

**Opportunities for Doctoral Research at the**

**Centre for Appearance Research (CAR), UWE, Bristol**

The Centre for Appearance Research (CAR) was established in 1992. It is a thriving research centre with a national and international reputation as a centre of research excellence and a leading force in the field of psychological and interdisciplinary applied research in appearance, disfigurement, body image and related studies.

With more than 25 academics, researchers and postgraduate research students, CAR offers a stimulating environment for research and knowledge exchange, and is home to a thriving, experienced and internationally renowned group of researchers who are passionate about delivering authoritative and relevant research. CAR is one of UWE’s recognized centres of research excellence and has a broad portfolio of externally funded research projects, public engagement and knowledge exchange activities.

Doctoral students within CAR benefit from being part of a supportive group of postgraduate researchers, all with an interest in the psychology of appearance, and supervision from leading academics in this field with expertise in a wide range of research methods.

CAR Website: <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/hls/research/appearanceresearch>

**Potential PhD Studentships for Self- & Sponsor-Funded Applicants**

*In addition to the projects outlined below, we would be pleased to discuss other ideas from potential students with a strong interest in conducting doctoral research in any aspect of the psychology of appearance. The membership of any supervisory teams would be confirmed in due course, in line with UWE’s requirements for doctoral research.*

1. **The Psychosocial Impact of Changes to Appearance Amongst Men Diagnosed as having Cancer**

Contact: Professor Diana Harcourt

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In recent years interest in the psychosocial impact of changes to appearance as a result of cancer diagnosis and treatment has increased considerably. However, research in this field has focussed on the experiences of women, and predominantly the impact of appearance changes associated with breast cancer. In contrast, this PhD will explore the experiences of men. Using mixed methods, it will examine the nature and incidence of appearance-related concerns and support needs, with a view to developing supportive interventions for this group.

1. **Peer Support for People Affected by Burn Injuries**

Contact: Professor Diana Harcourt

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This PhD will use mixed methods to explore the use of peer support amongst people affected by burn injuries (those who sustain the burn and/or family and friends). It will examine face-to-face and online interventions in this area. The Centre for Appearance Research is part of the South West Children’s Burns Research Centre, and this PhD will benefit from the opportunities presented by being part of a unique, multi-disciplinary research collaboration.

1. **Facebook as an Appearance Potent Environment for Adolescent Body Image**

Contact: Dr Amy Slater

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Amy Slater’s background and research interests:

My research interest lies in the area of body image, specifically body image in adolescents and children. Within this I am interested in the role of sociocultural factors (such as the media) in the development of body image concerns. My recent work has focused on the role of the Internet and in particular social networking sites (such as *Facebook*) in the body image of adolescent and pre-adolescent girls. A further research area is exploring the issue of the premature sexualisation of girls. I also have an interest in the role of parenting in sexualisation and body image concerns of young children.

This PhD project would aim to explore adolescent *Facebook* use in detail, with a particular focus on the appearance potency of this online environment (exploring appearance presentations and appearance conversations). A second aim would be to develop a theoretical model of how *Facebook* use may impact on body image.

1. **Interventions to support young people affected by visible differences**

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Growing up with a condition or injury that impacts upon appearance can present significant psychological and social challenges for children and young people and their families. Whereas interventions are currently being developed for teenagers (for example the YP face IT online programme [www.ypfaceit.co.uk](http://www.ypfaceit.co.uk)) there are few evidence based psychological interventions to support children under 12 years old and their parents.  The proposed project will aim to develop and evaluate a web based interactive and age-appropriate intervention (accessible via computer and tablet) to address the support needs of primary school children aged 7-11 years old.

1. **The Impact of Appearance Concerns on Intimacy in People with Disfigurement**

Contact: Dr Elizabeth Jenkinson

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Studies within the proposed PhD will explore the concerns and experiences of adults with disfigurements in intimate situations, including sexual and romantic relationships, with the aim of identifying their support and intervention needs. It is anticipated that findings will be then used to inform the development of a short assessment tool to aid identification of presenting issues by clinicians.

1. **Psychosocial Adjustment to Cleft Lip and Palate**

Contact: Prof Nichola Rumsey & Miss Nicola Stock

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A cleft in the lip and/or the palate is one of the most common congenital conditions in the world, yet the psychological impact of the condition on the family and on the individual is largely under-researched. Far from one simple operation to close the cleft, the burden of ongoing multidisciplinary treatment can be considerable, and the affected individual can face numerous psychological and social challenges across the lifespan. This PhD presents an exciting opportunity to investigate the psychological factors which underpin positive adjustment to cleft lip/palate, and to contribute significantly to the provision of psychological support and intervention in this unique and fascinating field.

1. **Clothing and Appearance**

Contact: Dr Victoria Clarke and Dr Nikki Hayfield

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We welcome applications for qualitative and mixed-method projects on any aspect of dress and appearance research, particularly in relation to gender and/or sexuality. Previous and current projects include perceptions of non-normative body hair practices, bisexual women's visual identities, clothing practices in LGB communities, lesbian women and body image, gay men and body image.

1. **Body Image Interventions in Real-World Settings**

Contact: Dr Phillippa Diedrichs

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Governments, policy makers, health professionals and researchers recognise that body image is a key issue of interest and concern for young people and adults in the United Kingdom and overseas. Empirical research conducted in developed countries around the world also shows that body image concerns (i.e., being unhappy with the way one’s body looks and functions) are now considered a ‘normative discontent’. In order to develop strategies to effectively promote healthy body image, it is important to systematically assess current levels of body image concerns and associated influences and outcomes. This knowledge can inform targets for intervention and provide a baseline upon which to assess the success of such strategies. This PhD project would involve conducting mixed method research to understand the causes and consequences of body image concerns among young people, in addition to developing and evaluating multi-level interventions to promote positive body image in real-world settings.

1. **Vicarious Psychosocial Impact of Changes to Appearance in Family Members**

Contact: Associate Professor Timothy Moss

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Within the appearance and body image literature, there is a growing body of work exploring and explaining individuals’ psychosocial adjustment to appearance differences. What is less well understood is the vicarious self-consciousness experienced by family members of those with visible differences. What are psychosocial responses amongst family members of association with someone who has a different appearance, and what impact does this have on broader family processes? This largely quantitative PhD will explore these ideas with a view to developing appropriate interventions for those living with people who look different.

1. **Antecedents of, and Psychological Inoculation for “Alternative” Interventions in Appearance Self-Consciousness**

Contact: Associate Professor Timothy Moss

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It is hard to use the internet or read popular media without being exposed to advertisements for complementary/alternative appearance altering products or treatments. The aim of this PhD is to investigate the emotional and cognitive antecedents of decision making processes in relation to treatment choice in the face of this largely unregulated plethora of persuasive communication. In particular, the work will focus upon why and how people make decisions to undertake potentially costly and hazardous treatments when these treatments are not underpinned by any evidence of effectiveness or efficacy, and whether we can psychologically inoculate them against the impact of these pernicious influences.

