SPRING 2008

Appearance Research News

The Newsletter of the Centre for Appearance Research - Issue 8

WHAT'S NEW?

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Welcome...

...to the Centre for Appearance Research (CAR).

In this issue we welcome new PhD students and members of the steering committee, we review CAR's highlights of 2007, including conferences and publications. Special features include reports of ongoing projects including "Teenagers' Altered Appearance during Treatment for Cancer", "The Role of the Family in Adjustment to Visible Difference" and "Bisexual Women's Visual Identity..."

The Headlines...

"Appearance Matters 3™" 1 & 2 July 2008

Hosted by **CAR** and supported by **The Healing Foundation**.
A two day conference highlighting current research and good practice around appearance-related issues including visible difference, information provision, education, the media, resilience, identity, weight, provision of care, psychosocial interventions and areas for further research.

For full details go to: www.science.uwe.ac.uk/appearancematters

Congratulations

UWE has awarded **Dr Alex Clarke** a Visiting Professorship in recognition of her substantial contribution to both knowledge and practice in the field of the psychological impact of disfiguring conditions.

New CAR Steering Committee Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the CAR Steering Committee
Professor Mike Stevens, CLIC Sargent Professor of Paediatric Oncology, at the University of Bristol and Bristol Children's Hospital,
Dr Helga Dittmar, Reader in Social Psychology at the University of Sussex, who has collaborated with CAR on a number of projects, and,
Sarah Sawyer, a patient expert, with a particular interest in psychology.

More news on page 2

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Welcome to New Members!

CAR has continued to increase in number over the past 12 months and we are delighted to welcome the following new members.

Rebecca Bellew is researching the role of the family in adjustment to visible difference. Her PhD is funded by a UWE faculty studentship and she is being supervised by Tim Moss and Nicky Rumsey.

Nikki Hayfield is examining sexual identity and body image concerns. Her PhD is also funded by a UWE faculty studentship. She is being supervised by Victoria Clarke, Emma Halliwell and Nicky Rumsey.

Eleanor Walsh, a UWE psychology graduate, has been appointed part-time Research Administrator for the Healing Foundation Project.

Heidi Williamson joined CAR in June 2007. The children's cancer charity CLIC Sargent is funding **Heidi** to conduct an 18 month exploratory investigation into adolescents' experiences of appearance change during treatment for cancer.

CAR in the Media

CLIC Sargent Project
Heidi Williamson was interviewed by the *Bristol Evening Post* about her research into adolescents' experience of appearance change during treatment for cancer.

CIRTED Project was highlighted in the United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust, Research Review.

"The Great British Body"
CAR members have been working on an ITV programme "The Great British Body" filmed in April and aired in June. CAR members have developed an online survey that was launched on ITV.com on 18th March, to collect data in conjunction with the programme.

CAR News...

Awayday, July 2007
A CAR awayday held after the 'Purely Cosmetic' conference was an opportunity for CAR members to discuss current research activity with our guests Dr David Sarwer of the University of Pennsylvania and Henrietta Spalding and Bernadette Castle from Changing Faces. Professor Frank Burnet from the UWE Science Communication Unit, gave a very useful and entertaining presentation on how to engage the public in our research. The day was extremely productive and stimulated much discussion and ideas for future research within the group.

Awayday, December 2007
Fiona Fox, Emma Dures and Aly Bessell presented a short piece on positive psychological theory and interventions as part of the CAR awayday in December. Their presentation summarised the knowledge they gained from a series of positive psychology conferences attended over the past year. The first was a 2-day resilience training and CBT workshop in May 2007 hosted by Christine Padesky. The second was a background lecture to positive psychology hosted by Tim Anstiss in July 2007 and the third, a guest lecture given by Martin Seligman in November 2007 on the interventions currently being utilised and tested within the field of positive psychology.

Nicky Rumsey and Di Harcourt visited Australia in February 2008. Whilst in Sydney and Melbourne, they developed current and future research collaborations through meeting with researchers and clinicians.

Teenagers' Altered Appearance during Treatment for Cancer

By Heidi Williamson, CLIC Sargent Research Associate

Despite improvements in survival statistics amongst childhood cancers, the disease and its treatment still has a diverse, extensive and often enduring impact upon quality of life (Vance et al: 2001). Amongst the many difficulties faced are the temporary or permanent changes to appearance resulting from treatment, such as hair loss, weight gain, skin complaints, scarring and amputation. Having an altered appearance during or after treatment can bring with it a host of psychosocial consequences including reduced self-esteem and psychological well-being, increased depression and self-consciousness, problems with social interactions and relationships with peers, difficulty in employing effective coping strategies, body image concerns and a sense of isolation (Reiter-Purtill & Noll; 2003, Enskar et al; 1997, Varni et al; 1995).

Experiencing these changes during adolescence may present particular challenges as the usual processes of physical, social and sexual development at this time often result in individuals being acutely aware of their body and appearance (Holmbeck; 2002), with self-esteem strongly linked to appearance during this period (Harter; 1999).

The specific impact of cancer treatment upon appearance issues amongst an adolescent population has received surprisingly little attention. Similarly, very little is known about how parents and siblings respond and cope with the potential challenges presented by the changed appearance of the adolescent undergoing treatment and how they might be actively involved in providing support.

In this study participants, and their siblings if they wish, are able to use photography to capture the dynamic nature of their experiences as treatment progresses. Photographs form the basis for in-depth interviews with the adolescents and siblings, and parents are also invited to discuss their experiences. We hope to provide insight into the experiences and management of an altered appearance, from both the adolescents' and their family's perspective.

For further information about any aspect of this study please contact Heidi Williamson via e-mail: Heidi3.williamson@uwe.ac.uk or call 0117 32 81572

The Role of the Family in Adjustment to Visible Difference

By Rebecca Bellew, PhD student

Appearance distress and visible differences have been associated with a number of problems including depression and anxiety, low self-esteem and negative body image and interpersonal problems. However, not all individuals with a visible difference report a negative experience, some report the minor role it plays in their lives and its positive consequences.

This project is concerned with identifying factors associated with the ability to adjust to a visible difference. Demographic variables and the physical nature of the visible difference have been repeatedly found not to predict distress. However, it has been found that individuals who place greater importance on their appearance use strategies to cope with their visible difference that are maladaptive. Furthermore, individuals who have easy, recurring access to a negative schematic representation of their appearance are more likely to be poorly adjusted. What seems to play a crucial role in why some individuals lend more psychological importance to appearance is their interactions with others from an early age. Thus, the feelings of people around us, which as a child is mainly our family, are assimilated into a child's perception of their visible difference, and subsequently affects their ability to cope.

The studies of this PhD will focus on the intergenerational processes involved in coping with disfigurement. Thus, this research will focus on two participant groups; children with a visible difference and adults with a visible difference (including both participants groups families). All studies will also involve recruitment for three separate groups; visibly different, unhealthy (and not visibly different) and healthy (not visibly different as a control group). Studies one, two and three will involve the investigation of children (age ranging from 7-10 years) with a visible difference and their families, recruited through GP surgeries, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. They will investigate variables discussed above hypothesized to impact upon ability to cope with their visible difference. Studies four and five are quantitative studies that will investigate how adults' retrospective views of their family life may impact upon their own families in light of their visible difference.

For further information about any aspect of this research, please contact Rebecca Bellew via email: rebecca2.bellew@uwe.ac.uk

Bisexual Women's Visual Identity, Dress, Appearance and Beauty Practices

By Nikki Hayfield, PhD student

Stereotypical associations around lesbian and gay appearance are easily identified, - typically negative associations of lesbians such as 'ugly', 'butch', and 'masculine', clearly deem them unattractive, whilst stereotypes around gay men include 'stylish', 'well groomed' and 'effeminate', reflecting the different sociocultural constructions of lesbian and gay identities. In contrast, any specific appearance related bisexual stereotype is absent. It is well documented that lesbians and gay men use visual presentation to enable expression and communication of their sexual identity to the wider world (especially to those 'in the know') which creates a sense of group identity, or community, distinct from wider culture (Clarke and Turner, 2007). Despite this, the majority of studies that focus on bisexuality do not take into account the importance of bisexual visual identities hence little is known about what influences bisexual women's appearance. The minimal academic research that has focused on appearance and bisexuality indicates that bisexual women change their beauty practices according to the gender of their current partner (e.g. Taub 1999), but that no specific 'look' exists for bisexuals (Clarke and Turner 2007, Holliday, 2000). However, these studies lack focus on bisexuality alone, possibly because the common ground between lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, in belonging to the category 'non-heterosexual', often leads to researchers studying 'LGB' as a collective entity. However, it could be argued that they are different in as many ways as they are similar, and a recent study of the construction of sexual identities highlights that 'a separate focus on bisexuals may be necessary to understand the specificity of bisexual visual identities' (Clarke and Turner, 2007: 275).

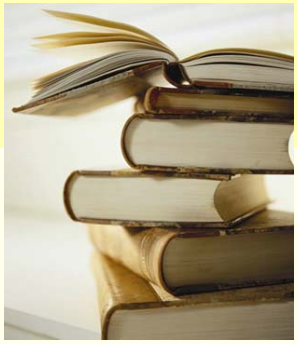
This research will involve three separate studies. The first study, which is currently underway, consists of qualitative semi-structured interviews, with self-identifying bisexual women. A range of questions around appearance are discussed in order to ascertain whether participants use clothing, body art and cosmetics/beauty practices in order to create a bisexual visual identity. Interviews will also discuss the women's relationships and friendships, length of time identified as bisexual, how open about their bisexuality participants are and any social involvement with a bisexual or lesbian community, in order to consider whether these influence bisexual women when managing their appearance.

Data will be analysed thematically in order to highlight pertinent themes, which will then aid the development of the second stage of the research. In the second study, questionnaires will explore the ways in which bisexual women's appearance and beauty practices differ in relation to those of heterosexual and lesbian women. The third and final study has yet to be fully developed, but will involve participants identifying the sexuality of people in photographs based on their appearance.

The overall aim of this research is to establish if a bisexual 'look' is recognised both by bisexual individuals and within the wider population. The social consequences of adopting a visible bisexual identity, particularly in the context of the bisexual 'label' having a number of (negative) stereotypes attached to it (e.g. promiscuous, non-monogamous, in transition, lacking courage, McLean 2007:157) will be considered. The appearance that we 'choose' influences how others perceive us, which could have implications in personal (e.g. health/well-being), professional (e.g. education and employment), and social (e.g. membership in lesbian and gay subcultures) contexts.

For further information on this research, or if you are a bisexual woman interested in being interviewed about your appearance and beauty practices, then please contact Nikki Hayfield via email: Nikki2.Hayfield@uwe.ac.uk

Recent Publications



Baildam, A., Bishop, H., Boland, G., Dalglish, M., Davies, L., Fatah, F., Gooch, H., Martin, L., **Harcourt, D.,** Rainsbury, D., Rayter, Z., Sheppard, C., Smith, J., Weiler-Mithoff, E. & Winstanley, J. on behalf of the Association of Breast Surgery at BASO, BAPRAS and the Training Interface Group in Breast Surgery (2007). Oncoplastic Breast Surgery – a guide to good practice, *European Journal of Surgical Oncology, 33, Supplement 1*, S1-S23.

Bessell, A. & Moss, T.P. (2007). Evaluating the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions for individuals with visible differences: A systematic review of the empirical literature. *Body Image, 4*, 227-238.

Bessell, A., Harcourt, D., Moss, T. & Rumsey, N. (2007). The importance of psychosocial interventions for visible differences: exploring the needs of clients. *UWE psychology postgraduate papers, 4,* 14-21.

Bradbury, L. & **Harcourt, D.** (2007). An investigation into whether value placed on health, reported healthy behaviours and knowledge of associated health risks predicts numbers of piercings and tattoos, regret, satisfaction and future intentions. *UWE psychology postgraduate papers, 4, 2-7.*

Fox, F., Rumsey, N. & Morris M. (2007). *"Ur skin is the thing that everyone sees and you cant change it!"*: Exploring the appearance-related concerns of young people with psoriasis. *Developmental Neurorehabilitation. 10,(2)*, 133-141.

Fox, F., Morris, M. & Rumsey, N. (2007). Doing Synchronous Online Focus Groups with Young People: Methodological Reflections. *Qualitative Health Research: Pearls, Pith & Provenance, 17 (4),* 539-547.

Frith, H., Harcourt, D. & Fussell, A. (2007). Anticipating an altered appearance: Women undergoing chemotherapy treatment for breast cancer. *European Journal of Oncology Nursing, 11 (5),* 385-391.

Harcourt, D. (2007). Quality of Life in Post-Mastectomy Radiotherapy. *Advances in Breast Cancer, 4 (1),* 8-11.

Hartland, K. & **Harcourt, D.** (2007). A study of illness representations of acne and attitudes towards appearance. *UWE psychology postgraduate papers, 4, 8-13.*

Kennedy, F., Harcourt, D. & Rumsey, N. (2007). Perceptions of Ductal Carcinoma in Situ (DCIS): Is it real breast cancer or not? *UWE psychology postgraduate papers, 4,* 36-42.

Kennedy, F., Harcourt, D. & Rumsey, N. The challenge of being diagnosed and treated for ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS). *European Journal of Oncology Nursing* (2007), doi:10.1016/j.ejon.2007.09.007.

Malson, H. & Nasser, M. (2007). At risk by reason of gender, in Nasser, M., Baistow, K.and Treasure, J. (eds) *When the body speaks its mind: The interface between mental health and the female body.* Routledge: London.

Morris, M. & Jackson, S. (2007). Pituitary disease: the patients' perspective. *The Endocrinologist, 83,* 10-11

Jackson, S., Harrad, R.A., **Morris, M. & Rumsey, N.** (2006). The psychosocial benefits of corrective surgery for adults with strabismus. *British Journal of Ophthalmology, 90*, 883-888.

Rumsey, N. & Harcourt, D. (2007). Visible difference amongst children and adolescents: Issues and intervention. *Developmental Neurorehabilitation, 10 (2),* 113-123.

Wallace, M., Harcourt, D. & Rumsey, N. (2007). Adjustment to appearance changes resulting from meningococcal septicaemia during adolescence: A qualitative study. *Developmental Neurorehabilitation, 10 (2),* 125-132.

Knowledge Exchange & Public Engagement

Conference Presentations & Talks

Emma Dures gave a presentation at the annual DebRA conference, titled “The transition from childhood to adulthood” as part of a workshop run by herself and an adult with EB, EB nurse, social care team member and psychotherapist (May 2007)

Emma Dures gave a presentation at the FAS postgraduate conference, UWE: “Living in fragile skin: understanding the psychosocial impact of Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB)” (November 2007)

Helen Malson “Between discourse and embodied experience: Reflections on analysing women’s accounts in feminist post-structuralist” at Embodying Femininity, Critical Sexology Seminar, South Bank University, London (June 2007)

Jamie White & **Emma Halliwell** “An investigation into the relationship between excessive exercise, disordered eating and body image: is frequency of exercise important?” at the BPS Division of Health Psychology Conference, Nottingham

Nicky Rumsey was the Keynote speaker at the Canadian Association of Plastic Surgeons Annual Conference in Banff in June. Her presentation was titled "Psychological aspects of cosmetic surgery patients". She was also an invited speaker at the CLAPA (Cleft Lip and Palate Association) Adults Conference in Birmingham, where she gave a talk titled "Life with a cleft lip/palate"

Nicky chaired a symposium and presented a paper “The effectiveness of psychosocial interventions for adults, adolescents and children” at the European Craniofacial Congress in Bilbao, Spain (June2007)

Nicky was a keynote speaker at the BAAPS Breast Academy meeting in London in September (2007). She gave a talk entitled “Psychological aspects of breast augmentation patients”

Nicky also gave an invited lecture on “Psychosocial aspects of craniofacial deformity” at The Royal College of Surgeons Scotland (November 2007)

Di Harcourt & **Nicky Rumsey** gave a seminar presentation “Researching Appearance: Trials and Tribulations” at the University of Nottingham (January 2008)

Di Harcourt & **Nicky Rumsey** gave the following presentations in Australia, February 2008:

"Appearance Matters: Genetics & Appearance", to members of the Genetic Services Team, Children's Hospital, Melbourne

"Looking Different: Counselling, Genetics & Visible Difference", to Genetic Counselling staff at the Children's Hospital, Melbourne and the MSc Genetic Counselling Programme, Melbourne University

"Psychosocial Aspects of Breast Reconstruction", to the Tumour Board Seminar Series, Westmead Hospital, Sydney

"Appearance Matters: Cancer & Appearance", to the Researchers in Oncology and Medical Psychology (ROMP) Group, University of Sydney

CAR Events

Appearance Matters™ 3 1st and 2nd July 2008 at Explore@Bristol

CAR is hosting a two day conference supported by *The Healing Foundation*, highlighting current research and good practice around appearance-related issues, with keynote speakers Professor Marika Tiggemann and Professor Nichola Rumsey. The conference will be especially relevant to all researchers and clinicians interested in the psychosocial aspects of appearance.

CAR Seminar Series 2007-2008

We are always pleased to welcome guest speakers as part of the School of Life Sciences seminar series. Recently we were joined by -

Dr Lee Monaghan from University of Limerick, who talked about *"Men and the war on obesity".*

Dr Anne Haase from the University of Bristol who spoke about *Exercise & Appearance.*

and

Dr James Partridge & Jane Frances from Changing Faces who presented "*Growing up the Culture & Growing up the Child: How disfigurement can Illuminate the Learning Landscape"* .

When you've looked at
the ceiling, the coffee machine,
your shoes and the far wall,

look me in the eye
and say hello.

Photographer Andy Flack

Don't feel bad. It's a natural response not to know where to look when meeting someone with a facial disfigurement for the first time.

I'm used to having conversations with the side of people's faces, or the tops of their heads.

I've even had people conduct an entire discussion through the person standing next to me. (Sometimes even when I don't know the person standing next to me).

What I'm saying is, don't be scared. Make eye contact, shake hands, or even smile. I won't bite. We could talk about what happened to me, if you like.

Or we could discuss something more important, like the weather, or the price of fish. Above all, don't get put off. Meeting a complete stranger is a difficult business at the best of times.

Changing faces
the way you face disfigurement

You will find it awkward, but it does get better. I'm still learning myself. So, until we meet again, get a little practice in. Look me in the eye and say goodbye.

CHANGING FACES, THE SQUIRE CENTRE, 33–37 UNIVERSITY ST, LONDON, WC1E 6JN. TEL 0845 4500 275 www.changingfaces.co.uk

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