Welcome…

…to the Centre for Appearance Research (CAR) newsletter. We begin once more with news of new members of staff and funding successes. We also outline external activities being conducted by members of the Centre and changes to the membership of our Steering Committee.

Welcome to 3 new PhD students:

Jamie White is conducting a PhD exploring the development of body image in adolescence. His supervisory team will be Emma Halliwell, Tim Moss & Nicky Rumsey.

Fiona Fox is examining the appearance concerns of adolescents with chronic conditions. Her supervisory team is Marianne Morris and Nicky Rumsey.

Ben Rosser is researching “Biases in cognitive processing of appearance related information in disfigurement: The role of the self-schema”, supervised by Tim Moss & Nicky Rumsey.

Welcome to New CAR members:

Laura Kingston has joined CAR as a part time research assistant. She is working under the supervision of Emma Halliwell on an ESRC funded project examining womens’ self beliefs in response to idealised images portrayed in advertising.

CAR contact details

CAR has re-located to the main campus of UWE. Our contact details are now:

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University of the West of England
Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane
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www.uwe.ac.uk/fas/car
Funding Success

We have had some excellent funding successes in recent months.

Nicky Rumsey, Tim Moss & Di Harcourt are members of a collaboration of key researchers and clinicians in the field of disfigurement who have been awarded £497,000 from the Healing Foundation to conduct a programme of research identifying factors and processes contributing to successful adjustment to disfiguring conditions. The research will involve a large scale, multi-centre assessment of the factors involved in adjustment in adults with a wide range of disfiguring conditions, and a series of smaller, in-depth investigations. All are designed to inform the development of interventions designed to promote positive adjustment amongst those affected.

Members of CAR (Marianne Morris, Tim Moss & Emma Halliwell) were awarded 3 PhD bursaries from the Faculty of Applied Sciences, UWE, Bristol. These bursaries are funding the new PhD students welcomed above.

Nicky Rumsey, Marianne Morris & Kate Gleeson have been awarded £81,000 for a 3 year PhD bursary from the charity DEBRA. This project will establish the psychosocial needs of people with the skin blistering condition, epidermolysis bullosa, and will culminate in recommendations to meet these needs. The charity Changing Faces has undertaken to provide linked funding to underpin the intervention strand of this project during the latter 18 months.

Diana Harcourt has been awarded funding from Breast Cancer Campaign for a 3-year PhD studentship to examine the psychosocial impact of DCIS (Ductal Carcinoma in Situ), a pre-invasive breast cancer.

External activities

Nicky Rumsey has been elected Chair of the British Psychological Society’s Division of Health Psychology for 2005/6. A three year cycle of Chair-Elect, Chair and Vice-Chair began in September. She has also been seconded to the Department of Health for half a day per week for 12 months from December 2004. Her role is to advise the Department on the contribution health psychologists can make to new developments in the NHS.


Melissa Wallace has been elected as the PsyPAG (Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group) Rep for the British Psychological Society (BPS) South West Branch and also PsyPAG Communications Officer.

Appearance Matters 2

Plans are underway for the next ‘Appearance Matters’ conference, to be held in the summer of 2006. Further details and a call for papers will appear on our website in due course.
Media activity

Nicky Rumsey appeared on ‘This Morning’ on GMTV in October discussing the psychological impact of scarring.

Emily Lovegrove appeared on a number of TV and radio programmes, including GMTV’s ‘This Morning’, Sky News, BBC Radio 4 and Radio 5 discussing appearance related teasing and bullying – and what to do about it. She was also interviewed by The Observer newspaper.

Steering Committee Membership

Since its foundation, CAR has been very fortunate and grateful to receive much appreciated advice, guidance and support from members of its steering committee. There have recently been a number of changes to the membership of the steering committee. We welcome Mr Jonathan Sandy (Professor in Orthodontics at the University of Bristol with a consultant session in the North Bristol Trust) as the new Chair of the Committee, Mr Brendan Eley (Chief Executive, the Healing Foundation), Mr John Kenealy (Consultant Plastic Surgeon and Clinical Director of Plastic Surgery at North Bristol Health Care Trust), Professor Paul Dieppe (Director of the MRC funded Health Services Research Collaboration at the University of Bristol and a Consultant Rheumatologist), Professor Anne Woollett (The Institute of Education, London) and Mr Tim Cole (Global HR Director of the law firm, Freshfields, Bruckhaus Derringer) who join Professor Wendy Purcell (Dean of Faculty of Applied Sciences at UWE), Mr Anthony Brown (a Trustee of Changing Faces) and Dr James Partridge (Chief Executive, Changing Faces) on the committee.

We send our heartfelt thanks and best wishes to Dr Richard Lansdown (previous Chair of the Committee), Mr Chris Ward and Mr Michael Ashley-Miller for all their unerring enthusiasm towards CAR over the past few years. Having all been members of the Committee since its inception, they have now stepped down to take on new responsibilities and well-earnt retirements. We thank them all for the unstinting support they have given us throughout the growth of the Centre.

Forthcoming Events

Seminar Series

We are pleased to announce the upcoming seminars to take place in April, May and June 2005 at the University of Bath and the University of the West of England:

Weighty Issues: Representation, Identity, and Practice in the areas of Eating Disorders, Obesity and Body Management.

The purpose of the series is to provide a forum in which researchers using qualitative, critical, interpretive and social psychological (as well as anthropological and sociological) approaches to the study of body management, fatness, thinness and weight ‘disorders’ (and their intersections), can present and discuss their work.

1) 27.04.05 Representations and constructions of body weight and body management (UWE)
2) 18.05.05 Identity and weight issues (UWE)
3) 08.06.05 Body management practices and implications (Bath University)

All welcome. For more information and to register please go to http://staff.bath.ac.uk/psssr/weightyissues.html
“One of the aims of my research is to improve our understanding of the impact of sociocultural ideals for attractiveness on both women’s and men’s body image concerns.”

Recently there has been increasing concern about the effect of ultra-thin female models on women’s, particularly young women’s, body image and body shaping behaviour. For example, the government in the UK held a body image summit in June 2000 to discuss the need for policies regarding such media images and the British Medical Association concluded “the media play a significant role in the aetiology of eating disorders”.

Women’s ideal body weight as depicted in magazines has decreased over the last 40 years, so that the average model now is more than 20 per cent underweight (eg Wiseman et al 1992). Additionally, over the last 30 years there has been increasing emphasis on ideal male body images, in the media and amongst men themselves (eg Pope et al 2001). Male models have become increasingly muscular, to the extent that many contemporary models display bodies that are judged as unattainable without the use of anabolic steroids (Leit et al 2000).

Parallels are frequently drawn between the changes in body ideals and escalating levels of body dissatisfaction, increases in the incidence of eating disorders amongst men and women (eg Pope et al 1997) and increases in muscle dysmorphic disorder and steroid use amongst men (Pope et al 1997).

However, we cannot establish causality from correlational data, so experimental investigations in this area are essential. Our previous research findings add to the growing empirical support for the view that these images play a role in fuelling women’s body dissatisfaction. Furthermore, we have demonstrated this negative
impact is not limited to young women. Older women, who internalise the thin ideal, are also susceptible to negative effects of exposure (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004). Only a handful of studies have investigated exposure to idealised models amongst men. Our findings are consistent with the emerging picture that many men report increased body image concerns after viewing male models in advertising (Halliwell et al 2005). However, some men, who were actively trying to change their body shape, seemed to use these models as inspirational figures and responded positively to exposure, at least in the short term. Considering the increasingly unrealistic dimensions of the male body ideal this may be particularly problematic as it may encourage men to adopt extreme body shaping strategies such as steroid use.

A research project I’m currently involved in, funded by the ESRC and conducted in collaboration with colleagues at Sussex University, focuses on what can be done to help protect women from these negative effects. We aim to identify precisely how – and why – ultra-thin media ideals used in advertising have a negative effect in making many women feel dissatisfied with their own bodies. We also aim to discover whether the use of ultra-thin models in advertising actually helps to sell products. Although unrealistically thin young women are often used in advertisements for everything from soft drinks to cars, there has been no previous research to show that using such images actually increases sales of any product.

The study, which will be completed this summer (2005), involves 400 female students at UWE, Bristol and at Sussex Universities. They will first be asked to give information about how they feel about their own bodies before their reactions to various images are studied at three different stages, then compared to their original self-image.

An improved understanding of the psychological processes underlying women’s responses to idealised images in advertising has important implications for debates and policies concerning responsible advertising, as well as prevention and intervention programs aimed at protecting particularly vulnerable women from excessive body dissatisfaction.

For more information about this research, please contact Emma by e-mail: emma.halliwell@uwe.ac.uk or call (0117) 32 82154.
Mick Emerson and Tina Owen (Outlook, North Bristol NHS Trust) presented a paper at South West and West Midlands NHS Cleft Audit Meeting on the Psychosocial Audit of 10 and 15 year olds with cleft lip and/or palate.

Nicky Rumsey and Di Harcourt were invited speakers at the World Union of Wound Healing Societies Conference in Paris where they presented papers titled “The Psychosocial impact of burns” and “The psychosocial impact of scarring” respectively.

Hannah Frith and Kate Gleeson convened a symposium at the British Psychological Society, Psychology of Women Section annual conference on ‘Feminism, Fashion and the Body’ which included researchers from Liverpool and Teeside as well as CAR.

Other contributions to the conference were:


James Partridge & Natty Leitner gave a presentation on psychosocial issues, including appearance issues, for people with skin cancers to the Skin Cancer NICE Guidance Development Group in August.

Melissa Wallace presented a paper titled “The impact of treatment-induced changes to appearance amongst adolescents who have undergone treatment for cancer” at the PsyPAG (Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group) Annual Conference in July 2004.

Hannah Frith convened a Structured Discussion session entitled “Theorising Identity in Health Psychology” at the British Psychological Society (BPS) Division of Health Psychology annual conference in Edinburgh. Hannah was the Chair and Discussant and the session included the following presentations by members of CAR:

Di Harcourt “Why don’t objective measures of bodily difference map onto the subjective experiences of psychological distress?”

Kate Gleeson “Why is there no simple relationship between body image and health behaviours?”

Natty Leitner “How might health psychology inadvertently contribute to the pathologisation of visible differences or different embodiments”

Members of CAR also made the following presentations at the same BPS Division of Health Psychology conference:

Melissa Wallace, D. Harcourt & N. Rumsey “The appearance-related concerns of adolescents who have undergone treatment for cancer”

Di Harcourt presented a paper titled “Deciding to include others in decision-making” in a structured discussion session on “Facilitation of patient involvement in health care treatment choices”.
The following poster presentations were also made at the BPS Health Psychology conference:

**Sue Jackson & Nichola Rumsey** “Raising awareness: the psychosocial impact of corrective surgery in strabismic adults”

**Marianne Morris & Sarah Booker** “The impact of type 1 diabetes on the self and others: Emergent themes in an analysis of focus group data”

**Joy Farrimond & Marianne Morris** “Knowing or not knowing before birth: parents’ experiences of having a baby with a cleft malformation”

**Di Harcourt** “Involving others in decision-making” as part of a Workshop on Interventions to Facilitate Professional-patient Decision Making, organised by the Nursing, Midwifery & Allied Health Professions Research Unit, University of Stirling.

**Sue Jackson & Marianne Morris** presented a poster called “Psychosocial impact of corrective surgery on strabismic adults” at the Royal College of Ophthalmology Annual Congress. Sue also prepared a talk that was delivered at a Novartis Foundation Discussion meeting in London and had a poster chosen for rapid fire presentation at the Oxford Congress in July.

The annual UWE Psychology Postgraduate conference took place in January 2005. The following papers were presented by postgraduate students within CAR:

**Melissa Wallace** “Appearance concerns amongst adolescents undergoing treatment for cancer”

**Sue Jackson** “Why the eyes have it: a preliminary grounded theory model about the importance of eyes”

**Natty Leitner** “Meaningless pseudonyms: safety issues in doing research with ourselves”
Recent publications


