

Lina Ricciardelli

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Diana Harcourt: Thank you for that Hermionie and I think you all agree that the Healing Foundation video is so powerful it's always very, I don't know how we can follow that, so that difficult task actually passes over to Helga, I don't envy you this one (laughs). Helga Dittmar is the reader in Psychology at the University of Sussex and she's going to introduce our first key note speaker professor Lina Ricciardelli. Over to you Helga.

Helga Dittmar: Thanks Di. Well good morning everybody and I think it'll be a really good conference, I'm really looking forward to it. It's a real pleasure and an honour to introduce today's key note speaker to you, although she probably doesn't need an introduction for most of you here at Appearance Matters. Lina Ricciardelli (*repeats name using correct Italian pronunciation*), she has got some Italian roots but she's very happy with Ricciardelli (*English pronunciation*) she assured me earlier, is at Deakin University in Australia so she has come a very long way to be with us here today. So, how did I first come to know Lina? Well...I met her on the internet, that's how you do these things these days, but what I mean is we had quite a bit of email contact a little while ago while I was working as associate editor of the journal of Social and Clinical Psychology and she very kindly and expertly reviewed a number of body image manuscripts for me, so, having met you virtually then Lina, it's a particular pleasure to meet you in person today. You probably know that Lina is one of the foremost researchers in the literature on body image and appearance and eating more generally and has been for many years but you may not know some of her earlier roots in psycholinguistics, as well as in substance abuse before she then focused mainly around body image. Now Lina's achievements and publications are many, I mean for instance if you go on to psychinfo like I did yesterday, you come up with almost 100 public journal articles. So her publications are many and if I gave you a list of all of those we would be here for a very long time and Lina wouldn't get a chance to speak at all, so instead I want to just very briefly highlight 2 particular contributions which are very important for me as well as many here I think, for one of them is Lina's pioneering work on body image and body related behaviours in children, I mean not only the research she did herself but the work she did on consolidating and integrating the really quite desperate research that we have in this particular field, so she's done a number of reviews which feature a bio – psychosocial model which I think has been an inspiration not only for me but many other researchers around the world. So you in a way Lina were one of the first to emphasise the developmental roots of body image concerns and how important it is for us to focus really quite early on in the age development so it's taken you were the first I think and it's taken us a little while to catch up in the field but I think we're getting there and maybe the second focus, which I also think is very important is taking on board that whereas body image concerns and problematic eating behaviours have been long a focus for women and girls that body image pressures have been increasing for men to and that we also need to do really good work on male body image and appearance related concerns and again particularly in terms of adolescent boys that's been another focus where again you were pioneering and highlighting how important that area is. But I think I'll leave it here and I'm really looking forward to your keynote address Lina.

Lina Ricciardelli: Thank you. The honour and pleasure is all mine. But again it's my pleasure to be here and to share some of the ideas that have been collected over the, it might be 17 years, lucky number 17 in Italy not lucky number 13, but anyway somewhere like that, somewhere between getting close to 20 and thank you too for that very esteemed introduction, that was very kind of you Helga.

Now, the work that I've been doing is with a lot of colleagues that I'd like to acknowledge, sometimes I have a list that goes on forever but that's not practice so I've limited it to the number that can fit in nicely on the slide to one of my colleagues at Deakin, Marita McCabe one of the colleagues who is in London now, he's been there for a few years who introduced me to qualitative research and that was one of the life changes for me I know a lot of you have done qualitative research all your life, but in psychology it wasn't as acceptable, to Sarah Grogan during my last study leave in the UK where we had amazing discussions and that was a wonderful way to spend study leave and some time to think and she was writing a book at the same time, I don't know how she fit me in but she did, all my students, there are too many to mention but they're all special and important in every possible way, to our funding bodies without that we can't often do our research so that's very important, and to this Centre for Appearance Research thank you for inviting me.

Now I'll go backwards, I just wanted to put this slide, and it can represent any city, I just wanted to have a little bit of Melbourne I'm not even sure why, but I sort of felt it was important, I don't know why, but anyway, but at the end of the day it's all cities and perhaps even smaller centres where body image and appearance are everywhere, everywhere we go, the football – there's so much focus on football players and their appearance and their bodies, fashion, eating, it goes on and on. Now these are just some general questions that are out there and I may not have the answers, I know a lot of you do research in these areas to and you may have better answers than me so I'll be acknowledging you next time if you help me with these, but I guess one thing, I'm not quite sure why boys were less researched before about 2000, they weren't totally ignored, but there wasn't a massive emphasis on boys it was harder to find, but if you've looked you would find. I started working with boys thinking we could help girls, that boys didn't have problems, so that was a bad turn in a sense that boys do have problems, we can learn a lot from boys and apply it girls but we also need to look at boys in their own right and those are some of the questions there afterwards. I owe a lot of people that I've read so much acknowledgement to but the notion of the ideal of lean muscularity that was a term coined by Gloria Leon who did a lot of work and she always used to have some mystifying little sentences about boys in the end of her papers which I thought well there must be a bigger story than that but the work was very much on girls and boys never fitted the pattern, but she, early on described them as wanting lean muscularity. Over the years too, the muscular images have become more powerful, simply due to the advent of steroids that some of these images are possible, they weren't possible before steroids, and we sort of take it for granted more and more these days when we see, do they still have Mr Universe competitions? Perhaps they do, I haven't seen them in the media for a long time but before that during the 60's while women got thin, men looked more moderate too in their media images or looked perhaps more normal, whatever normal is but this is one of the action heroes of the 1960's G.I. Joe, and he changed a lot by the time he got to the 90's he has become very muscular in the 90's, now times passed yet again I suspect he'd be a lot skinnier, I don't know- some people are studying him in much more detail than myself but if any of the models are to go by his legs would be quite skinny and he'd have a very thin waist, and he'd be different, but I don't have a picture of him as what he might be in 2010. These are

some images of male models that appeared last year, I don't think I've distorted them too much putting them in to the powerpoint sometimes that happens but you can see that the thinness is there and perhaps not so surprising we see or hear more about disordered eating with this emphasis on wanting to achieve this thinness in men too, even though before this thin images there's enough indication out there to indicate that men do have eating disorders, they haven't just appeared, they manifest in different ways – often they're not as detectable in the same way as they are in women, for example men do a lot more, emphasis more on the exercise pattern to reduce weight and do it excessively and that could be an indicator when it becomes more important than any other aspects of their lives, so you often see it the same kind of manifestation as women and a lot of the diagnostic mental criteria, diagnosis criteria wasn't designed for men, so its not going to fit for men, so some of these estimated which I think by any stretch of the imagination are quite severe even for men in terms of looking at clinical disorders in terms of population estimates out there. This happened to me on the plane here, that I saw this article about a super skinny male manikin, I don't know if he's here yet, if anyone's seen him but this super skinny male has very unusual measurements and unobtainable measurements and these are some of the articles, they're all in the pop media , I didn't actually find a research reviewed paper yet, so it led me to just try to see what are mannequins like and these are just some of the main ones that were given in this junky newspaper, perhaps I shouldn't say it's junky, its knowledge too so I should retract that back, but they range from, you can see if you read through those quickly that the chest is getting, well I guest that's changed, but the waist is getting much thinner and in comparison to what an average man in the US, I don't have other figures, that's very thin and unobtainable so to what extent this may have an impact we don't know, it's not to be cheeky, I just don't know to what extent we pay attention to mannequins, we do see them, so perhaps – I mean one can say that about any form of the media, but if it's out there everywhere we pay more and more attention to it. The data are quite consistent or should say somewhat consistent because the ranges between these extreme weight loss strategies that boys and girls engage in there's a broad range but they're there to suggest that men, or boys I'm talking mostly about adolescent boys today sometimes I go into the men too but only when there's less data on the boys because it's just too much to focus on the whole life span but the data there suggests that adolescent boys are engaging in weight loss strategies even if we look at the minimum or the one end it's still high enough to be of alarm. Then we've got what boys do as well, more boys than girls, although a lot of girls want muscle tone, muscle firmness, that's coming up more and more in some of the interviews we've collected it varies from country to county, but never the less it's out there and some of the media that I've seen – the female images are very muscular and toned so this is another issue but particularly for the boys, often boys may not easily access steroid use, but in questions that we've asked ' if you would use steroids or if they were readily available' a large percentage, at least a third of adolescent boys would like to use them so that's showing that they have some preoccupation and some desire that's stronger than just saying oh I want a better body, they would go much further if it was readily available and there are other strategies out there I don't know, I actually haven't seen a protein powder shop yet in Bristol but I haven't walked that far out but just about in every city in every country I've ever been to they're there and full of stuff that's meant to bulk you up some of it fairly benign but other stuff that could longer term be potentially harmful and dangerous as well, but the pressures out there. This is a book that came out about the same time as a lot of us were starting research or more focused on boys if you like it's not that we began the research but we where all honing in to it about the same time and some of the people are here or some of the people who have students that are here, it just goes to show that it's not just

one person doing the one things in one part of the universe it's everyone sort of doing it together and it's nice to get together a conference like this to share ideas. I've only put some of the ones that I've recalled and cited well if I've missed you send me a note and I'll add you to the list but this is what I call a new wave, sort of starting in the decade 2000 now if you pick up any journal in body image there's often one or two papers in every issue and so it's become voluminous and exciting and heard to keep up with but I'm just wanting to show you a bit of the background, also in this edition the 2002 edition, approximately I might have that date wrong, there was no single chapter specifically allocated to boys in fact maybe I think there was about 2 paragraphs specifically allocated to boys so it just shows you how much it was neglected but now there is a chapter coming up in the new book. I also want to point out that it wasn't invented, body image in boys research didn't come out of nowhere in 2000, it was out there, sometimes a little bit harder to find and these are some of the ones that I've cited a lot, again you might have some other ones and it would be great to get them pass them to me over lunch or later, but it's just to show you that there were people who are working at it, it's just that they weren't perhaps as obsessive about it and as we've been talking to a few people today already sometimes the research we do with boys research and men's research is challenging, so some people, you know only the tough people keep going, the others will go on and do something else because you do end up having more questions asked than questions answered at times from your studies, but that's good research to ask a lot of questions.

Now what I'm going to go through if there's time, as time is always tricky, and there's not too many clocks but we're lucky to have the chime at 12 so that will give me an idea, there are three studies I've selected I would have like to select 23 but that would have been insane. I selected the first one because it was one of our first studies that I'm very proud of with my colleagues that we did and I spent the whole summer trying to get the data together, once the data was collected that's the easy part believe it as you all know, trying to make sense of it, and it was sort of starting from scratch because we didn't have any instruments that we thought were adequate enough for studying boys and the social cultural influences. Is that 12o'clock already wow, no its not, I'll have to move faster. We chose a semi structured interview method to study body image in boys and the socio cultural influences of parents, friends and the media, because there were no measures, as I've already told you. We had a modest sample size by our standards, being primarily non qualitative researchers, but our interview schedule was very very structured at the end of the day when I thought about it, when we did part two we went to a much more open ended question, but you can see here that with any stretch of the imagination that's it's almost a very closed format, but this is what we thought in 1999/1998 was qualitative research. We were getting open ended questions from these adolescent boys we didn't have the actual answers, but we gave them a lot of hints as you can see they were really really did only have to fill in a gap. We found more null findings than positive findings in the sense that a lot of boys didn't rate social cultural influences as important, that's probably one of the most important findings, but we also found that some of the major influences for the boys, were the mother who gave more positive comments, I mean it's not an incredible large number of boys, only 25% reported very positive comments from their mothers, they were saying things like "you've got a great body" "you look great" – things like that, and their female friends – it was very much the females in their lives that were providing more encouragements and positives! But again, a large percentage of these boys didn't say very much, so that's something to keep in mind. We were also very confused because the boys didn't say the media was negative for them, sometimes it was positive and negative often it had no effect but for 27.5% of the boys it was positive at the same

time though, even though it was positive it made them do something about it, it's something to remember that while these boys were influenced by the media, some of them – they felt positive about it and did their exercise in a positive way – they didn't go away thinking 'oh I'm never going to look like that' or 'I wish I was someone else' it was that kind of sense that we got. Even when we asked about their social comparisons, a large number of boys that did not do this again so that's one of the major findings and another finding from this early study is that a lot of the boys, or when I say a lot, a proportion of the boys that was note worthy also felt social comparisons were either positive or neutral – they didn't say the social comparisons were always negative as girls do. So the main findings we found, were on the whole that boys didn't feel that there were a lot of social cultural influences, now remember that this is a study we did in about 1999, it was published in 2000 but it takes a bit of time to come out, it might even of been 1998, so the results might be very different 10 years later. What was interesting was these positive effects and from time to time you do see these enhancement effects of the media in studies with boys and men – they're not always there so not always consistent which is troubling at times so there must be a lot of moderators and very much dependent on population sampling. Now our second study was much more qualitative it probably still doesn't meet what my view is of a perfect qualitative study – if such a thing exists, because we had very much specific questions, we this time though had much more open ended questions, we had fewer questions and we left it to the boys to direct this, we also chose a male interviewer, I think the interviewer himself/herself is very important, the previous one was a female interviewer. We as I said had very open ended questions that have given us some hint there and some more will come out, we were very much wanting to know what they thought about their bodies and what social cultural influences were impacting on these. At the time it was NUD*IST and that's what we used and we did a lot of coding, a lot of discussion, a lot of reading, reading of these transcripts, I think if I was to summarise what I learnt is that you do a lot of reading, which I quite enjoy so that didn't concern me at all, it does concern some of my other colleagues perhaps who are much less interested in qualitative research, but they've got other methods to choose. We found in reading reading reading that they mentioned sport, I don't know why that was a surprise to Marita and myself when we did the study, perhaps it was something that we missed the obvious, we didn't was actually ask questions about sport, but sport is what was overwhelmingly themed in terms of what boys said and surprise boys play more sport than girls, I'm not saying only boys play sport, but it's very much a means of initiation of their masculinity and it must be harder for boys who don't like sport, who are not good at sport, and that's where I think more work is needed, well what about those boys, are they left out? But very much our interviews – and I'll go through this fast because we can talk later and this is published as you've seen so you can read about it in more detail. Boys focused on their body via sport, the adjectives they talked about their body were really the ones that were good at sport so the two were synonymous and other people have found this too, earlier than us and later than us so there's a lot of consistency with this. Sport was often used as the disguise for their body image concerns, they seem to me to be quite keen on wanting to have fit strong powerful good looking bodies but they kept telling us it was mainly for sport you know, don't doubt us, it's for sport. Sport is also a place to show off, I mean watch all the footballers out there and cricketers and tennis players, you know, if you've got it flaunt it I guess, and the body sport context arena is one of those. For boys is also very competitive, we found this that they talked about being the best, the strongest, the strongest in the class and even they want to be bigger to play better but it's competition so they quite acknowledge this competitive talk – rather than social comparison they were in to competitive talk. And sport is not negative, it has positive aspects too, so again for boys

it's a win situation in terms of a way of acknowledging their identity, their self esteem, their social status. So what we found was that for boys its function, being successful at sport and it's a context to legitimise their body image concerns. (*How are we going for time? – your doing absolutely fine, you've got 10 minutes – ok*). I might go through this new study then, it's taking a long time to finish, too long, but I'm sure you all appreciate there that every year seems to have more internet emails and interviews with everything else we do, but its a study that we're working on with children's body image and social comparisons and of course I'll try to focus in on the boys. Why social comparisons in children, well, it's obvious to me but not obvious to others, that this is the time, ages of about 8-10 when kids start to compare themselves to others, and say well maybe I'm not as good as that person, or maybe I'm better, but earlier on at the age of 4 they think they are the perfect person and they don't have this sense as this is very much developmental, its necessary as we can't go around saying oh we're wonderful and just living in our own world, we have to fit in with others. It's also important to find out what our strengths are and our weaknesses and I don't mean that because we can't all aspire to be great tennis players and ballerina's, we might not, but I'm sure we all have our niches and life is to find out what those are and kids start this very early at the age of eight or ten, and why it's fascinating is that this is where body image concerns become quite marked for a lot of kids and also there's a decline in their self concepts. There's no study that I can find that actually shows this, probably because it's so hard to study but the two can't just be a coincidence, there must be a very strong link between those. And we also know that our social comparisons and our body image are very integral whether it's body image that promotes social comparison or the other way around as far as I can tell the jury's not out. And we have lots of researchers in this room and students of researchers in this room who've been doing work with social comparisons in all different kinds of ways, I've got a bias that I've highlighted ones with adolescent boys, but there's lots there with women and adults and men as well. We did a study a while ago one of my honours students with looking at social comparisons and eating problems and muscle concerns, the story was that the ethics committee weren't very happy about us asking this kind of work so it came from nowhere that we didn't get ethics approval to start off with, whilst we'd been working merrily merrily happily along, asking very intrusive questions about eating disorders, if any of you are familiar with the CHEAT, children's eating attitudes questionnaire, some of those should not be asked of anyone much less children, they didn't have problems with those but they found the whole notion of social comparisons and asking that of children very sensitive and challenging, but we got through that and were stronger as a result of it. This study was descriptive in many ways and correlational but we were lucky to have this student that tested the kids twice so that's quite valuable data, it was a very short retest period, but with children I think six months is long enough to see changes as you know ideally you'd like to test them even every month there's really no criterion out there as far as I can tell that anyone can tell me what a good period is for any age group for change and when I ask people no-ones able to tell me, so it would be good if someone out here knows the answer. Our measures are very challenging with children if you think they're challenging with different culture groups, challenging with men, well they're just as challenging with children because their language is still being developed, the constructs are abstract but we do find at the age of eight language is fairly intact and abstract thinking is fairly on the way, it's not particularly formed yet as we've all been taught along the way but it's there to at least start with come of these constructs but I do admire people that study children even younger than eight, much younger just because communicating, my first study was with language a lot of children at the age of four and five, their grammar, their semantics is so weak that even doing a vocabulary test is hard much less

asking them about their body image. But these measures were on the whole okay for children, we've done a lot of work with the social comparisons with same gender peers, we still haven't got it right, even at version three and version four, I still think there's a lot of tinkering, but this was one of the in between versions and if you'd like to ask me more about that we can do that anytime today or tomorrow. We, for better or for worse in this study used the children's figure drawings subscales, it's probably not a very sensitive measure in my view of children's body image concerns but that's the one we used and we had dieting concerns from the CHEAT items, a shortened version of the ones that were less intrusive and then a type of matched measure on muscle concerns. Children's negative and positive affects, self-esteem and their actual weight and height. The short of the story is that kids don't do a lot of social comparisons, they do much more with their height, surprise surprise, not unusual – but it's not so different from adolescence, if you have a look at how much social comparisons adolescents do, boys and girls, the levels aren't as high as you'd think, whether they're not able to articulate it is probably another issue even at adolescence we're not aware of it, but in terms of just some of the highlights of this data set, girls were more focused on weight and height and boys focused on height and muscles. Girls interestingly at this stage were equally focused on better and worse bodies, but I'm a bit sceptical because the data are very low levels and the boys on the whole were more focused on their worst bodies so maybe that's a protective factor already. But interestingly the data was stable over the six months. Interestingly we found..I'll just go through some highlights, the girls body comparisons, we got a total measure of about 8 items of the different body parts they were comparing themselves to, the girls the social comparisons were very much correlated or more moderately correlated I should say with self esteem, for boys they weren't correlated with self esteem so something else is going on, they were correlated weakly with body dissatisfaction. But more importantly we're interested in the longer term prediction over six months if you can call that longer term, short term perhaps, social comparisons did predict lower self esteem for girls – not for boys, social comparisons did predict dieting and muscle concerns, dieting for girls and boys, muscle concerns just for boys so that's something that's telling us it's different, that the boys are already focused more on these muscles and one of the arguments that I think is important is we can't just start studying boys in adolescence it's probably too late already to know what's going on, we need to study them in pre-adolescence, that's one of my points. But it's interesting, this connection between self- esteem and social comparisons already for girls at the age of eight, it's quite ingrained for boys it's more focused on their muscle concerns but dieting are both. In fact when we look at the differences between dieting concerns between boys and girls they're almost equivalent so there's no difference there which is interesting. If a picture tells a thousand words, this is one that I came across last year at going to the movies how very differently girls and boys are sometimes portrayed it's a very selective image because the store has a less gendered image for girls and boys this year but I'm not very good with my camera so I didn't take that one, but it was much more different, but this one was stunning to me that I rarely take photos but I had to do this one and unfortunately I couldn't move the pole, but you can see, I won't tell you what I think but you can see, what I think the images are quite different telling us that the boys and girls are socialised quite differently and are portrayed quite differently in this image already that the functional aspects versus the appearance aspects are much more skewed in the genders. We need a lot more work with children, so I might just end that conclusion there and focus more on what we know about adolescent boys as that was the major topic for today. The research for the boys is suggesting without doubt that there is a stronger strive for thinness as well. Boys though are more protected as they seem to be able to focus on positive aspects, whether it's the socialisation,

whether it's adaptive evolutionary way of being that is there survival mechanism that is biologically innate they are there, and call it what you like, self-serving bias, a better than average affect, boys will, well men particularly, I don't know a study about adolescent boys, will describe themselves as better than the average in terms of their appearance and their muscles. Puberty also works in favour of boys because it will bring them more inline to this muscular ideal that for sometime now has been a popular one, whether it's going to work as it's not going to make them thin, but it makes their chest bigger and I guess that's ideal, so I guess a lot of the factors are in favour of the boys development from society, from evolution, from puberty. The individual factors, I haven't gone into those, but as far as we can tell in our reviews and in our own data the story seems to be very similar that many of the risk factors correlates are the same for girls and boys. We're going to hear a lot about the media so I'm very excited about that over the next two days because although the studies I've read tell me that it's the same for boys, it doesn't always seem to be the same effects, so overall I've said I qualify that a bit, maybe I should have put a couple of question marks. Boys have a lot more diverse media images out there, those mannequins probably coexist in different stores or in media images or if you watch the news you see different shapes of men much more than you do of women and I think that's protective as well, we have to remember to that adolescence is a very long period for adolescents, not for us perhaps as it's so long ago, but the early middle and late are very different and some of those differences are subtle and much more subtle for boys than they are for girls and I haven't talked too much about culture but that's one of my other loves in that there are studies out there whilst the world is becoming very global and western and similar at the same time at some of the countries where the power is being weakened in some minority countries we're seeing a sort of feminist model be much more active it's those men from other countries who don't have the power if you like or the upper hand or whatever you like to call it, who are experiencing more body image and eating problems than some of the boys in western countries. Whether that's going to change of course I mean some of these things are changing as we speak is something to watch out for. I have a long list of wish lists but we can do that another time in 2001 Cohane and Pope concluded this that boys of all ages report body dissatisfaction with their bodies they based this only on a review of about 17 studies and it was associated with reduced self esteem and they concluded that boys frequently wanted to be bigger, we probably don't know that much more after 10 years, so sometimes things happen very slowly, but we do have more and more people who are focusing on boys, targeting boys on their social context and their lived experiences. So I think that's where we need to go as sometimes we fall in to the trap in wanting to just replicate our studies from girls to boys, from one culture to the other, but this is where the qualitative work is very valuable as we can actually look at their lived experiences. Now I have my own questions, so if you don't ask me questions I'll ask you questions you can answer for me cause there's a lot of work out there. But I'll leave it there.

Diana Harcourt: thank Lina that's great, really great introduction to the conference and I'm sure a lot of people here are going to have questions and are going to want to talk to you over the next couple of days, here's just a small token of appreciation, so thank you for coming such a long way and thank you for starting in such a great way.