On the Cover: Media Influences, Body Image and Disordered Eating in European Youth
A research study by the
European Confederation of Youth Clubs

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Member of the Cyprus Youth Club Organization
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PREFACE

Research is an important aspect of many organizations – profit or non-profit. It is a way of searching for knowledge, answering questions and planning for the future. ECYC decided to add research as one of its components for future development and growth and to be used as a way of assessing and implementing new non-formal educational programs across its Member Organizations. One research assessing ethnic identity, prejudice and person perception has already occurred in 2010. After several discussions, the Board decided to accept a new research proposal made by the Cyprus Youth Clubs Organization and implement its second research study. With great joy, we received our funding from the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe and started our challenging task. This publication is the final result of much hard work by many people who were involved with translating the questionnaires and coordinating the data collection. Through this process, we were able to find out some interesting information and draw some interesting conclusions. In addition, some important recommendations are made for future training and non-formal education procedures which will be implemented by ECYC to best serve its Member Organizations. I hope you will enjoy reading this research publication and be able to benefit from the results and the recommendations. At ECYC, we are hoping for future research studies which will promote our organization even more, significantly increase our visibility throughout Europe and develop even more specific and beneficial recommendations to our members!

Marios Argyrides, PhD
Cyprus Youth Clubs Association Member
ECYC Member
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PART I

NO BODY IS PERFECT

INTRODUCTION
Media Influences

Even though many influences have been found to contribute significantly to the development and maintenance of shape- and weight-related disorders, the role of the media has recently received the most attention (Fallon, 1990; Heinberg, 1996; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). It has also been suggested that the mass media are the most potent and pervasive communicators of sociocultural standards (Heinberg, 1996; Mazur, 1986), even though sociocultural pressures can be exerted by other sources such as peers, parents and partners (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). The accessibility and universality of current print and electronic media has been highly criticized by researchers investigating body-image and eating disorders (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). Current print and electronic media images are developed based on a "blend" between a fictionalized ideal and reality, creating an unrealistic, distorted representation of actual people that is, in most cases, unattainable. Moreover, research has continuously supported that the 'thin ideal' is promoted mainly by print media, and particularly magazines targeting teenage girls and adult women (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Nemenoff, Stein, Diehl & Smilack, 1994). In fact, Wolf (1990) argued that, women's magazines specifically, served as advocates and promoters of the desirability of an unrealistic and dangerously thin ideal. In further support, the Renfrew Center Foundation for Eating Disorders (2003) stated that the body-type portrayed in advertising as the ideal is possessed naturally by only 5% of females.

Television is another important source of media affecting shape- and weight-related problems since the average home has their television turned on for more than seven hours a day (Harris, 1994) and only less than 10% of women who are appearing on television are overweight (Gonzales-Lavin and Smolak, 1995; Heinberg, 1996). A study by Labi (1998) found that 71% of adolescent girls ages 16-17 believed that television female actors were unrealistically thin. In another study by Garner (1997), 23% of the respondents stated that movie or television celebrities influenced their body image and 22% endorsed the influence of fashion magazine models. In another study using middle-school students, Taylor et al. (1998) found that the "need" to look like girls or women on television and/or magazines was one of the strongest predictors of weight concerns.

The connection between media exposure and eating disordered behavior has also been demonstrated using structural equation modeling (Stice, Schupak-Neuberg, Shaw & Stein, 1994), as well as with a few controlled laboratory studies, which also found similar results (Waller, Hamilton, and Shaw, 1992; Irving, 1990; Stice & Shaw, 1994). Due to the above connection, it has been continuously argued that long-term, daily exposure to these unrealistic media images can be very damaging, even "toxic", especially if levels of 'internalization of the thin ideal' are very high (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999).

Internalization of the Thin Ideal

Internalization of the thin ideal portrayed in media messages has also been suggested as a potential mediator between exposure to unrealistic media messages and shape- and eating-related disturbances and has received a great deal of attention in the literature (Durkin & Paxton, 2002; Stice & Shaw, 2002; Thompson & Stice, 2001). Thompson and Stice (2001) defined internalization as "the extent to which an individual
cognitively buys into societal norms of size and appearance” (p. 181) and consequently leads individuals into modifying their behavior in an attempt to approximate these standards (Thompson et al., 2004). The internalization of the thin ideal of the media messages has been found to be a causal risk factor for the onset of eating- and shape-related disturbances (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999; Thompson & Stice, 2001) and was related to body dissatisfaction. This internalization has also been found to be a significant predictor of treatment success with anorexia nervosa sufferers (Heinberg, Guarda & Haug, 2001). Furthermore, there has been strong evidence to support that the internalization dimension of the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire – 3rd Edition (SATAQ-3), a well-validated measure developed to assess this construct, is predictive of the onset of eating disturbances and also seems responsive to intervention techniques (Levine & Harrison, 2004; Stice & Hoffman, 2004; Thompson & Stice, 2001). Based on the above information, the need for further study of the constructs of body image, the effects of the media and how they possibly influence shape- and eating-related disturbances, is essential.

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders received significant medical, public and research attention over the years (Vandereycken, 2002). Numerous research studies attributed the development of eating disorders to three main clusters: sociocultural, familial and individual factors (Tylka & Subich, 2004). The sociocultural cluster of factors has been found to be applicable for both adolescents and adults (Thompson & Smolak, 2001).

In more recent years, the examination of the sociocultural factors cross-culturally has been of great interest (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). As compared to prior beliefs that body image issues and eating disturbances were a problem of the ‘Western’ world, recent prevalence studies indicated that adolescent girls and women from a variety of Non-western countries experience significant levels of body image disturbance and eating disorders (Gupta, Chaturvedi, Chandarana, & Johnson, 2001; Lunner et al., 2000; Sjostedt, Shumaker, & Nathawat, 1998). In fact, some researchers even argued that using the “Westernization” as a framework of explaining an increased risk for eating disorders may obscure more than it reveals (Jackson, Keel, & Lee, 2006; Pike & Borovoy, 2004). For example, Shroff and Thompson (2004) assessed body image and eating disturbance in India and found that their results replicated and extended previous findings from the U.S., Australia and Swedish samples, concluding that the potential risk factors of the development of eating and shape-related problems is cross-cultural. Similar cross-cultural findings have also been reported for Singapore (Ho, Tai, Lee, Cheng & Liow, 2006), United Arab Emirates (Eapen, Mabrouk & Bin-Othman, 2006) China (Lee & Lee, 2000) and Iran (Gargari et al., 2011).

A recent study by Preti and his colleagues (2009) which aimed at assessing the prevalence of eating disorders in six European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain) found high prevalence rates. The same was present for Cyprus (Argyrides, 2013).
**Purpose, Need and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of the current study was to assess for possible relationships between media influences (the internalization of the thin ideal by the media, pressures from the media and consideration of the media as a good source of information), negative body image and disordered eating attitudes and behaviors in a sample of youth from several ECYC Member Organizations. In addition, the current study wanted to assess for possible differences in scores among the different Member Organization countries. Two main research questions (RQs) were developed:

**RQ1:** Are the variables of disordered eating, feelings of attractiveness, body-image investment, weight-related anxiety and media influences related in each Member Organization of ECYC which participated?

**RQ2:** Do differences exist among the variables of interest between the ECYC Member Organizations who participated?

Based on these two research questions, it was hypothesized that the media influences (the internalization of the thin ideal by the media, pressures from the media and consideration of the media as a good source of information) will be significantly related to body-image investment, feelings of attractiveness and disordered eating attitudes and behavior, regardless of the Member Organization. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that the Member Organization will differ between them on the above stated variables.

This study will aid significantly the literature concerning the European youth population on the variables of interest. The results of the study can be used in order to develop targeted prevention strategies for reducing the aforementioned high rates of disordered eating.
PART II

METHODOLOGY
Participants

The focus of this study included the youth population of the Member Organizations (MOs) of the European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC). The questionnaires that assessed the variables of interest in this research study were administered via the internet using the Survey Monkey online survey method. A total of 563 young participants answered the questionnaires. Even though all the Member Organizations were invited to participate and were continuously reminded and encouraged to do so, only four main Member Organizations had sufficient response rates that could be statistically analyzed. The table which follows describes the country of origin of each young person, the frequency of young persons from each country and the representative percentage of each country.

Table 1
Country and Frequency of Young People that Answered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>563</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More specific information about the sample can be found in the “Results” section of this report.

Measures

Disordered Eating Attitudes and Behavior. The Eating Attitudes Test-26 (EAT-26) (Garner, Olmsted, Bohr & Garfinkel, 1982) is a widely used instrument which identifies the symptoms of eating disorders according to respondents’ feelings, attitudes and behaviors. The EAT-26 consists of three subscales: 1) Dieting, 2) Bulimia and Food Preoccupation, and 3) Oral Control. The 26 items of the scale are rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from Always (1) to Never (6) and also create a composite total score. Respondents whose composite total score is 20 or higher on the EAT-26 appear to have a higher risk of developing eating disorder pathology and is indicative of a high level of engagement with one’s body shape and dieting behavior. The EAT-26 has reported reliability coefficients ranging from .86 to .90. For the current study, the internal
consistency reliability coefficient of the total composite score that was of interest was found to be .87.

**Body-Image Satisfaction, Body-Image Investment and Weight-related Anxiety.** The Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire – Appearance Scales (MBSRQ-AS) (Cash, Morrow, Hrabosky, & Perry, 2004) evaluates particular attitudinal facets of the body image. The present study used a subset of the shorter, 34-item version of the scale which evaluates only appearance-related body image constructs. Specifically, the 7-item Appearance Evaluation subscale was used which measures feelings of physical attractiveness and satisfaction/dissatisfaction with one’s looks, the 12-item Appearance Orientation subscale which assesses the extent of investment on one’s appearance and the 4-item Overweight Preoccupation subscale which assesses fat anxiety, weight vigilance, dieting and eating restraint. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type satisfaction/dissatisfaction scale. The subscales of the current measure have been found to have good psychometric properties among both genders and different cultural groups. The internal consistencies of the three MBSRQ-AS subscales used in the current study varied from .77 to .88.

**Media Influences.** The Sociocultural Attitudes Toward Appearance Questionnaire-3 (SATAQ-3; Thompson et al., 2004) was used in order to assess participants’ level of the internalization of the thin ideal by the media. The SATAQ-3 is a 30-item Likert-type scale measuring the multidimensional impact of sociocultural influences on body-image on four dimensions which include: Information, Pressures, Internalization-General, and Internalization-Athlete. Internal consistencies of the four factors are very good with alpha coefficients generally exceeding 0.80 (Thompson et al., 2004). Items are answered on a 5-point scale (1 = Definitely Disagree, 5 = Definitely Agree) and a total score is computed for each factor. The focus of the current study was the internalization of the thin ideal by the media therefore, the subscale of Internalization-General (general media influence related to TV, magazines or movies) was of interest. For the present study, the internal consistency reliability of the Internalization-General subscale was very good (Cronbach's alpha = 0.84).

**Procedure**

After the research proposal was approved by the European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC) Board of Directors and the funding was received by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe, the researcher first created an account with Survey Monkey. The questionnaires, which already existed in some languages (English, Greek, German and Spanish), were then given to designated individuals from the Member Organizations (MOs) of ECYC to be translated in the unavailable languages. These languages included Icelandic and Lithuanian. The translated questionnaires were then entered into the Survey Monkey online survey website and a different link was
created for each translated questionnaire packet. The Secretary General of ECYC then forwarded the links to all Member Organizations and their members inviting them to answer the questionnaires. Specifically, the instructions were:

"Dear responder, please take the time to answer the following questions. Try to answer the questions as truthfully as possible. Your answers, which will be anonymous, will help us develop programs supporting other young people in the EU to have a healthy sense of self-esteem and self-assessment that can make a significant difference in how they feel and function in their everyday lives. You can choose to close your browser and terminate your participation at any time. For more information about this research, you can contact the Head of Research, Marios Argyrides, PhD at m.argyrides.1@nup.ac.cy.”

In addition, participants also answered a background information questionnaire that included questions concerning the person’s age, gender, height, weight, country they live and country they grew up in.

**Data Preparation and Statistical Analyses**

Upon completion of the survey collection of the data, all information was gathered and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 22.0 (SPSS 22.0). Preliminary analyses were conducted to identify and possibly remove any outliers that could skew the results. When all data were cleaned, the appropriate statistical analyses were completed to address the two research questions.
PART III

RESULTS
Even though the research team took many steps in order to increase the response rate of young people as much as possible, the response rate was slightly disappointing, as with the first research study. As it was stated earlier, there were only 563 young people that answered the questionnaires, as compared to the 2000 we expected. In addition, the frequency of responses of several countries was so low that no statistical analyses could be conducted. Therefore, participants from Member Organizations that were too low in frequency (i.e. France which had only 3 people and Germany with only 2) were eliminated from the analysis. After careful review and discussion, only four countries were selected to take part in the study. The criterion used to make that choice was that these countries had enough young participants which answered the questionnaires which allowed for the necessary statistical analyses to be conducted.

These four countries were Cyprus, Iceland, Lithuania and United Kingdom. The final number of young participants used in this research study was 563. The figure that follows shows the frequency of young participants from each country and gender. As can be seen from Figure 1, and as expected, there were more females represented than males across all the four countries used in the analysis. Specifically, there were 79 (14.0%) from the UK (13 males and 66 females), 143 (25.4%) from Iceland (54 males and 89 females), 72 (12.8%) from Lithuania (22 males and 50 females) and 269 (47.8%) from Cyprus (42 males and 227 females).

Figure 1: Number and Percentage of Participants by Country and Gender
The young participants were also asked about their age. Results indicated that the majority of the young participants had very similar ages. Specifically, participants from the United Kingdom had a mean age of 19.79 (SD = 4.24), from Iceland a mean age of 19.79 (SD = 5.07), from Lithuania 18.19 (SD = 2.86) and from Cyprus 22.43 (SD = 4.3).

The young participants were also asked about their height and weight. Participants from the United Kingdom had a mean height of 168cm (SD = 9.19), from Iceland a mean height of 172.83cm (SD = 8.92), from Lithuania 173.1cm (SD = 8.09) and from Cyprus 165.2cm (SD = 8.01). Concerning their weight, participants from the United Kingdom had a mean weight of 80.07Kg (SD = 31.95), from Iceland a mean weight of 72.09Kg (SD = 15.58), from Lithuania 65.5Kg (SD = 10.49) and from Cyprus 61.63 Kg (SD = 13.88).

Based on their height and weight, the Body Mass Index (BMI) ratio was calculated using the following categorization procedure: ‘Underweight' category (BMI = 0 - 18.49), ‘Normal Weight' category (BMI = 18.5 – 24.99), ‘Overweight’ category (BMI = 25 –29.99) and ‘Obese’ category (BMI = over 30). Concerning their BMI, participants from the United Kingdom had a mean BMI of 28.31 (SD = 10.89), from Iceland a mean BMI of 24.13 (SD = 4.88), from Lithuania 21.86 (SD = 3.16) and from Cyprus 22.42 (SD = 3.84). Four figures follow that indicate the BMI categories by country.

Figure 2: Number of Participants by BMI category in United Kingdom
Figure 3: Number of Participants by BMI category in Iceland

![BMI IN ICELAND](image)

Figure 4: Number of Participants by BMI category in Lithuania

![BMI IN LITHUANIA](image)
As can be seen from the pie charts, it is interesting that the UK participants had the highest BMI categories since 40.5% fell in the overweight/obese categories. Iceland was the second largest with 30.8% of participants in the overweight/obese category followed by Lithuania (22.2%) which was very similar to Cyprus (21.2%).

Based on the above results, it can be supported that the United Kingdom and Iceland Member Organizations of ECYC should develop more programs addressing weight-related issues.

Following the demographic analysis of the data, inferential statistics were used in order to answer the following research questions of the study:

1. Are the variables of disordered eating, feelings of attractiveness, body-image investment, weight-related anxiety and media influences related in each Member Organization of ECYC which participated?

2. Do differences exist among the variables of interest between the ECYC Member Organizations who participated?
Research Question 1 – Are the variables of disordered eating, feelings of attractiveness, body-image investment, weight-related anxiety and media influences related in each Member Organization of ECYC which participated?

In order to address the research question concerning whether the variables of interest (disordered eating, feelings of attractiveness, body-image investment, weight-related anxiety and media influences) are related to each other, several correlational statistical analyses were conducted and the results follow. Initially, an analysis was conducted that included all 563 participants to see how these variables related to each other regardless of country. This analysis indicated the following:

- Individuals who invest more time in their appearance, who have more weight-related anxiety, who have internalized the thin ideal, who feel pressured from the media to look a certain way and who consider the media as a good source of information for body image issues are significantly more likely to develop disordered eating behavior and patterns.
- Individuals who have low levels of perceived physical attractiveness and who feel negative about specific parts of their body are also significantly more likely to develop disordered eating behavior and patterns.

The same analysis was repeated for each of the four countries that participated separately and yielded identical results to the overall ones.

United Kingdom

- Individuals who invest more time in their appearance, who have more weight-related anxiety, who have internalized the thin ideal, who feel pressured from the media to look a certain way and who consider the media as a good source of information for body image issues are significantly more likely to develop disordered eating behavior and patterns.
- Individuals who have low levels of perceived physical attractiveness and who feel negative about specific parts of their body are also significantly more likely to develop disordered eating behavior and patterns.

Iceland

- Individuals who invest more time in their appearance, who have more weight-related anxiety, who have internalized the thin ideal, who feel pressured from the media to look a certain way and who consider the media as a good source of information for body image issues are significantly more likely to develop disordered eating behavior and patterns.
Individuals who have low levels of perceived physical attractiveness and who feel negative about specific parts of their body are also significantly more likely to develop disordered eating behavior and patterns.

Lithuania

Individuals who invest more time in their appearance, who have more weight-related anxiety, who have internalized the thin ideal, who feel pressured from the media to look a certain way and who consider the media as a good source of information for body image issues are significantly more likely to develop disordered eating behavior and patterns.

Individuals who have low levels of perceived physical attractiveness and who feel negative about specific parts of their body are also significantly more likely to develop disordered eating behavior and patterns.

Cyprus

Individuals who invest more time in their appearance, who have more weight-related anxiety, who have internalized the thin ideal, who feel pressured from the media to look a certain way and who consider the media as a good source of information for body image issues are significantly more likely to develop disordered eating behavior and patterns.

Individuals who have low levels of perceived physical attractiveness and who feel negative about specific parts of their body are also significantly more likely to develop disordered eating behavior and patterns.

Research Question 2 – Do differences exist among the variables of interest between the ECYC Member Organizations who participated?

In an attempt to answer the above research question, statistical analyses were conducted and provided the following results which will be presented for each variable of interest separately.

Disordered Eating Attitudes and Behavior

This variable identified the symptoms of eating disorders according to respondents’ feelings, attitudes and behaviors. High scorers appear to have a higher risk of developing eating disorder pathology and are indicative of a high level of engagement with one’s body shape and dieting behavior. Concerning this variable, young participants from the United Kingdom had the highest scores. In fact, participants from the UK had significantly higher scores than all the other three Member Organizations. The scores of
the other three Member Organizations were not significantly different between them. Results can be seen in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Disordered Eating Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM (79)</td>
<td>17.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICELAND (143)</td>
<td>11.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITHUANIA (72)</td>
<td>9.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYPRUS (269)</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the table that the largest difference existed between the UK and the other three Member Organizations. This indicates that young participants from the United Kingdom have significantly more disordered eating behaviors and patterns than any of the other three Member Organizations. This should be taken seriously into consideration as many programs targeting these issues should be developed and implemented immediately.

**Feelings of Physical Attractiveness**

This variable identified feelings of physical attractiveness and satisfaction/dissatisfaction with one’s looks. High scorers appear to have a better attitude towards their appearance and are more satisfied with their looks. Concerning this variable, once again, young participants from the United Kingdom had the lowest scores. In fact, participants from the UK had significantly lower scores than all the other three Member Organizations. The scores of the other three Member Organizations were not significantly different between them. Results can be seen in Table 3.
Table 3  
Scores of Physical Attractiveness by Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Physical Attractiveness Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM (79)</td>
<td>19.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICELAND (143)</td>
<td>23.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITHUANIA (72)</td>
<td>23.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYPRUS (269)</td>
<td>24.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the table that the largest difference existed between the UK and the other three Member Organizations. This indicates that young participants from the United Kingdom consider themselves significantly less attractive than any of the other three Member Organizations. This should be taken seriously into consideration as many programs targeting these issues should be developed and implemented immediately.

Investment in Appearance

This variable identified the level of investment towards one’s physical appearance (i.e. time and effort spent). High scorers appear to invest more time in their appearance. Concerning this variable, there were no significant differences between the four Member Organizations that took part in the study. This indicates that all participants, regardless of country, seem to have an equal level of investment towards their appearance. Results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4  
Scores of Investment in Appearance by Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Investment in Appearance Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM (79)</td>
<td>44.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICELAND (143)</td>
<td>41.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITHUANIA (72)</td>
<td>41.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYPRUS (269)</td>
<td>43.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weight-related Anxiety

This variable identified fat anxiety, weight vigilance, dieting and eating restraint in participants. High scorers appear to have more weight-related anxiety and weight vigilance and show more behaviors towards dieting. Concerning this variable, once again, young participants from the United Kingdom had the highest scores. In fact, participants from the UK had significantly higher scores than all the other three Member Organizations. Furthermore, participants from Cyprus also had significantly higher scores on this variable as compared to participants from Lithuania. Results can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5
Scores of Weight-related Anxiety by Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Weight-related Anxiety Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM (79)</td>
<td>12.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICELAND (143)</td>
<td>9.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITHUANIA (72)</td>
<td>8.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYPRUS (269)</td>
<td>10.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the table that the largest difference existed between the UK and the other three Member Organizations. A difference also existed between Cyprus and Lithuania participants. This indicates that young participants from the United Kingdom do seem to have higher weight-related anxiety and weight vigilance than any of the other three Member Organizations. The same exists for Cyprus as compared to Lithuania. This should be taken seriously into consideration as many programs targeting these issues should be developed and implemented immediately, especially in the UK and Cyprus.

Media Influences – Internalization of the Thin Ideal

This variable identified how much the internalization of the thin ideal as presented by the media is internalized by each participant. High scorers appear to have internalized the thin ideal more than low scorers. Concerning this variable, young participants from the
United Kingdom had the highest scores. In fact, participants from the UK had significantly higher scores than all the other three Member Organizations. Results can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6
Scores of Thin Ideal Internalization by Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Thin Ideal Internalization Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM (79)</td>
<td>29.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICELAND (143)</td>
<td>25.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITHUANIA (72)</td>
<td>25.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYPRUS (269)</td>
<td>23.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the table that the largest difference existed between the UK and the other three Member Organizations. This indicates that young participants from the United Kingdom have internalized the thin ideal more than any of the other three Member Organizations. This should be taken seriously into consideration as many programs targeting these issues should be developed and implemented immediately.

Media Influences – Pressures from the Media

This variable identified how much pressure a participant felt from the media that he/she had to look a certain way. High scorers appear to have higher feelings of pressure by the media to look a certain way. Concerning this variable, young participants from the United Kingdom and Iceland had the highest scores. In fact, participants from the UK and Iceland had significantly higher scores than the other two Member Organizations. Results can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7
Scores of Pressures by Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Pressures Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

23
It is clear from the table that the largest difference existed between the UK and Iceland and the other two Member Organizations. This indicates that young participants from the United Kingdom and Iceland feel more pressured by the media to look a certain way more than any of the other two Member Organizations. This should be taken seriously into consideration as many programs targeting these issues should be developed and implemented immediately, especially in the United Kingdom and Iceland.

**Media Influences – Information**

This variable identified how much participants considered the media as a good source of information of how one should look like. High scorers appear to consider the media as a good source of information. Concerning this variable, young participants from Lithuania had the lowest scores. In fact, participants from Lithuania had significantly lower scores than all the other three Member Organizations. Results can be seen in Table 8.

**Table 8**
Scores of Media Information by Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Media Information Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNITED KINGDOM (79)</td>
<td>27.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICELAND (143)</td>
<td>26.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITHUANIA (72)</td>
<td>23.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYPRUS (269)</td>
<td>27.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the table that the largest difference existed between Lithuania and the other three Member Organizations. This indicates that young participants from
Lithuania do not consider the media as a good source of information as compared to the other three Member Organizations.
PART IV

DISCUSSION
The purpose of the current study was to assess for possible relationships between media influences (the internalization of the thin ideal by the media, pressures from the media and consideration of the media as a good source of information), negative body image and disordered eating attitudes and behaviors in a sample of youth from several ECYC Member Organizations. In addition, the current study wanted to assess for possible differences in scores among the different Member Organization countries.

**Findings and Interpretation**

Results indicated that individuals who are more likely to develop, or even have already developed, disordered eating behavior and patterns have certain characteristics. Specifically, results showed that these individuals also invest more time in their appearance, have more weight-related anxiety and vigilance, have internalized the thin ideal by the media, feel pressured from the media to look a certain way and consider the media as a good source of information for body image issues. In addition, these individuals also have low levels of perceived physical attractiveness and feel negative about specific parts of their body. Interestingly, these findings were identical in all four countries who participated in the study (United Kingdom, Iceland, Lithuania and Cyprus).

These findings are in line with existing research from non-clinical populations (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999; Thompson & Stice, 2001) which found internalization to be related to eating-and shape-related disturbances and body dissatisfaction. The finding that weight-related anxiety and the internalization of the thin ideal were related to disordered eating attitudes and behaviors was also in concordance with previous research results (Neumark-Sztainer, Wall, Story, & Sherwood, 2009).

When comparing the four Member Organizations on the variables of interest, results showed some consistent trends. Concerning disordered eating attitudes and behaviors, young participants from the United Kingdom had the highest scores than all the other three Member Organizations indicating that they have significantly more disordered eating behaviors and patterns. This is also in line with previous research (Micali et al., 2013).

Concerning feelings of physical attractiveness and satisfaction/dissatisfaction with one’s looks, young participants from the United Kingdom had the lowest scores than all the other three Member Organizations. The scores of the other three Member Organizations were not significantly different between them. This indicates that the young participants from the United Kingdom consider themselves significantly less attractive than any of the other three Member Organizations.
Concerning levels of investment towards one’s physical appearance (i.e. time and effort spent), there were no significant differences between the four Member Organizations that took part in the study. This indicates that all participants, regardless of country, seem to have an equal level of investment towards their appearance. This result is very interesting and is worth of further investigation. Specifically, even though body image investment is related to the other variables in this study while the other variables significantly differ by country, body image investment does not. This indicates that regardless of the other variables and/or country, investment in one’s appearance is something cross-cultural within the four Member Organizations that participated.

Concerning weight-related anxiety, weight vigilance, dieting and eating restraint, young participants from the United Kingdom had the highest scores indicating higher anxiety. In addition, Cyprus also had significantly higher scores on this variable as compared to participants from Lithuania. This indicates that the young participants from the United Kingdom do seem to have higher weight-related anxiety and weight vigilance than any of the other three Member Organizations. The same exists for Cyprus as compared to Lithuania. This result is in line with previous research concerning Cyprus and the United Kingdom (Katsounari, 2009). However, this is the first comparison ever made between Cyprus and Lithuania.

Concerning the internalization of the thin ideal by the media, young participants from the United Kingdom had the highest scores and significantly higher than all the other three Member Organizations. This indicates that the young participants from the United Kingdom have internalized the thin ideal more than any of the other three Member Organizations. This is also new data added to the literature.

Concerning feelings of pressure from the media to look a certain way, young participants from the United Kingdom and Iceland had the highest scores and were significantly higher than the other two Member Organizations. This indicates that the young participants from the United Kingdom and Iceland feel more pressure by the media to look a certain way, more than any of the other two Member Organizations. This is also new data to the literature.

Finally, concerning how much participants consider the media as a good source of information of how one should look like, young participants from Lithuania had the lowest scores and were significantly lower than all the other three Member Organizations. This indicates that the young participants from Lithuania do not consider the media as a good source of information as compared to the other three Member Organizations. This finding calls for more investigation as to what it is that makes Lithuanian youth not consider the, under different circumstances, ‘powerful’ media as a good source of information. This may even serve as a protective factor.
Conclusions

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the current study. First, there is enough evidence to claim that the variables used in the current study – disordered eating attitudes and behaviors, physical attractiveness, body image investment and media influences – do seem to be interacting with each other, regardless of the country/Member Organization that participated. This is a very powerful conclusion as it makes these variables dynamic and cross-cultural. Disordered eating attitudes and behaviors are related to the other variables and training programs should focus on all the presented variables and not individually to eating concerns.

A second conclusion revolves around the cultural differences found across the four Member Organizations. Specifically, the youth from the United Kingdom seem to be struggling more than the rest of the Member Organizations on disordered eating attitudes and behaviors, feelings of unattractiveness, weight-related anxiety, internalization of the thin ideal and feeling pressure from the media to look a certain way. Therefore, large scale prevention programs should be developed immediately and implemented amongst the youth in the United Kingdom in order to decrease these scores.

The third conclusion revolves around the variable of investment in one’s appearance. This result is very interesting and is worth of further investigation of what exactly it is that makes the investment so powerful, dynamic and cross-cultural within the four Member Organizations that participated.

Lastly, it is concluded that the variable of considering the media as a good source of information in Lithuania should be investigated further so that the possible protective factors that are used there can also be implemented in the rest of the countries/Member Organizations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions reported above, the following recommendations are made:

- Training programs should be developed which will focus on increasing healthy body image (including body image investment) and target disordered eating attitudes and behaviors across all the Member Organizations, especially in the United Kingdom.
- The training programs should not only focus on the eating pathology but also on all the variables covered in the current study.
More research is needed to assess the variable of investment in one’s appearance to investigate the reasons why it is so “penetrating” to the countries regardless of scores on the other variables.

More research is needed to assess the variable of information from the media, which is, considering the media as a good source of information. This should be done in Lithuania specifically as it can serve as a good protective factor.

ECYC should continue the hard work on increasing healthy body image and fighting disordered eating.

ECYC is already providing and will continue to provide support for the Member Organizations in order to improve certain attitudes towards a healthier body image. The youth is a very fragile population; these teenagers and young adults are the European citizens of tomorrow. These results help us identify the above stated programs which are needed so that they develop healthy minded citizens, critical consumers and with healthier levels of body image.
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