

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER: CONVERSATIONS IN PSYCHOLOGY



Comments from the Editor

Welcome back to the school of Psychology newsletter which is now on its 4th issue. A big thank you to those who contributed to last year's issues. We hope you are feeling refreshed after the new year and we are looking forward to showcasing some more great contributions in 2020.

This issue starts with some school news, including some information on the National Student survey which our final year undergraduates should pay attention to.

Our first student article is a reflective piece from Dr Gerhard Neimann, one of our MSc Psychology students. This is followed by articles centred around Education; Cagla Titiz Köse first explores the Psychology of learning. This is followed by a discussion of school culture by Maksim Peshev. We then have two articles about attachment; the first from Alicia Hughes discusses whether a child with Reactive Attachment Disorder can function in mainstream education, and the second by Hannah Sharrad discusses the need for teachers to support those displaying behavioural difficulties who may, in fact, have insecure attachments. Our career spotlight focusses on the role of an Educational Psychologist, to follow on from the theme of our student articles.

A couple of other features to take note of in this issue are the 'Writing Academic Blogs' article written for our publishing feature by Sophie Ward, our new Deputy PTL. Also, our Head of School, Dr Gail Steptoe-Warren shares her experience at a recent BPS conference. Finally, our criminology lecturer and MSc Psychology student, Annie Foxall discusses some of the flaws in research on Psychopathology.

If you would like to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter, please contact myself at hstokes@arden.ac.uk for more information.

I welcome any feedback and content suggestions also.

Holly Stokes, Editor.

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SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWS

Welcomes & Congratulations



Sophie Ward

Welcome to Sophie Ward, our new postgraduate Deputy Program Team Leader and Psychology lecturer.

Congratulations to our Psychology lecturer, Tom Lockhart, on his new position as undergraduate Deputy Program Team Leader.

Also a big welcome to our new blended-learning lecturer, Yana Nikolova.



Tom Lockhart

Exciting Opportunities!

During one of the “Day in the Life” seminars, several of you mentioned that you would like the opportunity to be voluntary research assistants. In response to this, 30 students will be transcribing real interviews for Dr. Mvikeli Ncube’s research project. Thank you to everyone who applied for this role and watch this space for more exciting opportunities in the future!

Final Year Undergraduates! Let us hear your voice. The National Student Survey 2020



The National Student Survey (NSS) is an annual, externally run survey for all final year students in all UK universities. It’s a great opportunity for you to give us your feedback (anonymously) on all the different aspects of your course and a chance to reflect on your whole experience with us over the period of your study. We are really encouraging students to complete the study because the greater participation we have, the more reliable the results will be and then we will have a really good idea of what to keep doing, stop

doing or improve. **Scan the QR code above** or [click here](#) to be taken to the survey site for more information. The survey will be open from now until early April.

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWS

Gorilla: Online Experiment Builder

As a predominantly online university, we are naturally limited in the facilities we can offer to conduct research. To date, we have relied on low-tech options or face-to-face research, limiting your participant pool. We have an exciting development that will provide you with greater flexibility when you are conducting research.



We now have an institution licence to Gorilla, an online experiment builder that allows you to create behavioural experiments in your internet browser. Using Gorilla, you can create response-time tasks, questionnaires, present videos, and lots more.

We are currently creating some support materials to assist you with using Gorilla. However, there are lots of videos and guides on their website. Note you can only use Gorilla to collect data once you have been granted ethical approval. In order to sign up to Gorilla, please follow this link: <https://gorilla.sc/signup/arden>. You must sign up to Gorilla using your Arden University email address. Please contact James Bartlett (jbartlett@arden.ac.uk) to request a licence or ask for support.



Some More Great Work from Our Team

Our Program Team Leader, Dr Matthew Hall, has recently had his work published in other languages! See left his book titled '*Revenge Pornography: Gender, Sexuality and Motivations*' published in Korean.

Editor of the newsletter and Psychology lecturer, Holly Stokes, has recently had a discussion article titled '*The Worrying Decline in Children's Playtime: The Need for Intervention on a Nation-Wide Level*' published in PSYPag Quarterly. If you are interested, you can read the discussion article by clicking [here](#).

What if I'm my Own Worst Critic?

Dr Gerhard Niemann, MSc Psychology Student



At the start of my Psychometric internship a couple of years ago, my supervisor gave me some psychometric assessments to complete, including a personality assessment. During the feedback he noticed that I'm extremely self critical. As a Psychology student we face an immense task to climb to the top of a competitive and complex ladder to achieve that ultimate goal of becoming a professional Psychologist. As I have been on this journey for almost a decade I came to recognize something in myself that I was unaware of until my supervisor pointed it

out. For most of us we set ourselves extremely high standards to achieve. The unfortunate fact is that we ultimately fear failure that we, from our perspective, simply can't afford.

As human beings we constantly engage in self talk. When we meet our own expectations we praise and motivate ourselves positively. But when we fall short of our own expectations we start criticising ourselves and seeking the faults that lead to our "failures." In the book *Soul Psychology* by Joshua David Stone (1995), Paul Solomon wrote a chapter on *Unconditional Self-Love and the Inner Child*. He describes what he calls our "inner child" that is directly linked to our self-worth. This inner child must be nurtured to grow into a person with healthy self-worth. But what if we are constantly seeking out failures and blaming this "inner child" for our misfortune? If a child should hear things like: "you're not good enough" or "you're a slacker" or even that "you are simply not up to the task", that child will unmistakably grow up with a negative self-worth. This is why good intra-personal awareness is so important when we evaluate our own performance in respect to our expectations.

So what is intra-personal self-awareness and why is this so important for our own mental health? Daniel Goleman (1996) writes in his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* that there are two aspects to Emotional Intelligence (EI). The first aspect is the inter-personal domain and the second are the intra-personal domain. But for the purpose of this article we will focus on the intra-personal domain.

When we engage in self-talk regarding our own objectives, accomplishments or failures, this aspect of EI is especially important. In the first instance we must become aware of our inner most thoughts and how we describe ourselves. This aspect of EI ultimately revolves around accurate self-assessment (Gill et al., 2015). In other words, do we have an accurate perception of our emotions and capabilities? Bratton (2011) wrote an article on the impact of emotional intelligence on the accuracy of self-awareness and leadership performance where in he describes self-awareness as a person's ability to "accurately understand themselves, their emotions, motives and goals, to trust their own judgement and to take confident decisions, realistically appraise their skills, aptitudes and abilities and be able to use feedback to improve their performance" (pp 127).

This ultimately begs the question: Are we doing ourselves justice when we do not take these aspects into account when we assess our failures? Can we simply see our failures as an aspect of misfortune or bad luck? Eventually, we have to accept our own mortality! Yes, we do often underestimate our own judgment, skills and abilities. We simply can't know and do it all. We do make bad judgments from time to time and we also lack the skills and knowledge to succeed at everything. We are human after all. I appreciate the way Hogan (2013) describes this factor of EI as the ability to recognise the "Human Factor" when engaging with people. This is applicable to us all, our relationships and prospective clients. Please don't misunderstand my argument. Fear of failure is ultimately one of the best motivating factors to success (Borquez, 2009), but our fear of failure should not result in poor mental health.

After completing my Masters in Pastoral Counselling and later qualifying as a professional Psychometrist, I thought I could face every challenge patients bring through my door. But boy was I wrong! Even after completing my PhD I often find myself facing the most mindboggling life experiences people face. There are problems I never read about in books or journal articles or heard of in class. I still often find myself without words, unable to respond with any confidence with some problems people face.

I quickly realized that I must at times confess that I have to do some research to be able to give proper advice and counselling. One of my professors once told us in class: "It is better to say that I don't know rather to find yourself in a situation where you have to admit you were wrong." I want to pass this wisdom onto you as my fellow future Psychologists. Never over estimate yourself, regardless of your high standards in the quest for knowledge in human behaviour. Utilise self-awareness to accurately assess and develop yourself. When we do this right we can recognise our development areas and learn from our mistakes and failures. It is also a case a being humble; just like every other individual we are not immune to make mistakes and to fail. Self talk enables us to produce the perspectives of ourselves within private conversations and to incorporate these perspectives into our emotional problem solving, and into our concept of self (Depape et al., 2006). We, however, should create perspectives of ourselves as positively as possible. Therefore take care of your inner child, not by criticising and blaming yourself, but to learn from your shortcomings. Use your failures to learn about life. This will ultimately evolve to knowledge you otherwise would not have gained.

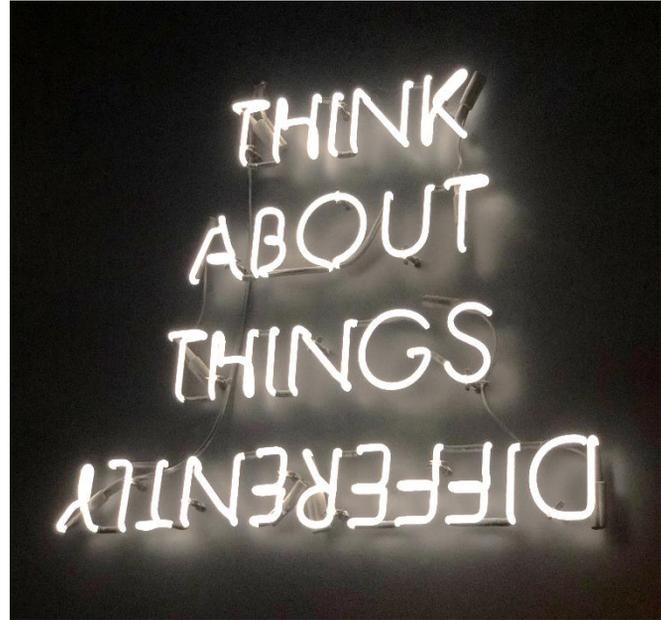
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The Psychology of Learning: Creating Desirable Difficulties

By Cagla Titiz Köse, MSc Psychology student

Research has shown that how we learn and how we think we learn can be very different from each other, and our instinct when it comes to long term retention can be misleading. Desirable difficulties (Björk, 1994) are certain difficulties which have been observed to greatly improve long-term retention and so should be integrated into the learning process. Learning with difficulties is easier said than done. Because when learning is difficult, people make more errors. However, it's through these errors and difficulties, that, a deeper processing is achieved. The following article will evaluate these desirable difficulty manipulations and the last section will describe how to apply them to your online studies.



Retrieval Practice

Retrieval practice is a testing strategy in which bringing information to mind boosts learning as the individual has to generate the information (Rowland & DeLosh, 2014). Pulling that information from an individual's mind improves their memory and the learning of that information, known as a testing effect. The thought of testing tightens people's stomachs because tests are so often hard. Paradoxically, it is just this difficulty that makes them such effective study tools. The retrieval practices are different from assessments, no-stakes of low-stakes testing is the key to optimize learning, where the emphasis is retrieving and not assessing. Generation effects and using tests as learning events has been beneficial in the long term. Retrieval, in effect, is a powerful "memory modifier" (Bjork, 1975).

Pre-Testing

Kornell et. al. (2009) conducted an experiment where participants were shown a cue word (e.g., whale) and they were asked to guess a weak associate (e.g., mammal). Most of the participants failed to find the right answer. However, when compared to a read-only condition, it was observed that unsuccessful retrieval attempts and taking challenging tests-rather than avoiding errors, enhanced future learning. Robert Björk mentioned in an interview that this experiment is set up so that the majority will guess something other than the correct response, which then produces better recall later. While guessing, they are activating their knowledge network which enhances the mapping of that information.

Forgetting as a Friend of Learning

Storage strength is a pure accumulation process; when information gets entrenched, and achieves a certain level of storage strength, it remains there. But, no matter how well-learned information is, with a long period of disuse its retrieval strength will decay, ultimately becoming forgotten (Bjork & Bjork, 1992). What is more important is, if there is a need to relearn this information, then it will be relearned at a rapid rate to be resurrected. As we use our memories, the things we recall become more recallable. Therefore, the more a person forgets something, the better they can ultimately remember it.

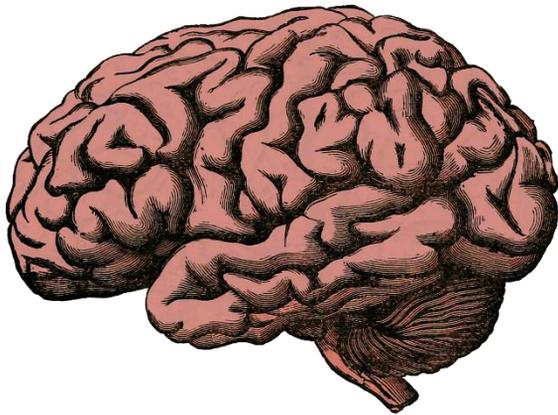
Interleaving and Spacing

Interleaving is switching between ideas while you study to highlight the links, similarities and differences among those categories (Kang & Pashler, 2012; Kornell & Bjork, 2008). For example, alternating topics to learn (i.e. ABCABC instead of AABBCB). Spacing is spreading out study sessions instead of marathon studying, also known as *distributed practice*. It is often contrasted with massing, which is studying for one or two sessions over a short period of time. Studies show that spacing leads to better long-term retention of information than massing (Kapler, Weston, & Wiseheart, 2015).

These two ideas can be combined, as demonstrated by a study by Kornell and Björk (2008) where they evaluated the effect of study schedules on inductive learning. Paintings by 12 artists were presented either blocked or interleaved. Afterwards, participants were shown new paintings by each artists and asked to identify which artist had painted each new painting. The study showed that interleaving artists' paintings had led to better performance than did blocking, which is important, because it also revealed that spacing enhances conceptual learning, the transfer of what they have learned to a new painting.

How to Apply Desirable Difficulties to your own Learning

The key lies in learning how we learn effectively, so try implementing desirable difficulties where you can in your own learning. Start small, perhaps incorporating one desirable difficulty at a time. There is no magic formula to perfectly optimize learning; instead, here are a couple of ways you can work on add these evidenced-based techniques into your learning, some of which are taken from Agarwal and Bain (2019):



Pre-test brain dump: Before each lesson take a piece of paper and 'brain dump': write down everything you already know about the topic.

Two-things: Before each lesson, write down two things you want to learn, repeated after finishing the lesson, write down two things you have learned.

Retrieve-take: After the lesson, take notes by outlining the important facts: don't go into the detail, and don't look at the materials. Cross-check these afterwards.

DIY Retrieval Questions: During this 'retrieve-take', form the information into *factual* questions on flashcards and have someone else quiz you on these.

Free recall: After the lesson, write down everything you can remember related to a topic, known as free recall. Cross-check this with the lecture materials later.

Continual retrieval practices: Continue to practice a *brain dump* as you progress through a module to sustain your recall.

Change where you study: According to psychologist Smith et al., (1978) you are more likely to remember what you study, when you change the place where you study.

School: A Change is Due?

Maksim Peshev, BA (Hons) HRM and Psychology student

School is a considerable part of most of the individuals' life, a place where a child spends most of their childhood. Thus, it is only reasonable for parents to be worried if they're making the right choice sending their child to one or the other. After all, ten years later you expect to see an adolescent with at least an outline of a plan on how they expect to succeed in life. Accordingly, children experience immense pressure from their parents and the school system to perform well academically, which is a known contributor to students' poor well-being (Ma et al., 2018; Rutherford, 2015). It is, perhaps, in everyone's interest to instead focus on exploring students' interest and gaining skills they will use later in life as that age is the perfect time for a person to decide what they like and what they enjoy spending time doing. Looking at the five-factor model of personality (Judge, Rodell, Klinger, Simon, & Crawford, 2013), it's evident that we all differ on the scale and the main idea is that everyone's set of personal traits also dictates the aptitude towards a certain profession (Barrick et al., 2013).

Since schools are mostly focused on theoretical learning rather than application of skills, we can see that good grades only demonstrate a decent learning ability which is not, in any way, predictive of success in life. In their study of successful people, Duckworth et al. (2012) notes that success often correlates with conscientiousness and concludes that it's resourceful to "anticipate and accommodate, rather than remediate, domain-specific deficits in conscientious behaviour", meaning that if any assistance is to be provided for one's future accomplishment, it should be done as early as possible. As per the Job Demands-Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001), each profession comes with a set of demands, to which every person may be more or less aligned simply by their design or upbringing. Thus, the best way to use the time spent in school is to allow the students to grow, develop and, most importantly, understand themselves and their tendencies. Curious in nature, people need to try different things and choose what's best for them - we need to treat school more like a "buffet" kind of setting – when it's time to go wild and explore your options and learn about the concepts that attract you the most.

So Do We Need a Change in our School System?

Not really. A change is needed in how we see the "good" and "bad" grades: they are not "success" vs "failure", rather "interest/alignment" vs "indifference". School professionals and parents should capture what it is that fascinates their child more than anything else. It can be argued that straight A's don't reveal anything except a strong result motivation and a good memory. Therefore, instead of measuring a child's success by their academic performance, it is more suitable to pay attention to what really matters – the skills that will prepare them to face the future.



In conclusion I'd like to share my vision with you: a world where the focus isn't placed on a child's academic achievements and where every person is happy at their workplace; happy because they are great at what they do and it fulfils them in every way. It's a world where everyone is proud of what they do, regulating work-related conflict and stress. That world is merely a generation away from us, and the key to it is simply allowing and helping our children to choose their own path.

If you would like the full reference list for this article, please contact the Editor at hstokes@arden.ac.uk.

Can a child with Reactive Attachment Disorder Function in Mainstream Education?

Alicia Hughes, BSc Psychology Student

What is Reactive Attachment Disorder?

Primarily, this article must establish a definition of Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) before we consider its relevance within mainstream education. RAD is an disorder that can have 'lasting, damaging effects reaching into other relationships if appropriate, consistent, and ongoing interventions are insufficient or lacking' (Herr, 2013, p3.) RAD was originally discussed by Bowlby (1955) who described children with RAD to have no remorse or sense of morality, with an incapability to form relationships. He concluded that any form of education would be unachievable (Thomas, 2019).

Has mainstream education evolved and developed enough to oppose Bowlby's (1955) conclusion? Is it possible that mainstream education could actually support a child with

RAD? This article will first look at the characteristics of RAD and will contemplate whether the two treatment aims highlighted by the Counselling Directory (2019); 'that the child in question, and the rest of the family, are safe,' and 'to encourage the child to form a healthy and loving bond,' can be ingrained within mainstream education from a humanistic approach.



What are the characteristics of a child with RAD?

Children with RAD often demonstrate behaviour that may be deemed aggressive, developmentally inappropriate and disturbed, alongside a lack of appropriate social interaction. Without being provoked, children may display verbally and physically aggressive behaviour towards both peers and surrounding adults. Unfortunately, in more severe cases, serious injuries can happen, such as broken bones and bruising. They may also kill small animals on a daily basis, such as bees, worms and small rodents. At times, children with RAD can display sensory behaviours, such as eating with hands, eating glue and smearing faeces. Socially, some children choose to only associate with peers of the different sex. At times, they can be noted to kiss, stroke and inappropriately touch others, alongside asking to see their private parts or show their own. These behaviours often result in high exclusion rates so we must contemplate whether mainstream education is the most beneficial environment for children with RAD.

Is the mainstream educational system a benefit or a hindrance to children with RAD?

In opposition to Bowlby's (1955) point of view, is it possible that the education system has advanced enough to support a child with RAD? Woolfolk (1998) describes how mainstream education should address behavioural issues by teaching 'directly about positive social behaviours,' incorporating 'lessons on social ethics' and discussing 'the effects of antisocial actions' (Woolfolk, 1998, p 91). Children with RAD can be keen to show affection to their peers, often overly, which may suggest that they need to feel loved and wanted. If a Humanistic approach is assumed, then a mainstream educational setting may have the potential to demonstrate the 'importance of feelings' and 'open communication,' alongside normalising 'a caring and respectful' attitude (Woolfolk, 1998, p498). Similarly, Hooley et al. (2015) discussed Bowlby's (1980) theory in depth, in how a child should be considered to be in control of 'the course of his or her future' (Hooley et al. 2015, p79). If these two suggestions are considered, then a mainstream educational environment may be ideal for modelling appropriate social behaviours to these children and providing them with the opportunities to develop these skills and to take control of their own direction.

Segal and Jaffe (2019) adopted a biological approach and discussed their insights in infant brain development and attachment. They explained how the primary caretaker can manage a child's emotional stability to ensure the child's nervous system becomes "securely attached" (Segal and Jaffe, 2019). Boyd and Bee (2015) expand on this by emphasising the importance of the quality of early relationships and highlighting how it is these attachments shape later attachments. It may be possible that a mainstream educational setting could provide these children with the chance to build relationships and to learn boundaries.

But what are the negatives of a mainstream education setting for children with RAD? Herr (2013) describes the behaviour of a child with RAD to be 'disturbed and developmentally inappropriate' (Herr, 2013, p2). It is fundamental that the well-being and safety of the children and adults, within the educational setting, must be acknowledged as the priority. The RAD child's behaviour may be dangerous, putting both the child and surrounding people at risk. Unfortunately, within a mainstream school, staff are often observed to spend a significant amount of time restraining children with RAD, for both their own safety and that of others, which accordingly results in the disruption of the lessons. In relation to this, it may be fundamental to consider 'what the impacts might be on the achievements of pupils with SEN and on their peers in mainstream schools' (Dyson et al. 2004, p11). Due to such disruptive behaviour, children may be academically behind, thus a mainstream education setting may not meet their needs.

Conclusions

Justifiably, I propose that children with RAD be educated in a safer, risk assessed environment. Herr (2013) explains how people with RAD 'have long lasting difficulties that they must overcome to enable them to be productive members of society', thus he may benefit from being in a setting, of which can provide psychotherapy and family therapy (Herr, 2013, p63). After considering both the pros and cons highlighted, I suggest that a child with RAD would flourish within a specialised setting, where staff are trained to address their specific needs and can provide them with continuous opportunities to develop basic social skills.

Flexibility and Adaptability of Primary School Classrooms: Supporting Individuals with Attachment Difficulties

Hannah Sharrad, MSc Psychology Student

“What is the matter with them today?”

“...because I said so, that’s why!”

“Everyone else is getting on with it, so can you!”



For anyone who has spent time within a primary classroom, these are phrases that are heard far too frequently. Teachers in the staffroom moaning that ‘there’s always one’ as they eat their lunch, gossiping about the horrors that ‘little Jimmy’ has been causing in the previous lesson. Unfortunately, what many of these teachers may not be aware of is that ‘little Jimmy’ may not ever feel truly safe or secure in his scary, mixed-up

world and his outbursts of defiance, refusal or even aggression could be a desperate cry for help. One that is so often going unheard.

In 1969, John Bowlby developed Attachment Theory which was then further researched by Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth, Blehar & Waters et al, 1978). Attachment is seen as the affectional bond between a child and their primary caregiver and starts forming over the first 18 months of a child’s life (Bowlby, 1969). Within this time, the child’s Internal Working Model (IWM) is being constructed, painting a picture of themselves and their self-worth alongside their thoughts and feelings towards others. Three ‘types’ of attachment were defined from the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth: secure, anxious-ambivalent and anxious-avoidant (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004). This later was increased to four, with the addition of disorganised-disorientated attachment (Main & Solomon, 1990).

For children who have grown-up in an insecure setting and relied on primary caregivers who have not attended to their needs in a supportive, caring manor, their IWM may have been moulded to make them believe people are untrustworthy and they are not worthy of love and care (Kennedy & Kenney, 2004). Therefore, as self-protection, they may appear ‘difficult’ in a classroom, disruptive, challenging (whatever that may mean) and possibly aggressive towards others (O’Neill, Guenette & Kitchenham, 2010). Usually, it is these children who may be sent to the Headteacher, stay in at playtime or never receive an award for any of their achievements, because their achievements are not what is perceived as worthy. Having worked with children given such labels I acknowledge this can be challenging at times. However, this is a classic example of how classroom culture creates a ‘one system fits all’ environment; expecting children to change and adapt to fit expectations, not the other way around.

Kenney and Kennedy (2004) have an enlightening view of supporting children with attachment difficulties in the classroom, and it all begins with the teacher taking time to look inside themselves and reflect on their own attachment style and how this may affect their relationship with certain children. Depending on our own attachment styles, we may, as practitioners, find some attachment difficulties quite challenging to emphasise with. However, in doing this, the child who is displaying such behaviours is receiving feedback, further reinforcing their IWM and their belief that the world is a frightening place where no one can be trusted (Mikulincer, Shaver & Pereg, 2003).

Pianta and Steinberg (1992) discuss the importance of the teacher-child relationship and how this can positively affect a child's relationships with peers and other adults, helping to adapt their IWM, giving them a feeling of security. Surely something we are all entitled to! Through this positive relationship, children have shown a reduction in behaviour problems and an increase in academic success, not to mention a reduction in anxiety as referenced by Mikulincer, Shaver and Berant (2012). If you think about Maslow and his hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) these effects are obvious really! There on the bottom two levels of the triangle, are the physiological and safety needs; nothing else can, should or would develop without those vital building blocks. Kennedy and Kennedy (2004) further support a positive child-teacher relationship explaining how that may be the only positive, supportive adult model that the child has within their life; therefore, it is crucial that the adult within the two-way relationship takes the time to reflect on their own behaviour and try to empathise with how the child may feel.

To do this, teachers must first understand themselves and their reactions to certain behaviours, but then to understand the child suffering (and I write that word with poignancy because it is a suffering) with attachment difficulties and acquaint oneself with the person, on an individualised basis, not just a score on a data sheet (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004). O'Neill et al. (2010) concur, explaining how children suffering with attachment difficulties require a strong, positive relationship with an adult who is caring and supportive, with a stable environment. Developing this further, they refer to the use of a PACE stance which focuses on elements of playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy when supporting children with attachment difficulties. This, along with a secure environment must be a good place to start.

The iceberg model demonstrates this well. The behaviour that is seen is just the tip of the metaphorical iceberg. Yes, that must be dealt with, but what is underneath the murky surface is much more important to take note of. It is there where interventions and support, such like those mentioned by O'Neill et al (2010) can make the biggest difference to the child and their future emotional development.

To summarise, Bowlby and Ainsworth developed a crucial theory which can be used to understand and support children within a primary classroom who may struggle emotionally and socially. Through absolutely no fault of their own they may not have had the support and guidance required when they were younger to adapt an IWM of trust, safety and resilience. It is therefore, a teachers job - as much as it is to teach long division and an -ed suffix- to support these children and show them they are worthy and they do have a secure place where they are valued and listened to.

CAREER SPOTLIGHT : EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

What is the role of an Educational Psychologist?

EP's support children and young people between the ages of 0-25 who are experiencing problems which may hinder their participation in school activities and their learning. They use psychological theory and research to enhance the individual's socio-emotional well-being through consulting with parents, teachers, social workers and professionals involved in the child's education. They also offer a range of interventions to teachers and parents, and provide training to teachers and other professionals on socio-emotional or behavioural issues. Another aspect of an EP's role is to conduct research and to advise educational policies based on research.



What is the relevance of my Psychology degree?

Your degree is directly relevant to this position as it is accredited by the BPS which is essential for postgraduate courses in Educational Psychology. The responsibilities of an Educational Psychologist directly align with the knowledge and skills gained through your degree:

- To carry out assessments based on observations of the child and consultation with other professionals.
- The ability to write formal reports.
- To conduct active research which informs practice and policies.
- To apply psychological theory when delivering interventions which promote socio-emotional well-being and behaviour management.
- To be able to manage time effectively, work independently independent, to be self-motivated and self-aware.

How do I become an Educational Psychologist?

After gaining a BPS-accredited psychology degree, you will then need to complete a BPS-accredited Doctorate in Educational Psychology (in England). Entry onto Doctorate courses can be competitive so a good degree is required, as well as a minimum of one year's full-time experience working in either education, health, social-care, youth justice or other childcare settings where there is direct contact with children and/or young people.

Experience as a teacher is also valuable, though other relevant work experiences include; teaching assistant, assistant Psychologist, learning mentor, careers adviser, early years worker and social work assistant, to name a few.

The first year of the Doctorate is heavily study-based, followed by two more years which are predominantly practice-based in a placement within the local authority Educational Psychology services. Upon completion, you will need to register with the HCPC.

GETTING TO KNOW THE PSYCHOLOGY TEAM: LOUISE LAKHA



Can you summarise who you are and your role at AU?

Hi. I'm Louise Lakha. I am one of the lecturers for both blended learning and distance learning. I teach mainly on the Criminology and Psychology program at the Holborn campus. So far, I have taught Biological and Cognitive Psychology, Key Studies, Social Psychology, and Contemporary Developmental Psychology, as well as Research Methods II for Distance Learning. The Holborn Study Centre is a great place to work. The staff are friendly and supportive and the places buzzes with students combining their busy lives with a determination to study hard and succeed.

Can you tell the readers about your main research interests?

My main area of research focuses on understanding how we allocate attention to our visual environment. After my first degree, I went to Birmingham University where I studied on their Cognitive Science MSc

course. I was excited to get the opportunity to do my MSc project for part of the Ministry of Defence, based in Malvern. I carried out experiments to test how efficiently multiple targets could be detected from their latest displays. This was the earlier part of the 1990s and their 3D displays seemed so futuristic! The Ministry of Defence funded my PhD and I went on to specialize in understanding how we pick out multiple objects in our visual environment based on different types of features. I worked on a couple of research grants after my PhD: investigating brand categorization at Warwick University and the phenomena of change blindness at Brunel University. It was a great moment when, for the first time, I got a journal paper published.

If you had to choose just one, what is your favourite academic experience?

I was at Brunel University for over six years, both as a researcher and then as a lecturer. It was during a time of great development, in which they got joint ownership of an fMRI scanner with Royal Holloway, Reading and Surrey. I felt so lucky to get the opportunity to be trained up to do brain-imaging. It was incredible to finally see what was going on in the brains of our participants, when they were doing our experiments!

What is your favourite thing about being part of AU?

My best moments at Arden University have been focused on my experiences of teaching. I have met so many interesting people and been impressed by the desire that they have to develop their learning and change their future. It's great being able to help make it happen.

Psychopathology and the Flawed Research Methodology

Annie Foxall, MSc Psychology student and Criminology Lecturer



Annie Foxall

Psychopathy is a concept that fascinates and horrifies both academics and those within the public - a word that is becoming used in almost daily language, in the media and literature. Watts et al. (2016) cites Hare (1991/2003) in explaining psychopathy as being a cluster of differing character traits, inclusive of superficial charm, impulsivity and irresponsibility, amongst other behaviour features. But what does it mean and what are the flaws in research surrounding this topic? There are a multitude of researchers who consider the psychopath and its existence, and this article will consider the flaws in some of this research.

What does one do when studying Psychopaths?

Vize, Lynam, Lamkin, Miller and Pardini (2016) undertook a longitudinal study to ascertain whether certain factors should be eliminated from the diagnoses and definition of psychopathy, namely fearless dominance, and whether the focus should be upon other factors. Results indicated that early personality is a good predictor of later antisocial

outcomes, as are maternal reports. Kiehl (2006) specifically considered brain disturbances in psychopathy and specific issues that indicate that the brains of psychopaths differentiate from those of 'normal' individuals. Langevin and his colleagues (1988) provide further neurological evidence for these differences; CT scanning revealed that approximately 50% of violent offenders had structural abnormalities relating specifically to the temporal lobe regions. Blake, Pincus and Buckner (1995) also used CT scans on those who had committed murder and found that 9 of 19 individuals had brain atrophy.

Flaws in the Research

Now this is all well and good as some of the results from these pieces of work were relatively successful in demonstrating differences between the psychopath and the 'normal' individual in both behaviour as well as brain structure. However this research is quite considerably flawed. All three of these pieces of research, as well as countless others, failed to include women within their research. This presents a problem and feeds into the current media stereotype that the psychopathic population consists of males. This does need to be addressed in future work as the absence of female-inclusive samples could generate gender bias as well as could be argued to be unethical in nature.

One study that is inclusive of the female portion of the population is work undertaken by Sevecke, Franke, Kosson and Krischer (2016). They studied environmental factors, namely early traumatising, in the development of psychopathy. Males and females aged between 14 and 19 who were incarcerated took part and those with mental health concerns and drug or alcohol issues were excluded from the study to prevent these factors producing bias in the results. Psychopathy was assessed by the youth version of the Psychopathy Checklist and childhood trauma was also assessed to consider physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect and emotional neglect. Physical abuse seemed to be less of a factor than emotional dysregulation in correlating with psychopathy. However, gender was the biggest factor in predicting psychopathic traits, with males scoring significantly higher than females (Sevecke et al., 2016). This suggests a difference in psychopathy dependent upon gender and provides justification for further research into these differences.

We have discussed the work of Vize, Lynam, Lamkin, Miller and Pardini (2016) who undertook longitudinal work and utilised self-report studies but only on those already displaying problematic behaviour. This is another problematic factor of the research undertaken in psychopathy; it is undertaken on those already incarcerated and/or within the forensic setting, meaning it lacks any external validity and it is difficult to decide whether such damages to the brain or abnormalities in behaviour occurred prior to criminality or post-criminality. In contrast, Lantrip, Towns, Roth and Giancola (2016) has greater external validity as they undertook self-report studies with the general public, identifying links between psychopathic traits and executive functions. It also stated that, findings from within a community sample as opposed to a forensic or psychiatric one demonstrate that some executive functions related to psychopathic personality traits and exist minus the antisocial behaviours (Lantrip et al., 2016) The results of this study indicate that psychopathic traits do exist within the general public and psychopathy does exist externally to the criminal setting.

However, this work is also potentially flawed as Vize et al. (2016) used self-report surveys, as do many other studies investigating psychopathy. The issues that exist when utilising self-report surveys are that they demonstrate a significant level of bias from the point of view of both those doing the reporting and those doing the interpreting. Respondents may indicate what they feel is the correct answer, or a more desirable answer, as opposed to a true and accurate answer. When undertaking interpretation, researchers may perceive the answer to mean one thing, when in fact it means another, so this poses a further issue of meaning and intent, this then impacts upon the reliability of the work undertaken.

Whilst there are numerous studies that look at psychopathy and use psychopathy measurement tools as well as various brain scanning and imaging to identify abnormalities, there are some flaws within the research. Whilst there is certainly evidence to suggest that there is such a mental health disorder as psychopathy, it is evident that further research is needed to establish its actual existence within a variety of settings. Not only does research need to be done on both males and females, the latter being severely under researched, but further research needs to be done working with the general population. Issues with self-report surveys need to be addressed as these do produce, as previously stated, a high level of bias. Further measures that are more scientific in nature need to be considered and more widely used, such as MRI's and CT scans. This would then give a true representation on psychopathology.

PUBLISHING AND EMPLOYABILITY: WRITING ACADEMIC BLOGS

Sophie Ward, Deputy Programme Team Leader and Lecturer

In the December issue of the School of Psychology Newsletter, Lecturer James Bartlett covered the importance and process of communicating research through peer-reviewed journals. In this issue I will be focusing on blogging, a method of communication now increasingly utilised by academics to disseminate research. I will outline what blogs are, followed by the advantages of publishing on a blog, how to write an entry, why you might create or contribute, and why you should be cautious.

What is A Blog?

A blog (weblog) is a website that is regularly updated by either an individual, or group of people, and contains an array of different entries, including topical articles, online discussions, and personal experiences.

Why Publish on A Blog?

Unlike writing a journal article, writing a blog entry is much less time consuming, both for the writer, the processor, and the reader. The writing process itself can help you to refine your thinking and writing style, which can be particularly helpful if you are part way through a project. Moreover, when done effectively, publishing on a relevant and appropriate blog can facilitate global conversation and public engagement, encourage regular, constructive and relaxed feedback, enhance reputation, and divert readers to additional academic publications which may otherwise be lost in the world of academia.

How Do I Write A Blog Entry?

Unless you have created your own blog, the first action you should take is to find a reputable blog that is appropriate for your research/ topic area and aimed at your target audience. You will then need to contact the blog creator/editors with a brief outline of your research/topic to see whether they are interested in publishing your entry, and if they are, then it is time to start writing...

While the content of your entry will vary depending on your topic, there are some important things you should always consider:

- **The title** – Does it stand out/draw the reader in? Is it too ambiguous?
- **Your audience** – Who are they? Will they be able to relate? Will they understand complex terminology?
- **Your tone** – What tone of voice will you be adopting? You must decide on your tone and stick to it!
- **Your narrative** - Is it clear? Does it have a logical flow?
- **The length** – Is it too short or too long? Most blog entries are moderate in length from 50-500 words, albeit this can vary.

You may also want to include your own personal experience/s. Remember, you should be professional but also personable.



Sophie Ward

Should I Create A Blog or Contribute?

Depending on your goal/s, you may choose to create your own blog, become an administrator, or external contributor. For example, if your goal is to share your own experience as a researcher over a long period of time you might consider creating a personal blog. If your aim is to disseminate research and facilitate occasional discussions becoming an external contributor may be more appropriate.

If you wish to start creating your own blog, you may want to take a look at the following platforms:

[WordPress](#)

[Blogger](#)

[PebblePad](#)

Why Should I Be Cautious?

Publishing on a blog often means releasing your research into the public domain in a way that is less controlled, and thus may be reproduced elsewhere without your consent. It is important that you find out whether your institution/ organisation are happy for you to do this, and that you do not release anything without careful consideration.



Image taken from [Flickr](#)

For an example of a blog entry written by Sophie herself, please see *Employee Disengagement – Could Frustration be to Blame?* Published on Engage for Success:

<https://engageforsuccess.org/employee-disengagement>

Dr Gail Steptoe-Warren: The BPS Division of Occupational Psychology Conference (2020)

I attended the Division of Occupational Psychology Conference hosted by the British Psychological Society in January 2020. This is the main UK conference event for Occupational Psychologists in the UK. The conference had over 400 attendees with over 140 being students. I presented 2 sessions on the new Stage 2 Qualification (2019) in Occupational Psychology to potential and current candidates. It was great to see the number of potential new practitioners in training for Occupational Psychology as these are the future of our discipline.



Gail running a session on the Stage 2 qualification

It was also good to see the diversity in topic areas from personal resilience and well-being, work design and organisational change, to working in a virtual team environment. These topics are interesting but also make us think about how the world of work is changing and how organisations, teams and employees need to adapt. This represents fundamental changes in how we work and how we view work. Some questions emerged for me including how do we ensure an inclusive virtual environment for employees? how do we remote manage employees? how do we ensure the health and wellbeing of employees when working remotely? how do we integrate remote workers into the culture and values of an organisation. These are areas that require further research and ones that could become dissertation projects for our Arden University Psychology Students. Not only would we need to understand how we change how we think about work but also how we change behaviours to respond to these different working practices.

We are in a time where there is a move away from large buildings which house employees to a virtual environment that needs different skill sets to encourage conversations, to build a culture of oneness and where there is a move from presenteeism at work to delivery of outcomes. Whilst this sounds like employees may have more autonomy we also need to be mindful that the outcomes we are setting are challenging and achievable to motivate people, but that there is acknowledgement that when working remotely that work and life boundaries can be blurred, especially as we work in a switched on and accessible world. The need for training in switching between work and family/social life is important in ensuring employees get downtime to ensure that they are both physical and mentally healthy.

On reflection of my time at conference, I enjoyed the presentations I attended and the opportunity to network with others who are interested in Occupational Psychology, but importantly it generated in me ideas of how the discipline may need to reconsider approaches to work. Attending conferences is important in the development of our knowledge – I would highly recommend attending conferences to broaden your knowledge as well as your network.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Arden School of Psychology Events

Lunchtime Lecture Series

How do Parents of Autistic Children Experience ABA Intervention? An IPA Study

Holly Stokes, 4th March, 2020, 1pm UK Time

Autism is a idiosyncratic disorder, making it difficult for parents to find the best intervention for their child. Holly will discuss her qualitative research centred around parents experiences with diagnosis, intervention decision-making and, specifically, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) intervention - an evidence-based intervention based on behaviourist principles.

Revenge Pornography: Non-Consensual, Online, Contested

Dr Matthew Hall, 1st April 2020, 1pm UK Time

Matthew will show the complex ways in which perpetrators invoke, and deploy, gender- and sexuality-based discourses to blame and hurt victims. He will then present a multi-dimensional analysis of the phenomenon, considering alternative theoretical framings.

'A Day in the Life of...' Seminar Series

- **An ABA Therapist: Working with Children with Autism** by Holly Stokes, date and time TBC
- **A Clinical Psychologist** by Sarah Berger, date and time TBC

A link to join these lecture and seminar sessions will be shared at a later date.

BPS events

- Psychology in the Pub: Are idealised virtual bodies as potentially harmful? Manchester, UK: 22nd June, 2020, 6:30-9:00pm.
- Psychology in the Pub: Time banking for Positive Mental Health. Manchester, UK: 14th April, 2020, 6:30 – 7:45pm
- Psychology in the Pub: The psychology of conspiracy theories. Leeds, UK: 10th March, 2020, 7:00-8:00pm

For other events including conferences, workshops, seminars and webinars, please visit the [American Psychological Association](#) and [British Psychological Society](#) websites.

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Contributing to the next issue of the newsletter

I would like to thank all contributors to this edition of the School of Psychology newsletter. If you would like to contribute a topical article or news item related to Psychology for the next edition, please contact myself at hstokes@arden.ac.uk for more information. I look forward to hearing from you!

Next Issue: April 2020.