use in high-school students: results from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2008;41(5):464-70

1 in 5 adolescent
boys have taken
protein supplements
in an attempt to gain
muscle



Smolak, L., & Stein, J. A. (2010). A Longitudinal Investigation of Gender Role and Muscle Building in Adolescent Boys. *Sex Roles*, 63, 738-746.

Anabolic-androgenic steroid

- Estimated that among Americans currently age 13-50 years, 2.9-4.0 million have used anabolic-androgenic steroid

Pope HG Jr, Kanayama G, Athey A, Ryan E, Hudson JI, Baggish A. The lifetime prevalence of anabolic-androgenic steroid use and dependence in Americans: current best estimates. *Am J Addict*. 2014 Jul-Aug;23(4):371-7



Teasing, Bullying

- 10 year old girls and boys who expressed beliefs about being ‘too fat’ reported greater frequencies of peer victimization
- 1419 middle school students (637 boys and 782 girls). 17.3% reported being teased about being overweight had higher scores on depression and lower scores on self-esteem.

Frisen A, Lunde C, Hwang P. Peer victimisation and its relationships with perceptions of body composition. *Educ Stud.* 2009;35(3):337-48.
 Greenleaf C, Petrie TA, Martin SB. Relationship of weight-based teasing and adolescents' psychological well-being and physical health. *J Sch Health.* 2014;84(1):49-55

Teasing, Bullying

- Studies show that students with visible and non-visible disabilities are subject to more bullying than non-disabled peers.
- Research has shown that students who are in the ethnic minority in a school are more likely to be bullied than students who are in the ethnic majority. Ethnicity is often inferred on the basis of appearance.

Carter BB, Spencer VG. The Fear Factor: Bullying and Students with Disabilities. *International Journal of Special Education.* 2006;21(1):11-23.
 Graham S. Peer Victimization in School. *Current Directions in Psychological Science.* 2006;15(6):317-21.

Academic Performance

- Avoid putting hand up in class
 - 31% avoid classroom debate;
- Don't go to school
 - 20% UK; 7% Italy; 14% Germany
 - Disordered eating affects attention span; memory difficulties (Green & Rogers, 1998)
- Unhealthy body image associated with lower grade point averages

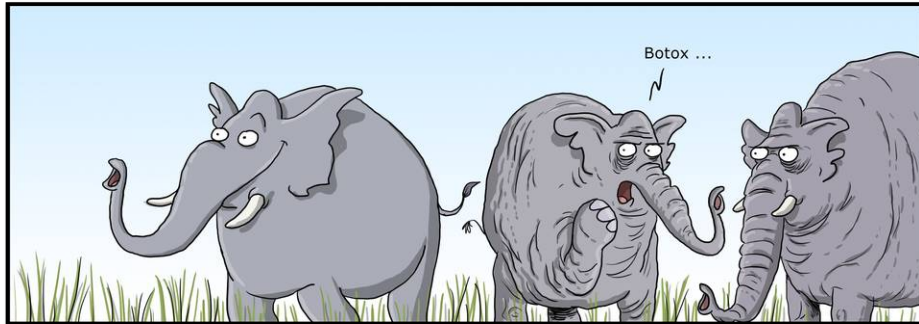


Lovegrove, E., & Rumsey, N. (2005). Ignoring it doesn't make it stop: adolescents, appearance, and bullying. *Cleft Palate Craniofac J*, 42(1), 33-44.
 Yanover T, Thompson JK. Self-reported interference with academic functioning and eating disordered symptoms: associations with multiple dimensions of body image. *Body image*. 2008;5(3):326-8.

Other Health-Related Aspects

- Delays in seeking treatment
 - fears of weight bias; vanity
- Treatment decision making
(eg steroids; chemotherapy;)
- Adherence to medication
(eg immunosuppression; diabetes)

Amy NK, Aalborg A, Lyons P, Keranen L. Barriers to routine gynecological cancer screening for White and African-American obese women. *Int J Obes (Lond)*. 2006;30(1):147-55.



Increased uptake of cosmetic procedures & aesthetic surgery

Crerand, C., Magee, L., & Sarwer, D. B. (2012). Cosmetic Procedures. In N. Rumsey & D. Harcourt (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of The Psychology of Appearance* Oxford: University Press.



**15% of adolescent girls say
they want to get **breast
implants**
when they are older**

(n=700 Paraskeva & Diedrichs, 2012)



**In 2007 >10,000 **breast
enlargement** procedures
were carried out in the
UK on women aged
18-19 years**

Sarwer, D. B., Infield, A. L., & Cserland, C. E. (2009). *Plastic surgery for children and adolescents* (Vol. 2nd ED). Washington DC: American Psychological Association



- **Unprecedented levels of debt are incurred amongst lower socioeconomic groups in order to undergo cosmetic surgery**

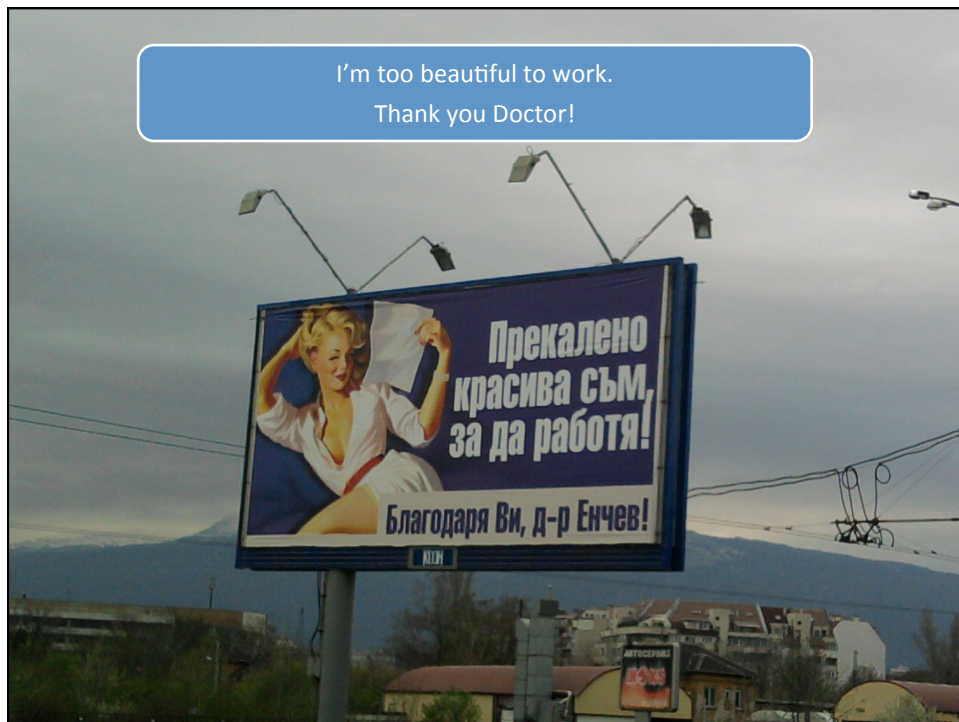
Crerand, C., Magee, L., & Sarwer, D. B. (2012). Cosmetic Procedures. In N. Rumsey & D. Harcourt (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of The Psychology of Appearance* Oxford: University Press.



The number of men flocking to plastic surgeons for both surgical and nonsurgical procedures continues to increase dramatically and are up 43% this year alone," states Michael Edwards, MD, President of the American Society for Aesthetic Surgery



<http://www.surgery.org/media/news-releases/the-american-society-for-aesthetic-plastic-surgery-reports-americans-spent-more-than-12-billion-in-2014--pro>



Why should we care? Is dissatisfaction with appearance a problem?

Dieting Steroids Eating Disorders Depression Cosmetic Surgery Botox
SMOKING Under-exercising, Over Exercising DEPRESSION Laxatives Drug and
alcohol abuse Suicidal thoughts Low self-esteem Decisions about medical
treatment

- Appearance dissatisfaction does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender or ethnicity. Research documents the widespread prevalence of appearance concerns among children and young-, mid- and older-adults, among women and men, and across a range of ethnic groups and cultures (Rumsey & Harcourt, 2012)



Appearance Matters

- Psychosocial health
- Physical health
- Overall wellbeing

