

‘Changing Faces is about enabling everyone to face disfigurement with confidence whether or not they have a disfiguring condition’

James Partridge OBE Founder and Chief Executive



Fair for All

De Montfort University

11 September 2008

Appearance Matters

Face Equality

Jane Frances

- 1. Stats, facts etc**
- 2. Four common myths about disfigurement**
- 3. Supporting an individual student**
- 4. Promoting inclusive mindset in the learning community**

Disfigurement is...

➤ ... any potentially noticeable difference in appearance which is not culturally sanctioned

➤ 3 broad causes:

- Traumatic event
- Congenital malformation
- Disease/disease-related treatment

(Harris 1997)

At least 400,000 people in the UK have disfigurements to their face, hands or body

Statistics from OPCS (1988)

Approx. 10% of the total population has some visible difference that affects their lives. More if functional differences are included (e.g. stroke, Parkinson's)

Rumsey (1998)

Language – vocabulary

disfigurement – facial difference – unusual looking
– variation – noticeable – visible difference ...

much research uses the terms -
‘attractive’ ... *‘disfigured’*

scar – mark – shape – texture – size – colour...

a disfigurement – a disfigured appearance
(never a disfigured person)

Someone may have a condition, injury or illness
that affects the way they look...

Responses to disfigurement

‘Even though others may not consciously intend to treat a person differently or less favourably when they are facially disfigured, almost all people do, especially upon first meeting them’

Kleck and Strenta (1980)

‘Stickiness’ in interactions

9 out of 10 people cannot link positive words and phrases to images of people with disfigurement

COG Survey, 2008

Responses to disfigurement

DISLIKE

Most... ...least likeable:

- non-disabled person
- person with crutch/brace
- person in wheelchair
- person with hand missing
- person with facial disfigurement
- person with obesity.

Very stable across several studies...

Some contextual, class and cultural differences...

Harper (1995)

Responses to disfigurement greatly affected by social skills

(Bull & Rumsey, 1988)

	Person with unusual appearance	Person with ordinary appearance
Person with good social skills	1 Very Favourably	2 Fairly Favourably
Person with poor social skills	4 Very Unfavourably	3 Fairly Unfavourably

Equalities legislation...

Duties...

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Prevailing myths...



“Scary”



“Modern medicine, especially surgery, can fix it”



“He’s so brave”



“She’s never going to have a good life.”

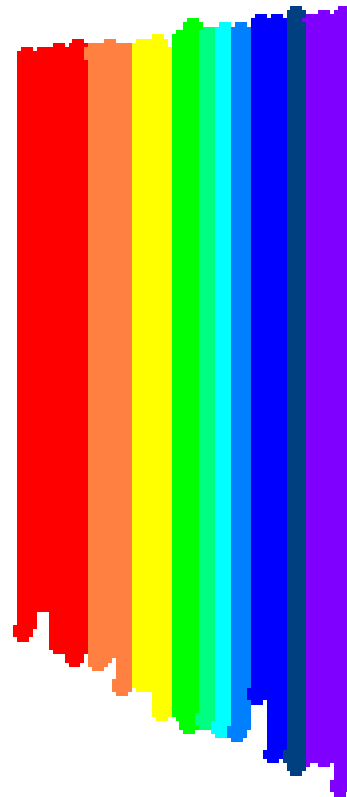
Stereotypes

➤ Across cultures and throughout history villains have been associated with disfigurements.

➤ This has led to the assumption that a person with a facial difference will be frightening or sinister.

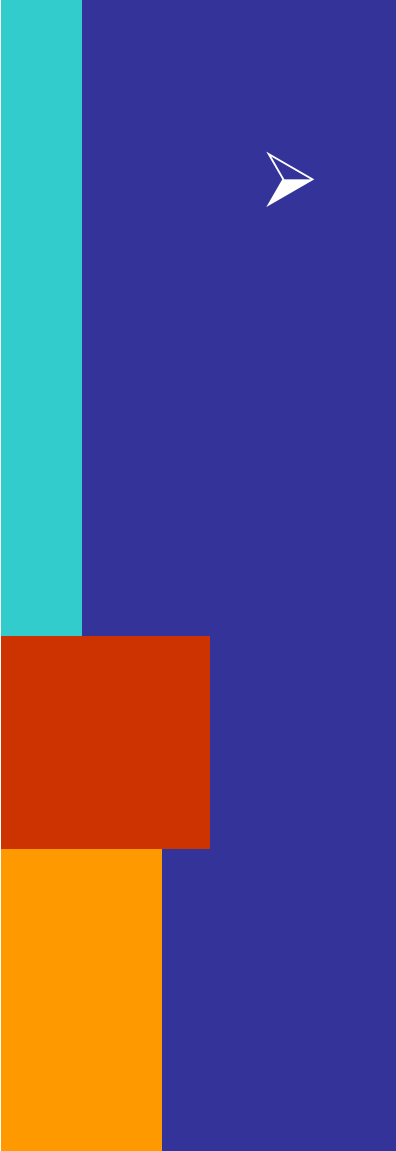
How do we challenge the prejudice underpinning our expectation that heroes and heroines must be conventionally good looking?





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Living with Disfigurement...



People with disfigurements 'are subjected to visual and verbal assaults and a level of familiarity from strangers not otherwise dared: naked stares, startled reactions, 'double takes', whispering, remarks, furtive looks, curiosity, personal questions, advice, manifestations of pity or aversion, laughter, ridicule and outright avoidance.' (*Macgregor, 1990*)

Living with Disfigurement...

People with disfigurements ...

**...are disadvantaged by society
rather than by their 'disability'.**

Psychological Profile of People with Disfigurement



Affected individuals report frequent experiences of discrimination.



As a group, show higher levels of anxiety, depression and social difficulties and lower self-esteem.



Double suicide rate in Danish adults with clefts

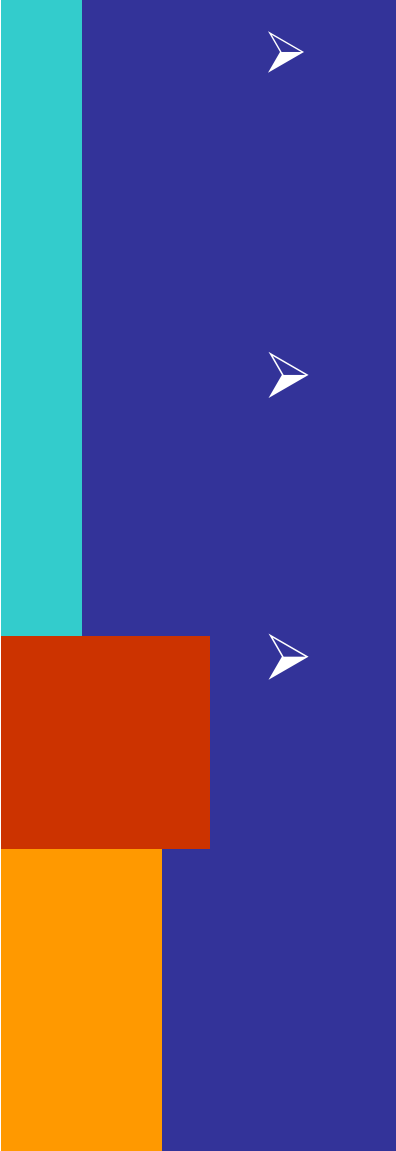


Considerable variation in psychological adjustment.



**Psychological profile is not commensurate with severity, visibility or gender
(e.g., Thompson & Kent, 2001; Herskind et al., 1993)**

Status and shame

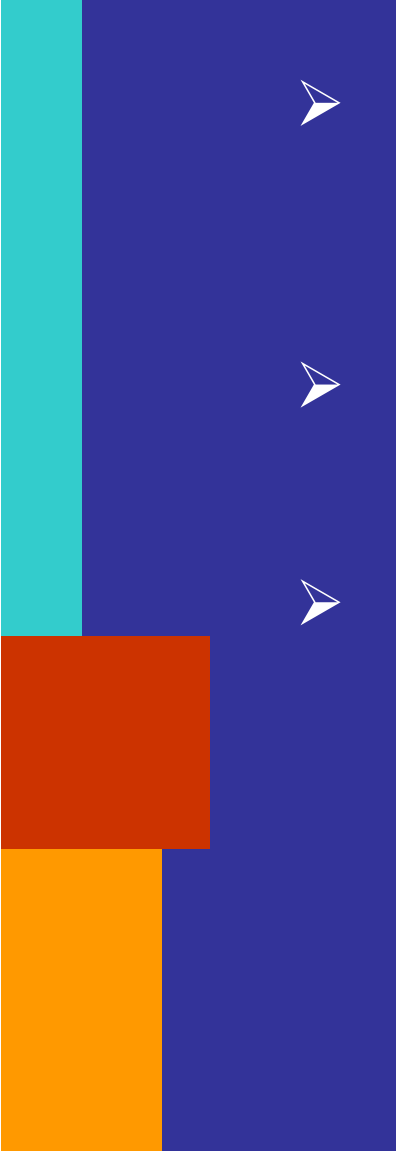


Shame is an affective-defensive response to the threat of, or actual experience of, social rejection or devaluation (loss of status) because one is (or has become) unattractive as a social agent.

Chronic exposure to threat (perceived or enacted) “trains” neuronal pathways which increases the likelihood that they will be stimulated again.

Physiological shaping over time, based on long term stress effects of being shamed and rejected result in amplified dispositions to be sensitive and responsive to potential shame.

Importance of group behaviour



Anyone who is vulnerable to being seen as 'different' may be vulnerable to feeling unacceptable to the group

Belonging can feel (almost unconsciously) competitive

People's responses to perceived difference are partly shaped by their own unconscious/automatic sense of belonging or lack of belonging to the group

Self-esteem...

...correlates with...

Looks?

Brains?

Friends?

Motor ability?

Existential?

Action

Actively promote sense of belonging and self-esteem

Observe social skills. Concerns? Discuss with student - be ready to talk about other people's reactions to visible difference.

[Refer to student support AND Changing Faces]

Monitor attendance and work output carefully. Concerns? Discuss with student - be ready to talk about hopes and expectations.

*Be clear about your expectations of your students.
[Refer to student support AND Changing Faces]*

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Appearance concerns affect all of us...in different ways

- 94% appearance concerns
- 51% fear appearance related teasing or bullying

Lovegrove (2002)

Avoid negative interventions...



Giving a talk about difference ahead of integration...

...substantially reduced the number of social initiations recorded.

Vandell and George (1981)

A more inclusive learning community...

People's responses to perceived difference are partly shaped by their unconscious/automatic sense of belonging or lack of belonging to the group.

Gilbert (2002)

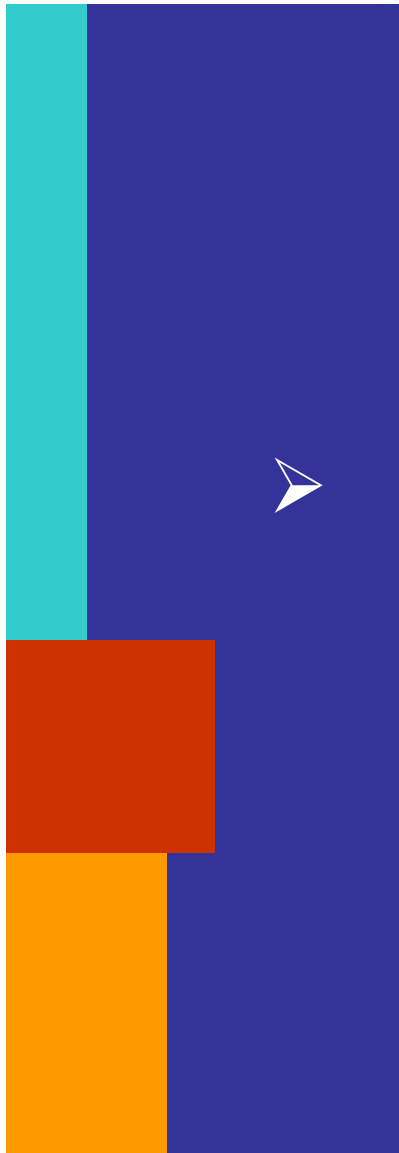
Increase everyone's self-confidence and self-esteem

Lovegrove (2002)

Factors for successful acceptance of minority group members ...

- **Equal status within the situation**
- **Common goals**
- **Interdependent situations**
- **Authority support**

(Ruffina David, The University of Melbourne, current research)



Thank you