

# PhD Opportunity

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

**Director of Studies:**

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**[Inclusive Sport and Physical Activity Research Group](#)****The PhD Opportunity**

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.

## 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

## Application Process

To begin the application process please go to

<https://www.worc.ac.uk/research/research-degrees/applying-for-a-phd/>.

## The Interview

All successful applicants will be offered an interview with the proposed Supervisory Team. You will be contacted by a member of the Doctoral School Team to find a suitable date. Interviews can be conducted in person or over Microsoft Teams.

## Funding your PhD

For information about Doctoral Loans please visit: <https://www.worc.ac.uk/study/fees-and-finance/doctoral-loans.aspx>

During your PhD you can access the Research Conference Support Scheme to support the costs of presenting your research at an external conference.

## Research at the University of Worcester

Research is central to the University's mission to make a difference in everything that we do. We are committed to delivering excellent research which extends the boundaries of human knowledge but which also improves people's lives by enabling better health outcomes, improving food security, developing environmentally sustainable solutions for crop production and socially sustainable solutions to our ageing population, enhancing public knowledge and understanding of the past and present.

The University hence focuses its research around five high-level challenges facing society, locally, nationally and globally:

- [Human Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Sustainable Futures](#)
- [Digital Innovation](#)
- [Culture, Identity and Social Exclusion](#)
- [Professional Education](#)

The success of our research is reflected in our continuous improvement in external research assessment processes. In the most recent Research Excellence Framework, REF 2021, the University saw a near 50% increase in the scale of its research and 12% increase in quality, building on its performance in REF 2014 when it was the UK's most improved university in terms of Research Power, a combination of scale and quality.

## Research Degrees at Worcester

Our research students are central to our overall mission for research. They are working at the cutting edge of their disciplines and driving forward the quality of our research whilst enriching our research culture. We are looking to increase our research student numbers as a strategic imperative.

Our commitment to our students is reflected in the results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2023 in which we ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> for overall research student satisfaction nationally. Key to our success in this area is the Doctoral School, a focal point for all our research students.

It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

### **Inclusive Sport and Physical Activity Research Group**

The Inclusive Sport and Physical Activity Research Group aims to support excluded and marginalised individuals and communities through ethically and socially responsible research.

We aim to support excluded and marginalised individuals and communities through ethically and socially responsible research with three key research themes: Gender, Identity and the Body; Inclusive Sports and Politics of Sport. Together these themes build a focused, contemporary and highly relevant research agenda based on collaboration and interdisciplinary practice, to integrate research scholarship in and beyond the School of Sport and Exercise Science at the University of Worcester.

### **Widening Participation**

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience.

**For further information** or an informal discussion on this project, please contact Dr Christian Edwards (Director of Studies) via email at [c.edwards@worc.ac.uk](mailto:c.edwards@worc.ac.uk)