SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER: CONVERSATIONS IN PSYCHOLOGY

Comments from the Editor

Welcome to issue nine of the newsletter! First in this issue is the Psychology news where we welcome some more new starters and highlight the achievements and Ph.D. completion by our team. To conclude the news, we introduce exciting new course developments to the Psychology programs that the School is offering for 2021.

Next, we delve into this issue's thought-provoking articles contributed by students and the Psychology team. Including interesting articles spanning topics such as paranormal belief systems, defence mechanisms during the lockdown, and important topical issues such as social media and depression, domestic abuse, and transgender and gender non-conforming people. Daniella Nayyar gives her insight into applied social psychology by sharing her experience of her rewarding role as a mentor for 'Voices of Colour'. For any aspiring occupational psychologists, a career in Occupational Psychology is examined for the **career spotlight**. We learn more about Kieron Rooney in more detail in our **getting to know the Psychology team**.

As we say goodbye to 2020, the team reflects on all the good things that have happened this year to spread some positivity, despite the unfortunate situation that we find ourselves in. Before ending on some thank you's for your contributions to the successful production of another year of the newsletter. If you missed the 'The Day in the Life Of a Clinical Psychologist' webinar with guest speaker Dr. Satbinder Bhogal, there is a link to a recording session of the webinar that is available to watch any time. Finally, the issue ends on some **dates for your diary** including links to free online BPS webinars to book for next year.

All that is left is to wish you all a well-earnt restful break and an enjoyable new year! We are looking forward to seeing you back in 2021 and for any new students joining us next year, we cannot wait to welcome you into Arden for the new year.

ARDEN PSYCHOLOGY

Follow us on Twitter!

@ArdenUniPsych

If you would like to contribute to the next issue, please contact the editorial team, Emily Blakemore (eblakemore@arden.ac.uk). We welcome any feedback and content suggestions also.

Emily Blakemore, Editor.

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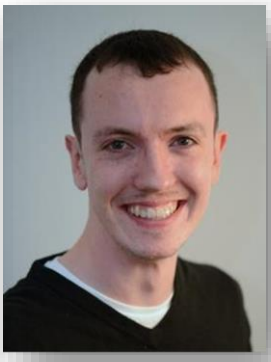
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWS

WELCOMES

Welcome to our new starters! We have two new lecturers, Lynne Hemingway and Alastair Pipkin and one new part-time lecturer, Alison Brown joining the team.

Alison Brown

Lynne Hemingway



Dr Alastair Pipkin

WELCOME ON BOARD

We want to say a massive welcome to Graphic design, social science, Criminology and joint programmes into the School. An inclusive name is still ongoing to reflect our new and expanding team!

CONGRATS

Congratulations to Daniella on her promotion from Associate lecturer to full-time lecturer in Psychology!

A big congratulations to lecturer **Dr Rachel Marchant** for having her PhD amendments approved - Well done Dr Marchant!

'CRAFTERNOON' EVENT

To raise money for **@MindCharity** the School ran a fun lunchtime Crafternoon session Zoom fundraising event where we spent the afternoon crafting.

<u>All together we raised £90 for charity!</u>

A big thank you to all those who joined, crafted and donated to the event!

The end product of the Christmas card that Emily crafted during the event.

NEXT YEAR

2021 COURSE DEVELOPMENTS

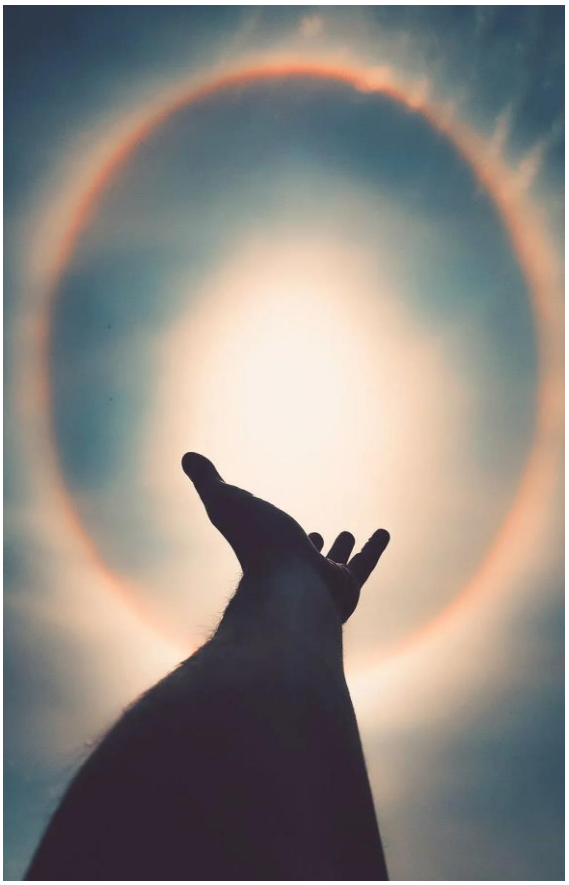
The School is looking at starting two new programmes in 2021 - BSc (Hons) Psychology with optionality of modules at Level 6 and BSc (Hons) Psychology with counselling.

Are we nurturing a belief in the paranormal?

Robin Lee Lynskey, BSc (Hons) Psychology

Are we nurturing a belief in the unbelievable? A belief in psychic powers and the paranormal is not an uncommon one. A 2011 YouGov survey questioned 2500 British people and found that around a quarter of these had consulted a psychic, and that half of this group believed that the psychic in question had genuine ability. In the USA, this number is even higher; a 2018 study conducted by Chapman University concluded that around 3 quarters of Americans hold some type of belief in the paranormal. But whilst such phenomenon is widely disputed in the scientific community, is there a psychological reason for such a belief system? Are individuals predisposed to a certain type of belief, or are there other factors at work?

One possible explanation for a propensity towards a belief in psychics and the paranormal could be related to thinking styles; non-believers may think more critically, and less intuitively than believers. Alcock and Otis (1980) showed that non-believers scored significantly higher when tested on their critical thinking abilities according to the Watson and Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal Scale (1980). Other evidence has been put forward to suggest that believers are more inclined to think intuitively, as opposed to analytically. A 2005 study conducted by Aarnio & Lindeman studied University students from a variety of vocational and academic disciplines and found a positive link between intuitive thinking styles and a belief in the paranormal. It was found that vocational students were more likely to hold paranormal beliefs, and that of the University students, those who studied subjects such as medicine and psychology, were more sceptical than those studying theology and education. The length of time spent in education also impacted belief in the paranormal. Based upon this, one may assume that intelligence may be negatively correlated with a belief in the paranormal. However, this is not supported by data. A 2006 study by Stuart-Hamilton, Nayak & Priest was unable to find any link between intelligence levels and a belief in the paranormal. Additionally, intelligence is somewhat difficult to quantify. The impact that these aforementioned factors had on such beliefs however, was minimal. Therefore, we must consider other factors that may be responsible for a predisposition in paranormal beliefs. Are such beliefs rooted in childhood, as a result of our upbringing?



Our upbringing has a huge impact on who we will grow up to be as an adult. Could there be a correlation in the belief a parent or guardian holds, and the likelihood that their child will hold the same belief? Studies suggest that this may be the case. Braswell, Rosengren & Berenbaum (2012) studied 509 parents in the United states. The children were aged between 3 and 7. The result of this study found that paranormal and or magical beliefs held by a parent will be encouraged in their children. A correlation was found in religious beliefs being encouraged by more religious parents, and interestingly, this was negatively correlated with the encouragement of more scientific beliefs. It could be argued that religiosity and paranormal beliefs are

related due to the supernatural content that underlies and is at the heart of many religious texts. Due to the commonality between the two, the idea that religiosity and paranormal belief are correlated is something that is worth examining in more depth; one would expect to find a link between the two. A 2005 study by Hergovitch, Schott & Arendasy attempting to study any possible correlation between religious beliefs and paranormal belief supports this. In this study, which took place in Austria, 596 students were given a questionnaire on paranormal beliefs and religiosity. A correlation could be observed between religiosity and a belief in the paranormal; participants who were religious were also more likely to hold paranormal beliefs. Interestingly, they also reported more propensity to paranormal belief in individuals whose religion was intrinsic (related to an organisation and not self-governed). Although reasons for this are not fully suggested, this could be due to the more prescriptive nature of organised religions, where stories that are supernatural in nature and often break the natural laws of physics, are commonplace.

To conclude, it can be seen that there are any number of reasons why an individual may believe in the paranormal, and a variety of factors which may influence that belief as they progress through life. As with many debates in psychology, it seems to come down to nature versus nurture, and in this case, nurture seems to be the prevailing factor in our belief systems. Upbringing and religiosity appear to be key factors, and although an individual's level of education may play a small role, we should be careful not to link intelligence and a belief in the paranormal too closely. We must also consider that this article has examined paranormal beliefs in Western societies only, and there may be other cultural factors that could potentially influence one's views on the subject.

Defence Mechanisms During Lockdowns

Sara Yadegari, BSc (Hons) Psychology

We have said it time and time again, 2020 has been a difficult year. Especially now, as a lot of countries work their way through the second wave of COVID-19 infections, and lockdowns and quarantine regulations are implemented in many countries. This combined with the harsher weather and the grey sky, and you have a classic case of melancholy. Suddenly, it feels like the summer never happened, weekends are even shorter than before and we need more coffee to get through the day.

As the lockdowns stretch through the autumn and winter, there is a growing concern around a decline of mental health at a large scale and across the entire population. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized depression and anxiety as common side effects of isolation, and there is a growing body of research showing the negative impact of chronic stress and limited social interactions on the health and well-being of individuals (Asim et al., 2020; Conti et al., 2020). Before COVID-19, voluntary self-isolation was only required by a small segment of population such as field researchers or expeditionists exploring unknown territories. The truth is, most individuals do not have a lot of training or mental preparation to live under lockdowns. But then again here we are, in the middle of a

a global pandemic taking it day-by-day and working our way through it. While there is good news around the development of vaccines and it seems likely that we may achieve large-scale vaccination in 2021, there is still a long way ahead and we need to ensure that we keep our mental health in check.

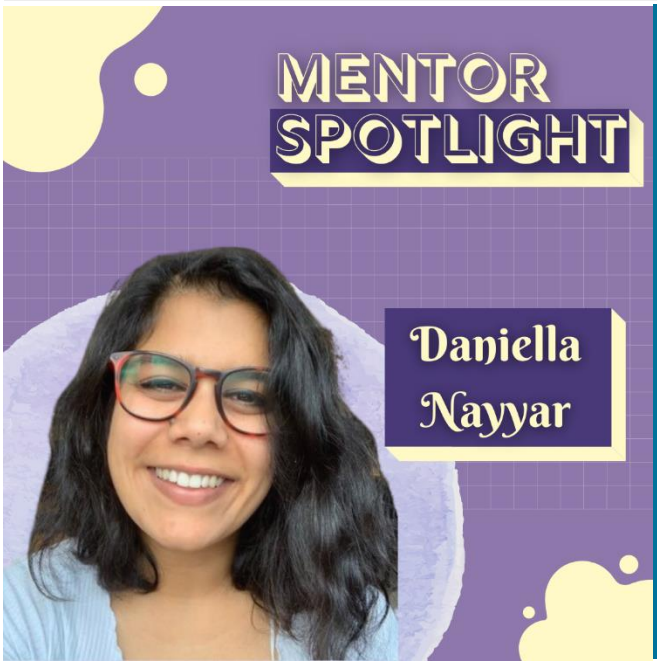
In such difficult situations, it is normal for us to arm ourselves with a series of defence mechanisms to maintain our mental balance. Since there is not much that we can do to change our circumstances, we might unconsciously channel the difficult emotions away from ourselves and onto something or someone else to reduce the burden of anxiety and stress on our psyche (Schacter, 2009). We are quite creative in seamlessly employing such defence mechanisms, and there is a long list of such mechanisms recognized by the early psychodynamic theorists such as Anna Freud (1936). Some examples of the defence mechanisms are: dissociation, projection, displacement, or intellectualization (Vaillant, 1994).

Dissociation is when we spend hours in front of the screen, on social media, or playing games, we are dissociating from life and detaching ourselves from the unpleasant reality of these days to catch a breath. When we are upset about something and lash out at people that are the closest to us, in an unconscious bid to hand over our negative emotions to someone we feel safe with, we are displacing our emotion merely to take a break from the exhaustion of life. Some of us might use intellectualization to reason with ourselves that the current situation is not so bad, that it could be worse, and that we are still lucky to be living in a privileged society with effective health care systems. Regardless of how effective we are in managing our emotions with these defence mechanisms, the truth is that we use them to turn our attention away from the underlying uncomfortable feeling, or sometimes trauma. Psychologists have categorized these defence mechanisms as neurotic or immature responses, and place them above pathological responses in terms of sophistication and effectiveness in life, but still warn against the long-term negative impact of such responses in an individual's ability to lead a satisfying and fulfilling life (Perry & Cooper, 1989).

This is not to say that if we are using neurotic defence mechanisms to deal with the complexity of life under lockdowns, we should immediately stop and sit down face-to-face with life and all its difficulties. On the contrary, perhaps right now we need to show ourselves some compassion to be able to persist and run the marathon of life during a pandemic. As discussed above, the current situation is unprecedented and there is not a single globally acceptable way to deal with it. During these tough times, we should be our own biggest allies, and treat ourselves like we would treat someone in distress, with kindness and care. Being aware of our neurotic defence mechanisms will help us to adjust the parts of our behaviours that are especially hurting us or are pointed at our loved ones and have vulnerable conversations about what we are going through. Once we gain this awareness, perhaps we can morph our responses into more conscious ones, such as humour, affiliation, or sublimation. Acknowledging the difficulties of these days will allow us to actively voice our low moods in witty and humorous ways and console others that resonate with our expressions. We could find comfort in redirecting our attention to more productive activities such as exercise or practicing a new skill. However, regardless of the type of defence mechanisms we use, the most important thing is to stay aware of them and prevent them from becoming our long-term strategy in life. This way, as the society works its way out of the pandemic, we will be able to lean back into our usual selves when this is all over, reduce the level of anxiety and stress on our psyche, and look back at this period knowing that we did the best we could in staying afloat.

Applied Social Psychology

Daniella Nayyar, Lecturer



I am an applied Social Psychologist. An applied social psychologist uses the theories created and scientifically tested from within Social Psychology to create interventions and strategies to help to improve or solve social issues that are prevalent in our society (Schneider, Gruman, Coutts, 2011). I wanted to share an experience in which I am using my research skills and access to resources as a social psychologist, in an applied way.

For the last few months, I have been volunteering as a Mentor for a newly created community action and leadership development programme called Voices of Colour. Voices of Colour addresses a number of problems in society, including a lack of youth voice and representation, as well as a lack of leadership opportunities for young South Asian women. I found this organisation on Twitter and reached out to see if I could input in any way.

Working with Voices of Colour

It has been very rewarding working with Voices of Colour. Interacting with young South Asian women at the start of their journeys into higher education has also been an eye-opening experience. I have realised how many of the challenges faced by South Asian women in the context of higher education has continued into new generations. For instance, I reached out to other community platforms to ask for resources to help to guide those who wish to move away for University and was pointed in the direction of some wonderful articles and blogs with a variety of resources and stories that others have shared (these have been collated for those who wish to explore these resources – contact for reference list). This request for resources taught me that many community organisations are conducting research that can be merged with academic understanding to strengthen our models and theories. This request also gave me the opportunity to access some of the literature on the challenges faced by this community. There is much talk on the gaps of attainment in higher education between those who belong to diverse ethnic groups, yet there are still communities within that wider classification that have not been accessed in this research or whose higher education pathways are conditional based on many wider factors that have not been built into our current understanding. I would not have realised this or created a wider aim to work to build research to fill this gap, had I not worked with Voices of Colour.

Why is mentoring important?

Mentoring is important for so many different reasons. There is the extended resource that someone in your field can provide academically, but also the social support. There is the opportunity for mentors and mentees alike to learn and grow from such relationships. Mentoring is rewarding and is a great way to share your own experiences, challenges and successes with others. It is a great way to add some structure, advice and guidance into the lives of others who might need that little nudge onto or along a pathway. I interact with my mentee through once a month scheduled online meetings where the topics are guided by the mentee. In between, I share resources and information via email regarding any of the topics that focused the meeting. That could be making academic resources more accessible, finding resources that help to build confidence, and resilience, or sharing my experiences within higher education.

Why have you chosen to mentor South Asian women?

There are many mentoring programmes out there. I chose Voices of Colour because of the values of the organisation and the fantastic founder, Indy. After one conversation with Indy, I was ready to change the world. Voices of Colour was created to tackle issues that I have faced in the past whilst growing and working in academia: a lack of access to community action platforms for South Asian women; a lack of role models and exposure to South Asian women leaders from different sectors; a lack of knowledge around the existence of ethnicity related unconscious bias and how that relates to progress and prospects. Voices of Colour gave me a platform to be that change I wish to see.

Why Voices of Colour?

I have chosen to mentor South Asian women because as a South Asian woman, I have an idea and lived experience of some of the challenges that individuals and the collective might face. I also have an understanding and empathy towards the variety of questions and uncertainty that comes from being at the start of an academic journey, not knowing which path to choose or where that path will take you. Not only is it great that I have found an active way to give back to my community using the experiences and skills that I have, but I have also found a way to share my experiences with the collective.

Closing Points

Imagine if someone of your current position, your status, your platform had interacted with you earlier, would your life have been different? Would your progress have been made easier if just one more person you could identify with had existed in your network? Mentoring with Voices of Colour has been a wonderful reflective process for me, and I am happy to be able to share that experience with all of you. More so, I am glad to have had the opportunity to reflect on how my research and teaching might be applied in my community. If you have any questions about this or my experiences of mentoring, or any research pathways that may stem from this discussion, please reach out.

Thank you,
Daniella
dnayyar@arden.ac.uk

Peer pressure and Depression in the age of social media

Oyinkansola Alabi, MSc Psychology

As social vertebrates, interfacing with family and friends across long distances has been a daily reality since the inception of the world. We have relied on multiple flavours of communication and connection to strengthen our relationships. One of such creative solutions is social media: a neutral innovation with a double-edged sword. A weapon capable of extinguishing sanity and improving individuality concurrently.

Social media was created to be an interactive computer-mediated technology. It facilitates the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression, via virtual communities and networks. This same golden goose has laid eggs of unhealthy competition, comparison, rivalry, self-sabotage and depression

In a study conducted by Hunt et al. (2018) they stated that “if you use less social media, you are actually less depressed and less lonely; meaning that decreased social media use is what causes that qualitative shift in your well-being”. Decreased social media use helps you worry less about what others are doing and helps you focus which improves your wellbeing. The study included 143 students from the University of Pennsylvania. They were randomly assigned to one of two groups: one that would continue their social media habits as usual or one that would significantly limit access to social media. For three weeks, the experimental group had their social media usage reduced to 30 minutes per day, 10 minutes on three different platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat). The question is, why let the experimental group use social media at all?

“We didn’t think (complete abstinence) was an accurate representation of the landscape of the world that we live in today. Social media is around us in so many capacities,” Hunt, Marx, Lipson and Young said.

The results were clear; the group that used less social media, even though it wasn’t eliminated, had better mental health outcomes. At the end of the trial, those in the experimental group saw both loneliness and depressive symptoms decline, with the largest changes happening in those who reported greater levels of depression. The question then is, how can systems designed to bring us closer to our friends and family be bad for our mental health?

According to Oscar Ybarra (2008), a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, you unconsciously activate social comparison, once you log on to any of these social spaces.

“People don’t necessarily have to be super aware that this is occurring, but it is. You log on and you’re generally dealing with curated content on the other side.”

The Fear of Missing Out, or FOMO, is a mental health effect that has been strongly linked with the use of social media. Amy Summerville (2018), a professor of psychology at Miami University in Ohio, is an expert on issues of regret and the psychology of “what might have been.” She explains that FOMO is an extension of larger issues of inclusion and social standing. Once our basic needs are met, like food, shelter, and water, the need for inclusion and social interaction ranks right up there, she says.

"The FOMO experience specifically is this feeling that I personally could have been there, and I wasn't. I do think that part of the reason that's really powerful is this cue that maybe we're not being included by people we have important social relationships with," she told Healthline.

According to the World Health Organisation, Nigeria is Africa's most depressed country and the 85th happiest country on the World happiness report (2019). The World Health Organisation also posits that there are 322 million people living with depression in the world. In the WHO suicide ranking, Nigeria has 15.1 suicides per 100,000 population per year and is ranked the 30th most suicide-prone out of 183 nations in the world. The question therefore is; will we disengage our hearts from these unpleasant realities? If we won't, how can we help Nigerians to develop the capacity to alter their state and move from a state of unhappiness to happiness, effortlessly?

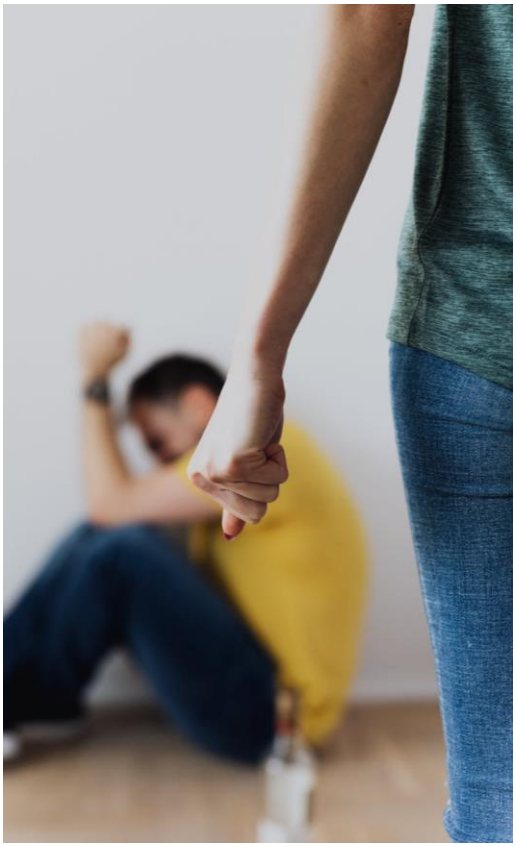
The formula for happiness as defined by Anthony Robbins (2017), is when your life's conditions (LC) match or equal your blueprint, your story, about what it should be. Happiness simply means one word, PROGRESS. PROGRESS equals HAPPINESS. However, when your life's conditions do not match your blueprint, your story, or how your life is supposed to be, you are going to have disappointments and may end up depressed. Every time we experience insecurity, unhappiness, and suicidal ideation, we have three choices. The first choice is to blame something / blame someone / blame yourself. The second is to change it. The third is to transform your blueprint if you don't desire to keep interacting with depression or being overwhelmed by life. Changing your STRATEGY, STORY and STATE furnishes you with the capacity to move from a state of unhappiness to happiness. It has been established that expressive writing such as rewriting one's story can improve mood disorders and help reduce symptoms among cancer patients too (Gortner et al., 2006; Milbury et al., 2014).

So, the next time you show up online, remember that:

- There will always be someone richer than you and someone you are richer than.
- Pressure reveals content. Social media only has the capacity to amplify your intrinsic state of mind.
- You can decide to nurture and sustain your self-awareness skills.
- You can fumigate your timeline by unfollowing everyone whose handle tensions you.
- You can observe regular social media detox and reduce the time spent online.
- You can connect with the offline world more.
- You can develop a habit of contentment and gratitude.

The Effects of Domestic Abuse

Saira Tanna, BSc (Hons) Psychology Student



What is domestic abuse? There are different types of domestic abuse, such as physical, psychological, sexual and economic. Abusers aim to assert control or power over their victims by using fear, shame or guilt. It can start from the abusers telling you what you can and cannot wear or even isolating you from your friends and family. An abuser tends to use negative language to break your confidence and self-esteem. For example, 'you look fat and ugly.' This is known as coercive control. You may have seen the news that domestic violence has increased drastically in the UK recently. Why? Since covid-19, we have been told to self-isolate and restrict our movements outside our homes. The Government implemented these changes to protect us all. However, they had not considered the effects it would have on those suffering from domestic abuse (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020). Victims of domestic abuse can be women or men. In this article, I will explain the psychological effects that victims suffer from due to domestic abuse.

Abusers can be of any age, ethnicity or level of education. Some common characteristics have been found in abusers. Some of these could be described as jealousy, isolation, blame-shifting, unrealistic expectations, hypersensitivity, cruelty to animals or children. Although not all abusers are physically aggressive there are some risk factors that can point to a victimiser becoming violent. For instance, verbal abuse and threats often leads to violence. Other risk factors for increased violence have been associated with the misuse of drugs or alcohol. Yet, numerous abusers have justified their violent behaviours because they were powerless to control their rage (Almis et al., 2018). But this is no excuse to harm others.

So why do abusers wish to control their partners? There is no specific profile for a domestic abuser. However, some theories have suggested that abusers are insecure about themselves and have extremely paranoid personalities. Although some abusers have been linked to having personality disorders, not all abusers suffer from a mental illness (Yu et al., 2019). Think about it, abuse tends to happen behind closed doors. If an abuser suffered from a mental illness, then their behaviour would be the same around everyone. On the other hand, victims of abuse have a higher risk of developing conditions, such as depression, eating disorders, obesity, heart disease, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic fatigue syndrome or fibromyalgia (Chandan et al., 2019; Almis et al., 2018).

You may be asking why victims do not just leave? It is important to understand that victims of domestic abuse suffer from trauma. Many are brainwashed into thinking that they have no support and fear their abuser. For example, if children are involved in a relationship, the abuser convinces the victim that they will never see the children again. In addition, some victims have reported that they were manipulated into adopting a pet. By doing so the abuser uses the pet's wellbeing to force the victim to stay. In addition, theories regarding domestic abuse suggests that leaving an abuser is a highly dangerous time for victims. Many victims have reported cycles, such as threatening them with violence, being physically abused, the abuser apologising to the victim and promises to change their behaviour. The cycle repeats itself over and

over, yet the abuser's behaviour never changes. In many cases, victims have noticed that the cycles become more severe and frequent (Newberry, 2017; Estrellado & Loh, 2016). However, leaving an abuser is not the only issue.

Although there are many charities supporting victims, most circumstances require police intervention. Unfortunately, domestic abuse is usually treated as a domestic dispute by law enforcement, instead of a crime. In some circumstances, victims of abuse are arrested for defending themselves from the abuser. When police side with the abuser or victims are not taken seriously, victims are often left with no option but to take their own life or are killed by their abuser. Much of the UK police force are male officers, who tend to be less sensitive in situations of domestic abuse, especially with male victims (Robinson et al., 2015). Males reporting an abusive partner are more likely to be laughed upon, not only by our society, but by law enforcement. These circumstances are worse for victims from ethnic minority. In most ethnic cultures divorce or separation is frowned upon. As for women, they are considered weak and are born into this world to fulfil the demands of their husbands (Stockman et al., 2015; Huntley et al., 2019).

Domestic abuse is a set of abusive characteristics or behaviours that one may use to control their partner. It does not matter which culture or ethnicity you are. Abusers just wish to assert power and control over their victims by stripping them of confidence and self-esteem. Victims who recognise signs of emotional and physical abuse can seek advice and refuge from charities to help them break free. However, police enforcement requires further training in recognising domestic abuse or the system will keep failing victims.

If you have been affected by this article and recognise the signs for domestic abuse, please contact any of the following services:

Womensaid.org.uk – Live online chats and forum discussions.

Nationaldahelpline.org.uk - 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline **0808 2000 247**

Or visit the government website for further advice www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help-

Please read the following PDF link for warning signs of an abusive partner: http://www.thefirststep.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Warning-signs-of-abusive-personalities.pdf

CAREER SPOTLIGHT : OCCUPATIONAL PSCYHOLOGIST

What is the role of a Occupational Psychologist?

The role of an occupational psychologist is to collaborate and work with organisations to improve workplace problems and the overall effectiveness of an organisation. Occupational Psychologists are concerned with understanding how organisations and employees behave and function in work environments. By applying theory and psychological knowledge, an occupational psychologist aims to resolve issues in the workplace, such as culture and change at both individual and team level. Employed as an occupational psychologist, the specific job duties may vary depending on the type of organisation and the organisation's goals. You can either work with clients within a consultancy role or in-house as an employee of an organisation.

What is the relevance of my Psychology degree?

Occupational psychologists frequently work with people so must demonstrate a variety of both interpersonal and job specific administrative skills. The key skills and competencies gained from your degree essential for a role within Occupational Psychology include:

- Ability to work under pressure and within short timescales to respond to client needs
- Problem-solving skills
- Excellent communication skills and ability to work with diverse range of people
- Knowledgeable in statistics and psychometrics

The British Psychological Society Accredited

How do I become a Occupational Psychologist?

To become an occupational psychologist, you need to complete a BPS-accredited Psychology degree or conversion course that provides a Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC).This is followed by a two-stage process, the first stage consists of completing a BPS-accredited Master's in occupational psychology, usually taking one-year full time or two year part-time. The second stage involves completing the BPS Qualification in Occupational Psychology (QOP), doctorate training for a minimum of 2 years full-time (or part-time equivalent), consisting of supervised practice whilst being employed within a paid or voluntary trainee occupational psychologist role. On successful completion of the stage process, you will then be eligible to apply for registration as an occupational psychologist with the HCPC and accreditation as a chartered psychologist with the BPS within the field of occupational psychology.

For any aspiring future Occupational Psychologists our Head Of School, Gail Steptoe-Warren will be discussing the QOP at the **Division Of Occupational Psychology Virtual Conference 2021**

7th January 2021 - 08 January 2021 08:45 - 18:00 pm BST

Student member price £16
Non member £40

Register for the event here

CONVERSATIONS IN PSYCHOLOGY Issue 9, December 2020

Minority Stress in Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People

Alastair Pipkin, Associate Lecturer in Psychology

The World Health Organisation (2020) defines gender as a set of socially constructed expectations, roles, behaviours and characteristics which are culturally and socially determined and, in Western cultures, are typically assigned to people based on their biological sex characteristics and assigned at birth. Gender identity refers to one's perceived and preferred gender role or expression, which may or may not align with their assigned sex or physical characteristics (Vincent & Lorimer, 2018).

A transgender or gender non-conforming person (TGNC) is someone who identifies as a gender identity other than their sex assigned at birth (American Psychological Association, 2015). They may have a binary identity, such as male or female, or a non-binary identity, anything beyond a male or female identity (e.g. agender being neither, gender fluid and moving in between, and many more; see Barker & Scheele, 2016).

Increased visibility in the media in recent years has come with opportunities and challenges for TGNC people. With increased acceptance of TGNC people's existence has come increased support, including seven specialist funded national NHS Gender Services to support people wishing to make a social and/or medical gender transition (e.g. NHS England, 2019). Visibility in the media and pop culture has also gone some way to shift unhelpful, stigmatised narratives away from linking TGNC people to 'transvestites' or cross-dressers (e.g. see documentary 'Disclosure' on Netflix). On the flip side, with increased visibility has come increased political debate regarding the rights of TGNC people, such as a recent high-profile court ruling regarding prescribing sex hormone blockers to young people (Courts and Tribunals Judiciary, 2020). It has also shed light on the many difficulties facing TGNC people in various domains of life, including high rates of bullying, social exclusion, abuse, homelessness, and mental health difficulties (Hatzenbuehler & Pachankis, 2016).

Political debate aside, evidence is mounting regarding the negative impact of stigma on TGNC and LGBTQ+ people more broadly. The dominant theoretical perspective is minority stress theory (Meyer & Frost, 2013) which proposes that holding a stigmatised minority identity, such as being TGNC, increases one's risk to psychological distress. It theorizes that actual and perceived stigma against one's identity can become internalised, resulting in hypervigilance in social interactions, social avoidance and anticipating – or indeed experiencing – social rejection (Hendricks & Testa, 2012).

For example, some TGNC people face daily challenges regarding which gender bathroom they should use, which research has linked to psychological distress (Herman, 2013). Imagine having this internal debate every time you need to use a public toilet; do I face the shame of using the opposite bathroom to my gender identity to avoid the risk of being outed, or do I live authentically and risk potential judgment, or worse, verbal or physical altercations?

The potential for hypervigilance, rumination and shame is evident, and that is but one example of daily battles TGNC people may face. Do I disclose my identity to those around me or potential intimate partners (Gamarel et al. 2014).; do I need to be concerned that glances in the street are signs of judgment or me not 'passing' in my gender identity (Rood et al. 2016; will future employers take issue with my identity (Hill et al., 2017)?

Research has tested minority stress theory, with numerous systematic reviews finding elevated rates of depression (de Freitas, Leda-Rego, Bezerra-Filho & Miranda-Scippa, 2020), anxiety (Millet, Longworth & Arcleus, 2017) and lower rates of self-reported quality of life in TGNC people compared to the general population (Nobli, Glazebrook & Arcelus, 2018). While advocacy for the rights, safety and acceptance of TGNC people is important and on-going, more individually focused psychological research is showing promise in understanding and addressing the maintaining mechanisms at play. Trans-affirmative Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TA-CBT) has been developed to understand how internalised stigma for minority identity plays out. Austin and Craig (2015) outline that stigma against a minority identity can become internalised and form negative beliefs about oneself, known as core beliefs. For example, 'I am unacceptable because I am transgender', or 'Romantic partners will reject me because I am non-binary'. Pachankis (2018) has taken this further to propose specific psychological processes identified in contributing to psychological distress. We know from cognitive and behavioural science that how we think influences how we feel and subsequently what we do, which can have reinforcing consequences such as avoiding feared situations but ultimately means that we have limited access to evidence that challenges the negative beliefs. For TGNC people, an affirmative therapeutic space can offer the opportunity to develop a more positive self-concept, to address the negative emotional sequalae of discrimination such as rumination and avoidance, and overall to move towards further affirmative social spaces

Taken together, outside of the therapy room, research points to the importance of day-to-day access to affirmative interactions and spaces. We know that social capital – having inclusive, affirmative spaces and interactions day-to-day – benefits well-being. I believe one of the great things about studying psychology is being set free from our unhelpful implicit assumptions or biases, such as stigma. Gender identity is but one facet of human identity facing stigma – ethnicity, mental health, disability, and class are among many others. I would argue that catching stigma in action through our assumptions, biases or actions can make the world a better place, one affirmative interaction at a time.

GETTING TO KNOW THE PSYCHOLOGY TEAM: KIERON ROONEY

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

My name is Kieron Rooney and I am a lecturer in Psychology here at Arden University. I lecture on a mix of modules, from biological and cognitive psychology, through to qualitative and quantitative research methods, across both the undergraduate and postgraduate Psychology programmes. I began life at AU as the Psychology Experimental Officer after having worked in a mental health hospital, before then moving into a lecturing role in July of this (very interesting!) year.

Can you tell the readers about your main research interests?

I am most interested in neuroscience, mindfulness, stress, and anxiety. I find it fascinating that we can succeed or fail based on how our brains interface with the world around us. Something as simple as thinking about something the right (or wrong!) way can have a huge impact upon our sense of wellbeing or actual success when trying to pursue a goal. This segues into how stress and anxiety can stop us in our tracks, and how being mindful can enable us to stop being pushed and pulled by our emotions and the things that happen around us.

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

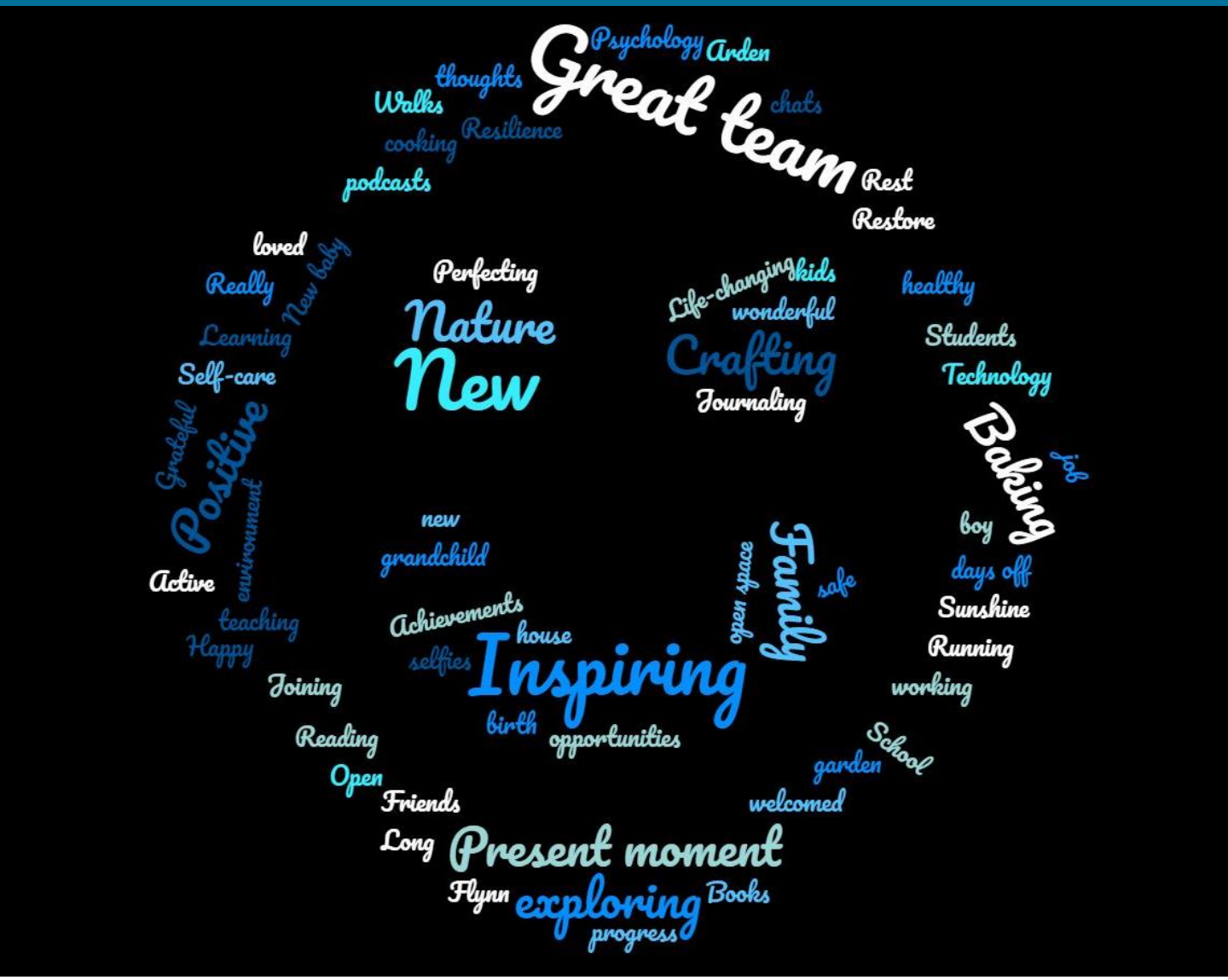
My favourite academic experience would be travelling down to London (from the midlands) on my very second day working for AU. I travelled down to lecture on a 'blended learning' module. It was my first time delivering lectures, so as you could imagine, I felt a little bit like Frodo wandering off from the shire when I packed my bags to go down to London each week! It was a fantastic experience that meant I hit the ground running when I started at Arden and confirmed that it was exactly what I wanted to do - lecture and work with people who were pursuing their goals via a Psychology degree.

What is your favourite thing about being part of AU?

It would have to be the people. Both the staff and the students are what makes AU such a special place to work. It never ceases to amaze me what interesting and varied lives our students have. When I have my office hours meetings and have 3-4 back-to-back videocalls with students, it is so interesting hearing what people are doing, where they are living, what their daily lives look like, and what made them pursue their degree, as well as being rewarding to play a small part in their journey. From a staff perspective, our colleagues are some of the most supportive and warm that you could wish for, making it an amazing place to be a part of.

Word Positivity Cloud

This year has not been the most positive and it is very easy to focus on the negatives and overlook the good things that have happened, to end the year on some positivity I've compiled a word cloud of all the things that the team are grateful for or made them smile from this year.



As you can see from the above word compilation, although there has been uncertainty surrounding the evolving pandemic causing our routines to be disrupted, creating stress and confusion. It's important that we enjoy the positive moments that bring us joy and focus on the things we can control rather than worrying about the things we cannot.

Stay safe. Stay calm. Stay positive.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

February 2020

What if I'm my Own Worst Critic? By Dr Gerhard Niemann
The Psychology of Learning: Creating Desirable Difficulties by Cagla Titiz Köse
School: A Change is Due? By Maksim Peshev
Can a Child with RAD Function in Mainstream Education? By Alicia Hughes
Flexibility and Adaptability of Primary School Classrooms by Hannah Sharrad
Psychopathology and the Flawed Research Methodology by Annie Foxall

April 2020

Autism: Harmful to Self and Society or Misunderstood? By Kensington Gagiyovwe
The Growing Importance of Sports Psychology by Marie Sherman
Supporting Self Regulation Development in Primary Education by Azra Klempic
Good Citizen Vs. Good Digital Citizen by Kristyn Hall
New Technologies, Image Distribution and Cyber Abuse by Dr Matthew Hall

June 2020

Public Health Issue: Chemsex by Natalie Quinn Walker
The Question That is Always Asked, But Rarely Answered: The Primary Cause for Sexually Predatory Behaviour by Alicia Hughes
Bad Seeds? The Tragedy of the Unnurtured Child by Sarah Newlyn
Psychological Intervention as a Part Of Palliative focused Care in Motor Neurone Disease/Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis by Ariel Mai Maria Helgudottir
Flexibility and Adaptability of Primary Classrooms: Interventions and Strategies to Support Learners with Insecure Attachment by Hannah Sharrad

August 2020

Developing a New Support System by Rachel Davies
The Importance of Mental Health for a Professional Dancer by Veronica Louw
What Gives Meaning in Your Life? By Emmeline Koopman
Multiple Sclerosis: The Psychological Impact of a Lifelong Illness by Louise Foster
Why Food Insecurity is More Than Going Hungry and Why it Matters by Emily Frezza
Abstract Reasoning: Concrete Terms for Logical Problems by Stefan Fouche
Analysing Socialisation Patterns Exhibited by South Asian Immigrant Mothers Living in the UK by Deepika Vijayaraj

October 2020

The Secret Garden Of Male Emotionality: Dispersing the Myths of Male Emotional Bereftness by Konstantinos Arfanis
A New Hope: Covid-19 and the Evolution of Higher Education by Daniella Nayyar
Gender-Based Violence - A Psychological Perspective by Dr Gerhard Niemann
Negative Stereotyping Leads to Prejudiced and Discrimination Behaviour By Saira Tanna
A Pandemic of Fear – The Psychology of Emotional Contagion by Galina Gardiner
The Westminster Health Forum Policy Conference by Holly Stokes
Psychopathy 101 By Sophie Rae
Feeling Excluded: An LGBT+ Perspective on Sex And Relationships Education by Ursula Oliver

December 2020

Are we nurturing a belief in the paranormal? by Robin Lee Lynskey
Defence Mechanisms During Lockdowns by Sara Yadegari
Applied Social Psychology by Daniella Nayyar
Peer pressure and Depression in the age of social media by Oyinkansola Alabi
The Effects of Domestic Abuse by Saira Tanna
Minority Stress in Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People by Alastair Pipkin

The Day In the Life Of a Clinical Psychologist: Beyond the Therapy room

This webinar provides a personal insight for anyone thinking about pursuing a career in Clinical psychology after completing your Psychology degree. In the session, our guest speaker Dr Satbinder Bhogal discusses her experiences as a clinical psychologist, aspects of her role and opportunities beyond the therapy room.

Dr Satbinder Bhogal: What its like to be a Clinical Psychologist - The World is your Oyster

Satbinder specialises in relationship difficulties, self-esteem, trauma and attachment issues. With years of experience working with adolescents and adults at the NHS coalface, she has a sensitive and ethical approach to treating complex psychological problems in her private Birmingham clinic.

If you are interested in taking the clinical route and missed Dr Satbinder's session, to watch a recording of the webinar use the following link:

https://arden-ac-uk.zoom.us/rec/share/cFZ_qoB-ZJ_uAckbGdSw8qVjJ_iCqNWLYLBF_fDOEHzDJqmqo8Z1K4bRx1oHMP6y.pAMEfjLk9WD52rbp

Any issues with accessing the recording, please email the editor (eblakemore@arden.ac.uk).

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Free BPS online webinars:

- **Your Future in Psychology 2021** - 21 January 2021 09:30 – 16:00 BST
- **Thriving when work is tough: In covid and non-covid times** – 22 January 2021 12:00-13:30 BST

Keep checking this webpage for all upcoming webinars as more get added!

Contributing to the next edition of the newsletter

We would like to thank all contributors to this issue of the School of Psychology newsletter. If you would like to contribute to a following issue, please contact Emily Blakemore at eblakemore@arden.ac.uk for more information. Please also contact us if you would like a reference list for any of the articles in this issue.
I look forward to hearing from you!

Next issue: February 2020

ARDEN UNIVERSITY