

SELF FUNDED PHD OPPORTUNITY

Men's lives: the consequences of living with high levels of drive for muscularity

Proposed title

Men's lives: the consequences of living with high levels of drive for muscularity

Research group

Gender, identity, and the body.

<https://www.worc.ac.uk/about/academic-schools/school-of-sport-and-exercise-science/sport-and-exercise-science-research/gender-identity-and-the-body..aspx>

Supervisory team

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PhD research abstract

Historically, body image research has focused on females and their dieting and weight loss habits. McCreary and Sasse (2000) recognised that although some men desired to be thin for health, occupational, or recreational reasons, high levels of the drive for thinness in men from Western societies is relatively rare. Consistent with other researchers, they identified that for Western men the ideal physique is muscular and mesomorphic and proposed the *drive for muscularity* (DFM) construct to represent the desire to increase muscularity levels as a parallel to the established drive for thinness. Given the contemporary centrality of the body in the acquisition of social status, it is not surprising that some men may develop strong desires to be muscular to improve their 'masculine credit'. Despite regular exercise and a muscular physique generally being associated with health benefits (e.g., increased self-esteem, improve cardiovascular health), a growing body of evidence suggests that high levels of DFM is a public health concern because of its links to impaired well-being (Edwards, Molnar, & Tod, 2017; Edwards, Tod, & Molnar, 2014). Our work specifically identifies how men with obsessive levels of DFM may experience social isolation, impaired social functioning, and engage in risky behaviours to enhance their muscularity (Edwards et al., 2017). Research has not, however, explicitly examined how men with high DFM perceive and experience their immediate social milieu and how that social milieu perceives individuals with high DFM. This void provides the impetus for a proposed PhD. Thus, we seek PhD students with an interest in men's body image to extend insights on the everyday lives of men with high levels of DFM. Guided by an experienced supervisory team, the successful candidate (or candidates) will adopt a mixed method research design and have an interdisciplinary focus (i.e., merging psychology and sociology) in unfolding a so far unexplored social figuration of men's lives with high DFM.

Key References

Edwards, C., Molnar, G. and Tod, D. (2017). Searching for Masculine Capital: Experiences Leading to High Drive for Muscularity in Men. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 18, 361-371. doi:10.1037/men0000072

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McCreary, D. R., & Sasse, D. K. (2000). An exploration of the drive for muscularity in adolescent boys and girls. *Journal of American College Health*, 48, 297-304. doi: 10.1080/07448480009596271