



## Charlemont grant report

Recipient name:	Dr. Ciara Mahon
Discipline and subject area:	Humanities and Social Science
Amount and year awarded:	€2,187 in 2023
Title of project:	Comparing two multisite randomised control trials of BE REAL's body image intervention for adolescents: Are there differences across countries?

### Summary of findings:

I was awarded a Royal Irish Academy Charlemont Grant to travel to the USA for two weeks in May 2023 to visit collaborators Dr. Jennifer Webb (UNC Charlotte) and Denise Hamburger (Be Real Foundation USA). For the past 2 years, I have been working with these colleagues on developing and evaluating the BodyKind programme, a four session, evidence-informed, teacher-led, school-based body image programme for adolescents aged 14-17 years (for more on the programme see: <https://berealusa.org/bodykind-curriculum/> ).

The purpose of this visit was to facilitate a data harmonisation process such that data collected in USA and Irish trials could be organised and combined to facilitate a cross-cultural comparison of trial outcomes. I also discussed joint funding proposals with the Be Real Foundation to facilitate dissemination and evaluation of BodyKind.

Key achievements to date include:

#### 1. Development of a data analysis and harmonisation plan.

During my visit with Dr. Webb, we devised a study design and data analysis plan to evaluate data and facilitate comparison of outcomes from trials in Ireland and the USA. This involved selecting outcome measures and implementation strategies that would be closely applied across both trials that would allow for cross-cultural comparisons. This plan has been used in a trial in the USA and trial currently underway in Ireland (see [osf.io/nhje4](https://osf.io/nhje4)).

#### 2. Completed controlled trial of BodyKind in USA.

My colleagues in the USA led by Dr. Webb assessed the acceptability, and the preliminary efficacy of the 4-session Be Real BodyKind curriculum in a sample of 234 adolescents, aged 15-18, attending high school in the Minneapolis, Minnesota region of the US. In line with the data analysis plan, a 2-arm controlled pragmatic trial with a 1-month follow-up was employed. Students completed self-report surveys assessing body image, appearance-related social media use, self-comparison and psychosocial functioning along with programme acceptability. Teachers (N=4) also provided feedback on their experiences of delivering the programme. Student and teacher acceptability ratings were promising. Major challenges with attrition were noted. BodyKind students reported



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greater reductions in social media appearance consciousness. Significant gains in body esteem and self-compassion were observed for BodyKind completers and sustained at follow-up.

During my trip, Dr. Webb and I decided on a data analytic plan and I subsequently led data analysis of this trial to ensure that comparable data analytic procedures are utilised for the US and Irish trials. I am currently working with Dr. Webb to draft a manuscript outlining findings of this trial for submission to the Journal of Youth and Adolescence. Based on the findings of this study, some adjustments were made to the data analysis plan in Ireland to ensure more robust data (e.g., we included an implementation evaluation to account for challenges with attrition and included a longer follow up of 2 months).

### **3. Pre-registered the RCT in Ireland and published protocol in BMC Public Health.**

The protocol of the multisite randomised controlled trial of BodyKind in Ireland was pre-registered on the Open Science Framework ([osf.io/nhje4](https://osf.io/nhje4)) and the protocol of this study was published in BMC Public Health. Additionally, a protocol for cross-cultural comparison of trial outcomes across multisite RCTs in the USA and Ireland was pre-registered on OSF ([osf.io/xae8z](https://osf.io/xae8z)).

### **4. Multisite randomised control trial in Ireland is currently underway.**

Key learnings from the USA trial informed study design for the Irish trial. Ethical approval has been obtained, 23 schools have been recruited and randomised to conditions, parental consent and student assent were obtained and 1200 students completed Time 1 (baseline) assessments. My colleague (Denise Hamburger, CEO of Be Real Foundation) visited Ireland to deliver teacher training of BodyKind in August 2023. Teachers are currently delivering the BodyKind programme to schools. Time 2 of data collection (post-intervention) will be completed in December and a 2-month follow up in March.

We will be able to conduct the cross-cultural comparison of US and Irish trials when all data from the Irish trial is completed. We hope that comparing two similarly protocolised RCTs embedded within different education systems and cultural contexts, could enhance our understanding of potential contextual factors (e.g., school structure, student sample) that may influence outcomes for participants and could inform future intervention design and implementation efforts.

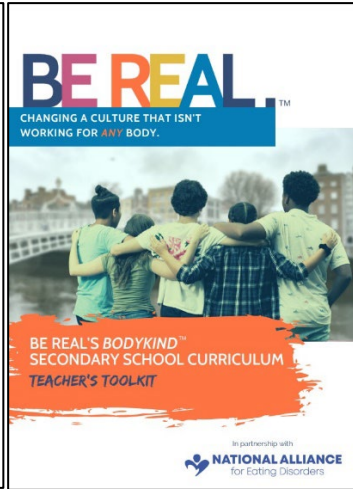
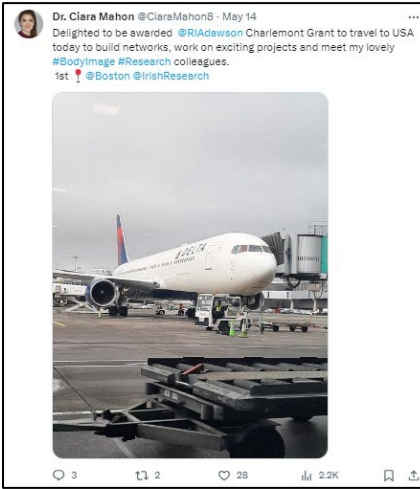
### **5. Identified joint funding proposals for dissemination and evaluation of BodyKind.**

Over the course of my visit with Denise Hamburger, we identified plans for acquiring funding and a strategy to disseminate and evaluate BodyKind more broadly. Currently, I am collaborating with Dr. Webb and Denise Hamburger on a joint funding proposal for the Klingenstein Third Generation Foundation (KTGF) Transformation of Mental Health Care Program to evaluate BodyKind in a large, multisite RCT in the USA. In addition, Denise successfully obtained sponsorship from the Eating Disorders Alliance in the USA to support research on BodyKind and allocated a portion of this funding to facilitate the trial I am leading in Ireland.

We have also identified key dissemination outlets for this research; I have been accepted to present on our work in Ireland and the USA at the International Conference for Eating Disorders (IECD) in New York (March 2024) and plan to co-present with Dr. Webb on our cross-cultural research at the Appearance Matters 10 conference (June 2024).



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### **Plans for continuing collaboration:**

Yes. The Irish RCT of BodyKind is projected to be completed by June 2024 (exceeding the current grant end date). In order to complete the cross-cultural comparison of the US and Irish trials, collaboration on this project will go beyond the grant end date.

Once data collection is completed in the BodyKind Ireland trial (June 2024), I plan to conduct a cross-country comparison of trial findings. In the meantime, my collaborators will continue to be involved in the BodyKind Ireland trial. We will continue to meet online on a monthly basis, where I will update the team on progress with the trial. The BodyKind trial in Ireland is now, in part, financially supported by the Be Real Foundation. Denise Hamburger will visit Ireland for a second time in March 2024 to train teachers in the waitlist control condition of the trial. During her visit, we plan to host an event to launch findings of the BodyKind study in Ireland and cross-comparisons with findings in the USA. I will present on findings of our cross-country trials at the leading international ICED conference in New York 2024 and plan to co-present findings of the Irish and USA BodyKind trials at the Appearance Matters Conference 10, Bristol 2024 with Dr. Webb.

I will continue to collaborate with Dr. Webb to prepare a manuscript of the USA BodyKind trial 2023. Additionally, I will continue to pursue a joint funding application with my colleagues Dr. Webb and Denise Hamburger for the Klingenstein Third Generation Foundation (KTGF) Transformation of Mental Health Care Program, which will hopefully facilitate a large multisite trial in the USA. This may provide an opportunity to compare two large multisite trials (in addition to the smaller USA trial that has already been completed).

This grant has given me the opportunity to strengthen my relationships with these colleagues to ensure a productive and rewarding collaboration that will be sustained well into the future with strategic goals for rich research outputs.

### **Additional collaborations with industry, national or international academic partners:**

During my USA trip, I was introduced by my colleagues to Prof. Bryn Austin, who invited me to visit her lab and meet her team in the Harvard School of Public Health (Chan School). Bryn is the Founding Director of the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders: A Public Health Incubator (STRIPED), based at the Harvard Chan School and Boston Children's Hospital. Her program STRIPED is the first research and training program dedicated to eating disorders prevention based at a School of Public Health and with a specialization in research-to-policy translation. I attended three lab meetings and got a tour of their research facilities. This visit provided me with invaluable insights into conducting interdisciplinary, applied research in the body image field and translating this into real world action through policy and intervention development. I will host one of Bryn's lab members, Abigail Bulens, who will be working remotely in Ireland in November 2023. I am applying for the National University of Ireland Early Career Grant to host an in-person international research symposium and plan to invite one of STRIPED team members to be a keynote speaker at an upcoming research event, that will be hosted by the Body Image Research Network Ireland (BIRN) on conducting interdisciplinary body image research in February 2024.



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I also had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Renee Engeln, author of bestselling book, *Beauty Sick* and Director of the The Body and Media Lab at Northeastern University, Chicago. Renee's research explores issues surrounding women's body images, with a particular emphasis on cultural practices that create or enforce the frequently contentious relationship women have with their bodies. We discussed potential research collaborations that we could pursue together (e.g., can reducing 'fat talk/appearance talk' in the classroom improve adolescent body image and how can we enable teachers to achieve this within the BodyKind programme).

### Publications associated with this project that you have been involved in:

1. Mahon, C., Hamburger, D., Webb, J.B. et al. Protocol of a cluster randomised trial of BodyKind: a school-based body image programme for adolescents. *BMC Public Health* 23, 2246 (2023).  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-17002-x> (JIF = 4.15)
2. Proposed: Be Real's BodyKind Curriculum Evaluation among Diverse US High Schoolers: Data Highlights, Lessons Learned, and Future Directions (*Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, (JIF =5.63)
3. Proposed: Cross country RCT comparison study: Submitted to a high impact, open access journal specialising in body image interventions (*Body Image*, JIF=6.3).

### Dissemination and plans for future dissemination:

1. A Multipronged Approach for Body Confidence: Piloting the BodyKind. Program for adolescents in the US". Abstract accepted for presentation at International Conference on Eating Disorders (ICED; 2024), New York, March 2024.
2. "Be Real's BodyKind RCT in Ireland & USA: Key Findings & Lessons learned" Copresenting with Dr. Webb at the School Based Body Image Program Symposium, Appearance Matters 10 (AM10) Bristol, June 2024.
3. Invited Guest Lecture at University North Carolina, Charlotte, USA, Department of Psychological Science & Health Psychology, "BodyKind: Building Healthier Relationships with our Bodies" May, 2023.
4. Invited Guest Lecture at University College Dublin, School of Psychology Seminar Series "Body Image in Adolescence: Supporting Healthy Body Image Development", May 2023.
5. Progress update on BodyKind research project delivered to key stakeholders in Jigsaw, June & November 2023.



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### **Outreach and engagement activities:**

I extensively documented my RIA-funded visit to the USA on Twitter and posts received strong engagement (as high as 2.2K and 3.1K views).

### **Media Coverage**

1. Meeting Denise Hamburger at the Be Real Foundation, Chicago
2. Meeting the STRIPED team at Harvard School of Public Health, Boston
3. Meeting the Dr. Jennifer Webb and her Mind Batch Lab team at UNC Charlotte, North Carolina
4. Meeting Renee Engeln, Northeastern University, Chicago.

In addition:

- Development of personal research website, body image blog and educational resource to increase awareness of research and help teachers support student body image:  
<https://mahoncl.wixsite.com/mysite> .
- Keynote speaker “Building Body Confident Schools Webinar” hosted by Jigsaw, The National Centre for Youth Mental Health & Education School Centre Ireland (ESCI), 3 May 2023 (300 attendees).
- Keynote speaker “Body Image and Disordered Eating Webinar for Parents” hosted by Jigsaw, The National Centre for Youth Mental Health, 14 November 2023 (100 attendees).
- Expert contributor on Jigsaw’s Schools’ Hub (resources for teachers to support student body image), May 2023. Article and accompanying infographics on “Top Tips for Teachers on Supporting Adolescent Body Image” for Jigsaw School’s Hub, to be published April 2023.

My research has been featured in national news and radio:

Pat Kenny Show, Newstalk (June 2023) BodyKind programme being rolled out in schools

Feature Article, Irish Times (June, 2023) by Niamh Jiménez, “Body image: ‘It’s a total bombardment of social media’”