

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER: CONVERSATIONS IN PSYCHOLOGY



Comments from the Editor

Welcome back to the School of Psychology newsletter. The first issue was a great success and I'm glad to see students and staff alike taking an interest in this initiative. In this second issue, we start with some welcomes, congratulations and a word from our new Head of School, Dr Gail Steptoe-Warren.

Our two student articles both highlight how different types of media can be reviewed from a psychological stance; Hannah Gilson reviews a book named *The Skills* and its relation to female success in the workplace, and Leon Versfeld explores the character of The Joker and the psychological controversy surrounding his depiction.

We also have two articles from our Psychology lecturers, James Bartlett and Dr Mvikel Ncube, which centre around current issues in psychological research. James outlines the 'changing landscape' of psychological research, and Mvikel specifically focusses upon twin research, providing a critical account of this field.

There are many other additions in this issue of the newsletter including a career spotlight, staff profile, news about our Virtual PsychLab and a section on conferences and publishing.

Our final piece from Natalie Quinn-Walker, an Arden University lecturer, discusses the public health concern of domestic abuse in reflection of October being **Domestic Violence Awareness month**.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter with the new additional pieces that have been included.

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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A WORD FROM OUR NEW HEAD OF SCHOOL

Welcome to the second School of Psychology newsletter. I have been at Arden University for a mere 2 months and find it a dynamic and exciting place to work. The team here are forward thinking and want our students to progress and achieve in the courses they undertake. My vision for the school is to develop more discipline-specific Psychology courses that allow learners to start or develop in their careers. Employers are not just looking for knowledge and understanding of a discipline area but want to see the relevant skills and behaviours which we strive to develop and nurture throughout our learner's period of study. We also want to develop our learner's profile as an academic which this newsletter helps to do. I hope you enjoy reading and we welcome any suggestions for future newsletter issues.



Dr Gail Steptoe-Warren

GAIL'S STAFF PROFILE

Gail Steptoe-Warren is Head of the School of Psychology at Arden University. Gail has worked in the higher education sector for 15 years developing discipline-relevant Psychology courses such as Occupational Psychology and Forensic Psychology for both face-to-face and distance learners. Gail is Chief Supervisor/Registrar at the British Psychological Society for the Stage 2 Qualification in Occupational Psychology.

Research

Gail's research expertise is in the development of situational judgment tests, decision making and human behaviour in the workplace, where she has worked on projects with the Fire Service and Prison Service as well as the charitable and commercial sectors.

Publications and Awards

Gail has published 2 books, *Occupational Psychology: An Applied Approach* and *Applying Psychology to the Fire Service: Emotion, Risk and Decision Making*. She has won awards for her work including The GORE Research Excellence Fire Service award (2015), The Psychometrics Forum Excellence in Psychometrics award (2016) and was shortlisted for the Excellence in Psychology Practice award (2019).

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWS

The School of Psychology became a School, in its own right, on 1st September 2019 in response to the growth in student numbers and the future plan to grow the discipline areas that we offer. The plans we have are exciting. Over the next two years, we will be developing additional Masters level, discipline specific courses. This will allow us to offer a learning journey into specific discipline areas of Psychology from undergraduate to postgraduate. As a School we have recruited lecturers who have experience in both teaching and practice which will allow us to provide an evidence-based approach to what we do in terms of teaching, research and practice. Our courses allow for students to tailor their learning to a time that suits them so that they can manage work, family and their personal life. Results from the NSS show that we are improving in what we provide to our students and we continue to strive to make the learning experience even better. Our main aim is to provide the next generation of Psychology graduates who can focus on ethical, legal and evidence-based approaches in whatever role they undertake. Our passion is to provide the right knowledge, skills and behaviours to help individuals start or progress in their careers.

Dr Gail Steptoe-Warren, Head of School



Some of the Psychology School team!

Right to left: Kimberley Marsh, Fiona Lintern, Holly Stokes, Hannah Begum, Gail Steptoe-Warren, James Bartlett & Tom Lockhart

WELCOMES

A warm welcome to new staff joining the school and a big congratulations to existing staff transitioning into new roles:

- Mvikeli Ncube (Blended- and Distance-Learning lecturer)
- Baber Malik (Distance-learning lecturer)
- Louise Lakha (Blended- and Distance-Learning lecturer)
- Charmaine Ellis (Blended-learning contactor)
- Fiona Essig (Blended-learning contractor)



Dr Tom Lockhart

CONGRATULATIONS

A big congratulations to the newly titled **Dr Tom Lockhart**, one of our Psychology lecturers, for successfully defending his PhD at his viva in August.

Tom's research addresses a problem within Clinical Psychology, the lack of a biological diagnostic marker for anxiety disorders. He specifically designed a series of electroencephalogram (EEG) studies to assess changes in the electrophysiology of the brain during anxiety. The results identified a long-range brain network that may serve as a biomarker of anxiety.

Well done Tom!

The Psychology of Female Success in the Workplace: Reviewing '*The Skills*'

Hannah Gilson, MSc Psychology student

Career success and satisfaction is one of the major contributory factors to individual self-esteem and emotional well-being (Lin, Wu & Chen, 2014) meaning a promotion or change in job may improve life vastly. Many of us in the global community of Arden University have engaged in our studies with this as our goal – to gain more knowledge and a qualification to help us progress in our field or retrain entirely and begin a new career. For many, it is that glimmer of greater professional accomplishment and contentment on the horizon which gets us through our (seemingly insurmountable) research, notetaking and assignments. Online or blended learning opportunities, such as those at Arden, make it possible for people to gain the skills and knowledge they need to make these changes, even if they are already in full time work, or have family responsibilities which occupy the majority of their time.

For mothers (or primary-carer fathers) the career journey can be even more arduous and difficult to navigate. Taking maternity leave and typically acting as the main childcare provider can have a detrimental impact on women's working progression, salary levels and pension contributions (Costa Dias, Joyce & Parodi, 2018), without even beginning to consider the psychological strain of parental guilt or loss of confidence in returning to work (Morgenroth & Heilman, 2017).



Award-winning broadcaster Mishal Husain, one of the presenters of BBC Radio 4's Today programme, has sought to guide women to redress the balance of the career-based disparity between the genders with her book '*The Skills: From first job to dream job, what every woman needs to know*'. This book interweaves perceptive discussions of a woman's place in the world of work (including some insight into the inner world of the BBC, which was itself rocked by gender pay controversy), with a range of pragmatic tips, relevant to both women and men, for use in interviews, meetings, presentations, digital platforms and day-to-day working life. This advice is mostly focused around the importance of preparation – that by doing research and putting in the groundwork, individuals can arm themselves ready to face any eventuality. She states that even those lacking inherent self-assurance will gain confidence through the knowledge that they have all the information and skills they need.

Husain also connects this idea to the importance of possessing an air of authority for those seeking career advancement, an attribute often associated with the older male. She asserts that anyone can achieve this demeanour simply by being confident in their understanding of their work, by developing expertise and grasping available opportunities to display this knowledge.

Of further interest to the field of Psychology, *The Skills* explores Carol Dweck's 'growth mind-set' concept (Dweck, 2015) and its significance, not just in the development of children, but throughout life. This idea suggests individuals are not limited to their 'natural' abilities or their level of intelligence, but that everyone has the power to learn new talents and improve their skills. We need to appreciate that the colleagues or superiors we may be impressed or even intimidated by in our workplaces were not born with all the entrepreneurial talent and business acumen they needed, but gained it through struggle and learning from mistakes. This is within the grasp of anyone with the determination to grow and to work hard. Theories of neuroplasticity and cognitive-behavioural techniques are also discussed as a way of building resilience to the knockbacks and challenges which may present themselves in the workplace (Kay & Shipman, 2014).

Alongside specific suggestions, Husain takes a more conceptual view of working life and discusses different theories of how traditional assumptions could be reimagined. One of the key ideas for the modern age is that with extended life expectancy and increased retirement age, women can seize an opportunity to relaunch new careers after childbirth. Husain asserts that we no longer need to adhere closely to a flight path within the same job role from leaving school or university straight through until retirement. Instead, we should now all be planning for what she terms 'a multi-stage life', in which it is entirely natural to begin in one discipline, establishing your initial skills and experience, but then transfer those skills by trying something new, possibly taking time out, or changing jobs completely. This point does exemplify one weakness of the book in that, despite Husain's caveat that her suggestions will not necessarily be favoured by all, there is a tendency for a middle-class bias within some of the ideas.

For example, the idea that women can improve their employability by giving up current jobs to experience internships and voluntary roles would be financially restricted for many. However, on a societal-scale, the 'multi-stage career' is a refreshing idea which could lead to a much more vibrant and richly skilled work force, rather than an aging population filled with workers who have become bored over the 20+ years they have spent in the same industry.

Another interesting discussion raised by Husain is the need for more female career role models, as research has shown that young women will not feel capable of entering professions, such as the STEM careers, unless they see other women who have been successful in that area (Hazari et al., 2013). *The Skills* itself offers encouragement for women throughout and one of the highlights is the vast array of quotations from inspiring women, from young entrepreneurs like YouTuber Zoella, to distinguished writers like Maya Angelou and Louisa May Alcott and veteran business women such as Oprah Winfrey and Christine Lagarde.

In *The Skills*, Husain provides a psychological grounding of how women particularly can adapt their philosophy of careers and self-concept to allow themselves to pursue opportunities they may previously have let slip by, due to fear, guilt, modesty, anxiety or family pressures. *The Skills* presents readers with a platform in which to contemplate significant questions about work and its place in their life: What do you want from your job? Where do you want to be in 10 years' time? Which skills do you already have which can achieve this and which new skills must you gain? Overall, *The Skills* is a useful read for any women currently contemplating their future career and is a valuable reminder to us all of the importance of access to education and fulfilling work opportunities in building individual self-confidence and contentment.

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The Joker: What's the Big Joke?

Leon Versfeld, BSc Psychology student

"You know what I think of you, hero? I think you're a half-measure. I think you're a man who can't finish the job. I think that you're a coward. You know the one thing that you just can't see? You know, you're one bad day away from being me" (Lee et al., 2019).

This quote was not uttered by a hero. Nor yet was it the words of a villain. This kind of commentary has the fragrance of an 'anti-hero'; a sinner, a scoundrel, a libertine and a devil. Or does the above quote conceal a hidden intelligence that requires further study and careful examination? In light of *Joker* making its appearance in cinemas worldwide, the following article will explore the dangerous spaces of The Joker's mind and the intense and chaotic psychology

of his character. This article will also look at some of the fundamental aspects surrounding The Joker's historical depictions and psychological belief systems regarding his feelings towards humankind. Furthermore, the article will also argue against the psychological controversy concerning the character's mental state and his misunderstood remarks about the human condition.

To understand the archetype of The Joker and his inherent psychology about human nature's fallacies, it is useful to first to consider some actual historical depictions of his kind. Overthrowing proclaimed morals, institutions and disregarding human virtue is what gives The Joker his reputation as an agent of chaos and an anarchist. Niccolo Machiavelli and Cao Cao were undoubtedly dangerous and unpredictable individuals. What these men and the Joker had in common was their shared psychological beliefs about intrinsic human nature: that morality is subjective and whatever fills man's passions, be it fortune, fame, or glory, regardless of the price, will ultimately suffice. Some will conclude that it is pure madness to contemplate such unsettling themes. The Joker might tell you that it is the opposite of madness. He might say something like: *"I'm not a monster, I'm just ahead of the curve."* (Nolan et al., 2008).



Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher of the mind and early psychologist, extensively wrote about the human condition. His work centralized around a single theory regarding individual psychological existence and freedom of self-development in an unjustifiable existence, also known as existentialism. This belief system could very well be responsible for The Joker's twisted, nonsensical, outrageous, but fantastic exploits. Due to uninformed conventional belief about psychological mental disorders, such as psychopathy, sociopathy, and schizophrenia, it appears that the general public- and to a greater extent, ill-educated psychologists- may misunderstand, understate, and cast these complex terms at the slightest indication of such an occurrence. It is much easier and less involved to bestow these above-mentioned terms on any individual who even remotely exhibits whichever symptom.

Hence, it might be justifiable that the interpretations of The Joker's mental attributes are perhaps also, for the most part, misconstrued. It seems feasible that a psychologist, or even the casual scholar, might label the above mentioned men, upon studying their histories, as psychopathic and unstable. Yet, they have reached the highest of positions in their respective hierarchies and claimed worldwide fame. Perhaps they weren't suffering from any mental condition. Perhaps they understood something that very few people do? If psychopathy does indeed lead to destructive and evil behaviour, then the typical observer is likely to either loathe or commend that act. Whatever the act may be, it is based on primordial and intrinsic human nature.

Fundamentally, this phenomenon raises the question whether The Joker is mentally ill and evil, or has complete control and sound comprehension of his actions in the world. To potentially provide an answer to such a complex question, Evolutionary and Biological Psychology should be taken into account. Genetic association with psychopathy and schizophrenia has strong support in the fields of genetics and molecular biology. However, noting that our genetic codes and structures have been perpetually changing and adapting throughout history (Scheepers, de Mul & Hoogendijk, 2018), one might entertain the possibility that any symptom related to psychopathy may be the result of healthy and beneficial mutation (Scheepers et al., 2018). This could be the leading cause in Machiavelli, Cao Cao, The Joker' and many other conceivable figures of history's extreme success and popularity.

Of course, it cannot be ascertained that mental disorders are non-existent and that some genetic features are not, to a certain extent, responsible. Nevertheless, it is equally damaging to exaggerate such sensitive topics, especially through media portrayals that promote stigma and judgement towards individuals who do suffer from psychological disorders (Stuart, 2006). Through media portrayals, stories and documentaries, people suffering from mental illnesses are conventionally affiliated with violence and criminal uptake. These portrayals and depictions of mental illness can have far-reaching consequences for people suffering from mental disorders. The late Heath Ledger (1979 - 2008), a movie star who played as Joker in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* (2008), summarized the character as a "psychopathic, mass-murdering, schizophrenic clown with zero empathy." (Ravenola, 2019). Professionals in the mental health industry should be vigilant to such media portrayals of madness, particularly when these media portrayals are in the presence of individuals suffering from mental illnesses (Camp et al., 2010).

Be that as it may, and entertaining the idea that psychopathy and schizophrenia are not exactly mental disorders, but instead are beneficial mutations and evolutionary adaptations to certain conditions such as severe stress, then it could very well be the leading cause of Machiavelli, Cao Cao, and The Joker's extreme success and popularity in the world. It is as Winston Churchill famously once said, "*History is written by the victors*". Perhaps the "victors of history" shared the beneficial adaptation due to certain conditions being met? Perhaps they were not suffering from any mental disorders; they just wanted to watch the world burn.

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PSYCHOLOGY CONFERENCES - GET INVOLVED!

The British Association for Cognitive Neuroscience Conference

Dr Tom Lockhart, Lecturer in Psychology



Dr Tom Lockhart

On the 2nd and 3rd of September, our Psychology lecturer, Dr Tom Lockhart, attended **The British Association for Cognitive Neuroscience Conference** at Cambridge University.

He delivered a 'data blitz talk' on linking brain systems to our defensive behavioural systems. Specifically, trying to figure out which areas of the brain are related to anxious behaviours. This work has applications in the fields of understanding defensive behaviours in humans, identifying diagnostic biomarkers for anxiety disorders and developing biofeedback treatments for anxiety disorders.

"Conferences are an excellent opportunity to get yourself noticed and to network with the most influential people in your field. They can also offer skills workshops and (in case nothing else has convinced you so far) they provide a chance for exotic travel, fancy dinners and social events with interesting people." – Dr Tom Lockhart

Our academics will continue to share these experiences in future newsletter issues with the hope that it will encourage you to possibly attend a conference yourself! See the ['Dates for your Diary'](#) section for upcoming conferences and events you may wish to attend.

Arden University Student Conference: April 2020

The first Arden University Annual Student Conference will be held in April 2020. The conference is an excellent opportunity for dissertation students to present their research and academic endeavours to their fellow students and the staff at Arden University through a series of talks and poster presentations.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE
INVOLVED IN A CONFERENCE
BY ARDEN STUDENT FOR
ARDEN STUDENTS?

The conference is multi-disciplinary, meaning that it will blend the realms of science, business and technology. There will also be a range of skills workshops and, of course, it's a great opportunity to network. Finally, the conference will be student led. Specifically, we are looking for students to volunteer to take control and to run the conference as their own. It will be **a conference by Arden students for Arden students**. Precise details of the conference will be released soon, once the student committee decides how best to run the conference.

If you want to be involved and be on the committee, or have any further questions, then please contact Tom Lockhart at tlockhart@arden.ac.uk.

The Changing Landscape Of Psychological Research

James Bartlett, Lecturer in Psychology

The last decade has not been kind to psychology. There have been falls from grace by influential researchers such as Diederik Stapel who fabricated all of his data and there was a “replication crisis”, where the results of many high-profile studies have failed to replicate. In response to these events, the way psychological research is performed and reported has changed. Therefore, as students and scholars of psychology, it is important you are aware of the current developments in psychological research.

The biggest challenge psychology has faced is the “replication crisis”; the realisation that many results could not be repeated by another researcher (Nelson, Simmons, & Simonsohn, 2018). Psychology journals also prefer to publish novel research that shows an effect of some sort, such as a difference between groups, or a relationship between variables. It is much harder to publish research that simply replicates a previous article, or reports a null effect of no difference or relationship. This is known as publication bias and it has a particularly damaging effect on people’s perceptions of psychological research.



James Bartlett

One of the best examples of publication bias stems from an article by Daryl Bem purporting to show evidence of precognition, or the ability to see into the future (Bem, 2011). Although many people were sceptical of the findings, it was published in one of the most prestigious psychology journals and it appeared to follow all the tried and tested methods. However, when a group of researchers attempted, and failed, to replicate the study (Ritchie, Wiseman, & French, 2012), the journal that originally published Bem’s article rejected it on the grounds that it “does not publish replications” (French, 2012).

A few years later, a giant team of researchers tried to replicate 100 articles published in high-profile psychology journals. The headline finding was that only 39 (39%) studies replicated the original finding (Open Science Collaboration, 2015). A more recent attempt at replicating a series of articles found similarly subpar results, with 14 of 28 (50%) findings being replicated (Klein et al., 2018). Although there is not consistent agreement over the extent of the problem, with some researchers suggesting we do not have anything to worry about, this period of reflection has forced psychology to look at its publishing and reporting practices. The result of this is that there is now genuine optimism, as contemporary research is being produced with greater rigour across psychology.

To target these problems, there is a growing culture of “open science”. This means that instead of research being closed off, the research process is more transparent. Starting in the design phase, authors are pre-registering the design of their study and how they plan on analysing the data (van’t Veer & Giner-Sorolla, 2016). This requires writing a document that outlines all of these plans, and archiving it with a time stamp which can be cited in the final article. An extension of this process which is gaining momentum is publishing a registered report, where pre-registration is combined with the publishing process. Authors submit their rationale and methods to a journal, known as a stage one submission. If this submission is satisfactory, the journal will offer in-principle acceptance (Chambers, 2017). Registered reports help with publication bias, as the final results do not impact the journal’s decision to publish the research.

The next step in making research more transparent is opening access to the data and the final article. If you read the fine print when you submit an article, many journals require you to make the data available for other researchers to confirm your findings. However, this is rarely followed in practice (Vanpaemel, Vermorgen, Deriemaeker, & Storms, 2015). To encourage better adoption of this, some journals are offering incentives such as providing articles who deposit their data with badges to identify those who follow through with it. Think of these as scout badges to demonstrate good behaviour.

It is also important to provide more people with access to the final article. Journal subscriptions are incredibly expensive for university libraries, and the general public are not going to pay to access a journal article. Therefore, one initiative is to make more articles open access. This can be done via the journal, but it usually requires you to pay an expensive article processing charge. Alternatively, you can make your own research open access, by depositing your author version of the manuscript on websites such as [PsyArXiv](#) or [ResearchGate](#). Most journals allow you to share your own version of the manuscript, but not the final version included in the journal. You can check whether a journal allows you to do this using the [Sherpa/Romeo](#) database.

Beyond the influence of individual researchers or small groups, one of the most interesting developments in psychology is the rise of projects containing multiple research groups. The majority of psychology research can be criticised for having too few participants, and focusing predominantly on WEIRD (white, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic) participants. This means the majority of articles include a modest sample of American or European university students. This is usually rationalised as they are the easiest population to sample, and it would require more resources than individual research groups can handle to go out and scour the earth for more diverse samples. The most ambitious project to try and tackle this problem is the [Psychological Science Accelerator](#). This is a network of hundreds of research groups in over 70 countries. Rather than the burden of collecting larger more diverse samples falling on one research group, many groups from different countries collect data for the same project and pool it together. This is a fascinating project that can revolutionise how psychological research is performed and represents a potential shift in the ecosystem of science, as informative team research may become valued over individual success.

Now that you are aware of some of the issues, you might want to incorporate some of these practices into your own research. A colleague and I wrote an article aimed at postgraduate students outlining how you can make your research more transparent with limited time on your hands (Bartlett and Eaves, 2019). The article includes further references you can look to for advice on open science practices. The main piece of advice is not biting off more than you can chew. There are a lot of new developments out there, and you can feel tempted to include everything at once. However, since you are on a learning curve, it is better to gradually improve the level of transparency to stop it becoming overwhelming and counterproductive. Even if you do not include any of these developments in your own research, you should now be more aware of how research is changing in the wider landscape of psychology.

For a list of references, please contact the editor, Holly Stokes, at hstokes@arden.ac.uk

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Twin Research In Psychology: A Critical Account

Dr Mvikeli Ncube, Lecturer in Psychology

Psychology as a discipline has been powerful in conceptualising what it is to be a twin but has also constrained, in some ways, the way twins are seen and the way they perceive themselves. In the course of doing so, some strong, influential discourses have been perpetuated and have been made to appear scientific, through being used as working terms by psychologists who take advantage of the power of science that underlies their work. One such discourse, as an example, is that of twin telepathy. This and other related discourses have helped shape the psychology of twinship but have also generated superstition, pathology, prejudice and stigma around twins; it could be argued that psychologists do not appear to care about the implications of the discourses they have formulated and have attached to twins. It could be further argued that psychologists are interested in utilising twins for finding out things in the interests of psychological studies, but not in the interest of the twins themselves; arguably this is the case with other subject groups too. However, in the case of twins, this tendency has led to some particular negative effects.

Critique of Traditional Psychological Research on Twins

Rose (1985) suggested that a scientific discourse consists of a complex set of ways to conceptualise objects of attention, naming them, explaining them and theorising about them. That is exactly what traditional psychological studies have done, in the process, exploiting twins. A good example of such controversial theorising around twins comes from Gedda (1961) who, despite admitting that he had no scientific evidence for his assumptions and was not an expert in gynaecology, strongly theorised that during the gestation period, twins are affected by many factors which can cause intellectual problems later in life. The factors cited included: toxemia of pregnancy, foetal overcrowding, an imbalance in the supply of blood caused by placental transfusion syndrome, and the gestation period itself which, according to Gedda (1961), is three weeks shorter when compared to that of singletons,

consequently causing twins to be born two pounds lighter in weight. Moreover, Gedda (1961) claimed that there are bigger challenges during the delivery of twins, compared to singletons; all these factors, according to Gedda (1961), impact negatively on the intellectual development of twins.

Some psychologists, who at their time were respected, used twin studies to promote social and racial inequalities, to invent and promote elitist political philosophies, to commit academic fraud, to invent scientific racism and to further their own political agendas. Some of the key research in intelligence studies involving twins, for example, the work by Cyril Burt, has since been discredited and shown to be false, because the study results were manipulated to make a political argument (Billig, 1978). This serves as a good example of twins being used as objects and tools for the advancement of controversial ideas about intelligence and for the support of the controversial idea that people in particular social categories have specific and innate types of intelligence, personalities and even a particular susceptibility to criminality. The studies advancing such political and social arguments about intelligence appear to have deliberately ruled out consideration of social influences on intelligence, as well as other factors.



Dr Mvikeli Ncube

This argument has been used to make controversial recommendations regarding class, race, educational opportunities and other inequalities, and this work drew largely and explicitly on twin studies. It was a moral betrayal and a social insult to twins who participated in the studies, not knowing that their data would be abused. The details in the information sheet and the consent forms that were used for recruitment in those studies were most likely misleading, meaning that the proper standards of research ethics were not followed.

Billig (1978) detailed how Hans J. Eysenck and Arthur Jensen (1969) made big claims about the heritability of intelligence, arguing that '80% of it is inherited'. Parker has pointed out that:

'The problem with most mainstream psychology research is that it either deliberately leaves things out or pretends that scientific inquiry or interpretation is neutral, and, hence, it gives tacit support to those in power' (p. 8).

Such studies appear to have taken twins—their relationships and lives—out of context, simply looking at how they inherit their abilities or their lack of abilities, independently of what has happened to them in their family, education, culture and in terms of other important factors. In addition, it appears that most conclusions about intelligence testing in mainstream studies have largely been based on identical twins.

Parker (2007) has argued that intelligence testing has been used to reinforce the discourse of essential underlying differences between ethnic groups. Such twin research has been used to reinforce the idea that differences between people are inherited and that we can identify these differences in individuals, in terms of their membership of social categories, such as gender, class, as well as racialised categories, rather than in terms of social relationships. As I have highlighted, in mainstream psychological studies twins have been treated not only as objects; they have also been studied out of context, without accounting for their relationships, treated as if they were completely separate from each other and could be understood just as individuals. Moreover, the researcher and his or her motives are always invisible; yet, their visibility would often cast the studies in question in an entirely different light. Scientific racism and other iniquities have emerged and have grown, as some researchers have manipulated twin studies. For example, Billig (1978) has highlighted that Burt (1917), who was suspected of inventing his twin studies, was also an important contributor to the discriminatory Butler Education Act and was also obsessed by ideas around 'breeding' and 'national degeneration'; Burt thus used twin studies to make claims to reinforce his own personal beliefs.

All this shows how far-reaching the effects of psychological twin studies have been, especially those that have influenced government policy on education and other areas as well. This is notwithstanding the emotional consequences experienced by those individuals who, as a result of such controversial studies, were made to lose out on educational opportunities, or had to be treated in particular ways. For instance, being labelled as feeble minded, as social defectives, as moral imbeciles and/or being accused of contributing to the nation's degeneration, with little hope of getting help, as medicine and education offered nothing to them. Degeneracy and delinquency theories were developed by exploiting heredity twin studies and were used to promote discrimination, social inequalities, labelling, and categorisation. Some people were labelled as morally sick, having idiocy problems—there were even claims that symptoms of these problems could be seen in the individual's head shape, facial features, or voice. All these controversial ideas caused a great deal of rigid thinking, promoted stigma and contributed to human suffering. However, it is important to note that the social policies and practices referred to earlier cannot all be attributed to 'bad' twin studies.



Conclusion

Having highlighted the 'harm' done by 'bad' mainstream twin psychological studies, I suggest that more critical qualitative approaches should be used to study twins' accounts in future to counter the 'damage' by making available different constructions. I propose that social constructionist approaches would be especially suitable because they allow room for a critical stance towards mainstream psychology. These approaches are, importantly, useful because they allow the researcher to view the experiences of twins from their own perspective, something which mainstream approaches lack, hence some of the problems I highlighted.

CAREER SPOTLIGHT : PLAY THERAPIST

What is the role of a play therapist?

Play therapists treat complex issues in children through the use of play as a communicative tool to understand and help them work through emotional distress. A range of issues can be worked through, including abuse and neglect, bereavement, divorce, traumatic experiences, psychological problems and learning difficulties.

What is the relevance of my Psychology degree?

A Psychology degree exposes you to many issues a play therapist intervenes with. Key responsibilities of a play therapist also crossover with the knowledge and basic skills you will begin to develop during your degree, including:

- Understanding child development
- Assessment of each child and their needs in order to determine suitable therapeutic intervention
- Delivery of therapeutic intervention
- Understanding the concept of building rapport
- Maintaining records of progress and reviewing therapeutic interventions regularly

How do I become a play therapist?

Following the completion of a Psychology degree, individuals can either complete a Master's degree in play therapy practice recognised at [specific universities in the UK](#), or a Masters qualification offered by Play Therapy UK through [Leeds Beckett University](#). Play therapy-based work experiences can be difficult to obtain, though other experience with children in schools, youth groups, social services and mental health support are relevant and useful.



Case Study: A Play Therapist working in Education, Sonnhild

Taken from the British Association of Play Therapists website, Sonnhild describes his experience as a play therapist working within behavioural and educational teams across 5 primary schools.



Sonnhild pursued a career as a play therapist due to an interest in child therapies which developed during a teaching career. They also held the belief that play and art are essential for enhancing child development through facilitation, exploration, discovery and learning. Sonnhild specifically works with children whose emotional needs are having an extreme impact on their educational experience and socialisation and those who display behaviour which could likely lead to exclusion. This role also includes liaising with parents/carers, teachers and other professionals involved in the child's care.

You can read the full case-study written by Sonnhild [here](#).

GETTING TO KNOW THE PSYCHOLOGY TEAM: DR MATTHEW HALL

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

I am the Programme Leader for Psychology at Arden University and I have a suit of responsibilities which includes, but is not limited to: all blended and distance learning psychology models and programmes; BPS accreditation; student progression, retention, and achievement; student admissions; chairing various committees; and the supervision of student dissertations. In addition to these I am keen to develop the School of Psychology and have been actively involved in the recent seminars, publications, and research groups.

Can you tell the readers about your main research interests?

As an interdisciplinary scholar I have worked on public, private and not-for-profit research projects. I actively publish and have published on topics as diverse as: 'metrosexuality'; body modification through substance misuse; the use of cognitive enhancing substances; disability and sexual desires and pleasures; feminism and the media; and issues faced by ex-service personnel accessing public services. My current research interests include: image-based sexual violences (colloquially known as 'revenge porn'); domestic abuse and the use of technologies; the transnationalisation of violences and policing, legislation, and governance issues; and the orientation to gender and sexuality in online contexts.

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

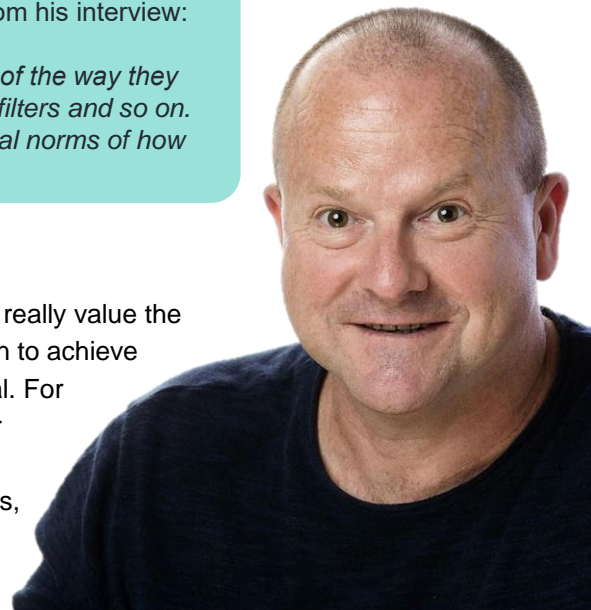
Writing and publishing is one of my favourite academic experiences. I began publishing peer-reviewed works whilst undertaking my PhD. In the 5 years since graduating I have published five books, seven chapters in books, fourteen peer-reviewed journal papers, six policy documents, and either written or interviewed for, eleven media articles. And, I always aim for my research to have 'real world' impacts whether that is in recommendations to those bodies that provide mental health services to ex-service personnel or governments that legislate for gender-related crimes. For example, with a colleague in Finland I set out detailed recommendations in response to 'revenge porn' to the to the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, and the House of Commons Select Committee: The Women and Equalities Committee.

Matthew recently did an interview for the Chilean newspaper, El Mercurio, with journalist Sofia Beuchat on the 'Selfie Paradox'. Here's a quote from his interview:

"The selfie paradox is where people believe they are in control of the way they present themselves through the use of camera angles, lighting, filters and so on. But, how people represent themselves tends to conform to social norms of how (wo)men should look"

What is your favourite thing about being part of AU?

The students and staff are my favourite thing about Arden University. I really value the diversity of perspectives at the University, and their drive and motivation to achieve the very best regardless of their individual circumstances is inspirational. For example, if you have been reading the Arden University Twitter feed, or attended the 2019 graduations, you will have seen Arden University students gaining degrees from a range of backgrounds, ages, ethnicities, personal circumstances, nationalities, genders, and so on. All saying that gaining a degree was one of the best experiences of their lives!



PUBLISHING AND EMPLOYABILITY

Dr Matthew Hall

In the previous issue of the School of Psychology Newsletter, Editor Holly Stokes covered some of the key subject specific and generic skills set out by the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education that graduates should develop during their studies in her article *Building your Employability*. In this issue I want to focus on the generic skill of communicating complex information in writing, and in particular, publishing.

Publishing is an excellent way of demonstrating to prospective and current employers one's quality of written work because this is likely to have gone through a peer-reviewed process of sorts with oversight from an editor. There are many ways to get oneself published and this includes books, book chapters, peer-reviewed academic papers, government and non-government reports, industry journals, periodicals, newspapers and magazines, reputable online platforms, the Arden University School of Psychology Newsletter, and many others. However, attempting to publish in some of these publications can seem daunting.

Submitting Evidence To Government And Parliamentary Consultations

But, a more easily accessible, and less well-known means of publishing that can impact on government policy and carries credibility with employers and universities, is submitting written evidence to government and parliamentary consultations. The vast majority of countries around the globe will have public consultations on a variety of topics. The nice thing about such consultations is that almost anyone can submit evidence and it can be submitted in a format of your choosing. All submissions factor into the final government report and some are also referenced. Submissions are given a code which can be used to demonstrate your writing skills with a reference to published work on your CV. For example:

Hall, M. & Hearn, J. (2018). Written evidence for the 'Sexual harassment of women and girls in public places inquiry'. *House of Commons Select Committee: The Women and Equalities Committee*. June 6. SPP0100.

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/women-and-equalities-committee/sexual-harassment-of-women-and-girls-in-public-places/written/83268.html>

If you are interested in publishing in this way, keep an eye out for relevant consultations.

Below is a list of some of the UK and European open calls:

[Parliamentary inquiries](#)
[UK Government](#)

[European Commission](#)
[Scottish Government](#)

[Welsh Government](#)
[Northern Ireland Executive](#)

PSYCHLAB NEWS

New materials and resources will soon be added to our [Virtual Psychology Lab on iLearn](#). This will include:

Assessments ([Paul Spector Website](#)) – The Paul Spector website has a wide range of assessment measures from Paul Spector himself alongside other free-use assessments.

[International Personality Item Pool](#) – An extremely useful website with items which can be used for questionnaires on a wide range of personality constructs. Also includes information about how items are scored and the reliability of scales indicated by the Cronbach's alpha value.



Domestic Abuse: A UK Public Health Concern

Natalie Quinn-Walker, Lecturer in Healthcare Management

October is **Domestic Violence Awareness month**. Natalie Quinn-Walker, a lecturer at Arden University, presents the following article outlining the UK public health concern of domestic abuse.

As part of the 'Lunchtime Lecture Series', Natalie will be presenting a talk titled: **Healthcare Professionals Response to Male Domestic Abuse Victims** on 6th November, 1pm - 2pm BST via Adobe Connect.



Natalie Quinn-Walker

Domestic abuse has become an entrenched public health issue. NICE statistics show the alarming impact upon society, with 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men being affected by domestic abuse. However, current figures are underestimating the real problem, as many victims disengage with their families and friends due to obsessive control of their partner, resulting in victims remaining in cycles of abuse for several years.

Tavistock Relationship (2016) explains the importance of halting the abuse before it escalates, as fear and control is instilled into the victim as the cycle of abuse continues. Many victims do not report their abuse due to fear of their safety or others. The common questions for victims are '*why did you stay? Why did you not leave?*'. However, leaving is not an option; it is a change in mind-set that is ultimately required. This is a process which can take months or years for the victim to eventually build the courage needed to escape and report.

Domestic abuse is gender and sexuality neutral, resulting in any potential relationship dynamic to develop an uncontrollable unbalanced level of power. The UK has reviewed policies on several occasions, increasing sentencing, improving support, and training to assist in identifying potential victims of abuse. However, policies such as 'End Violence against Women and Girls 2010 to 2015' may discourage male victims from seeking support, as the policy title emphasizes the misconception that domestic abuse is only a female concern. In 2018, a review of policy had begun, 'No Defence for Abuse Domestic Abuse Strategy 2018 – 2023', focusing on prevention, intervention and partnering strategies to ensure awareness of domestic abuse is raised across the UK. This is in accordance with domestic abuse existing as a hidden disease of society, happening behind closed doors.

Various campaigns have been launched to tackle this Public Health concern, with the latest report of 'A Cry for Health' being published in 2017. More specifically, SafeLives found the importance of locating specialist trained domestic abuse support workers at accident and emergency (A&E) and maternity units to empower people to report their abuse. However, not all victims will attend A&E. Domestic abuse is an umbrella term that can include a variety of abuse; psychological/ emotional abuse, coercive control, physical, financial, harassment/stalking, and online abuse.

Further education within various healthcare settings such as hospitals, GP's, dentists, therapists, and pharmacies could improve the potential of identifying a domestic abuse victim. Primarily, domestic abuse training has often focused on physical signs of abuse (bruises, cuts, wounds). While training focusing on noticeable marks and behaviours could prompt the staff to provide a leaflet or discuss in private their concerns, additional training is needed to understand the psychological abuse victims suffer, reviewing the victim's behaviour. Even though on initial contact, the victim may not disclose due to lack of confidence or disbelief of their abuse, it is a conversation starter. Some victims do not receive life-threatening injuries or require medical attention; however, they may attend a pharmacy for pain relief medication or see their dentist on several occasions for broken or chipped teeth. Repetitive visits to these settings could 'red flag' the situation and prompt the staff to delicately and sensitively enquire.

Currently, systems are in place, with healthcare professionals being trained on safeguarding, domestic abuse awareness. However, these training sessions need to be more intense to emphasise that not every victim will demonstrate the same ailments. Additionally, more training for professionals is needed, to encourage them to ask the questions, “*Is everything ok at home?*”. Victims may not disclose the first time or the second, but it will begin to break down the stigma and may encourage the victim to seek support when they are ready. This is notably because victims are often unaware they are in an abusive relationship, especially if no physical abuse is involved.

To assist in tackling this Public Health concern, the development of a gender-inclusive approach needs to be adopted. Consequently, the re-development of policies could empower more male victims to report their abuse. Significantly, the Office for National Statistics explains in 2014/5 that there were 1.3 million female victims of domestic abuse and 600,000 male victims, calculating for every three victims there were two females and one male. As an extension, Trust for London explains figures are equating to an alarming £5.5 billion per annum being spent on physical and mental health services (£1.6bn), criminal justice (£1.2bn) and housing and refuge costs (£185.7m). With the current overstretching of budgets for the provision of adequate care within the NHS and Public Health service, tackling this on-growing problem could save millions and save lives. Alarming, Trust for London, explains with an economic output loss of £1.8 billion per annum, which is an increasing yearly and on-growing problem, this could result in irreversible damage to the economy, in particular assisting in another potential recession.

In consideration of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, clearly without meeting the basic needs of life, safety and psychological needs which are often stripped from a victim, they are then trapped in the circle of ongoing abuse. This, in turn, stunts their ability to realise their true capabilities as identified by Pilgrims, who explains that everyone should have the opportunity to meet their potential. Tackling domestic abuse at the root cause can assist in the prevention of long-term economic issues and potential physical and psychological damage to the victims.

SUPPORT SERVICES

DASH Charity Helpline –
01753 549 865
24 hour National Domestic
Abuse Freephone Helpline –
0808 200 0247
Men’s Advice Line –
0808 801 0327
National LGBT Domestic
Abuse Helpline –
0300 999 5428

Due to economic issues which may be faced by the families such as loss of work, unemployment, the struggle for provisions of a balanced diet, the World Health Organisation research suggests these can increase the risk of family conflicts, resulting in domestic abuse. Thus, increasing emphasis is placed towards Public Health England to tackle this ever-growing problem. Domestic abuse causes ripples throughout the healthcare system, housing, and employment. Domestic abuse does not only affect the victim, but it also affects the families and friends of the perpetrator and victim, which is a hidden cost of the burdens of the abuse. Families and friends may require therapy, in particular children. Until domestic abuse is tackled as a gender-neutral approach, the statistics will never demonstrate the actual cost of domestic abuse – life or financial cost. Ultimately, domestic abuse is not an in-house issue; although it happens behind closed doors, the impact affects everyone.

References:

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- Office for National Statistics. (2016). Focus on violent crime and sexual offences data. London, UK: Office for National Statistics. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2015/bulletintablesfocusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffencesyearendingmarch2015>
- Trust for London (2018). Domestic violence costs £5.5 billion a year in England. Retrieved from: <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/news/domestic-violence-costs-55bn-year-england/>

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Arden School of Psychology Events

Lunchtime Lecture Series

HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS RESPONSE TO MALE DOMESTIC ABUSE VICTIMS.

Natalie Quinn-Walker

6th November at 13:00 BST

This talk will discuss research on male domestic abuse victims' experiences when seeking medical attention for their injuries following a domestic abuse incident.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY: A TWIN STUDY.

Mvikeli Ncube

December 3rd at 13:00 BST

The central focus of the talk is on how twin identity is socially constructed through language and other symbolic resources available to twins in their own specific cultural context

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

- o **A lecturer** by Tom Lockhart, 29th October 2019 at 12pm BST
- o **An Educational Psychologist** by Charmaine Ellis, 11th November 2019
- o **An Occupational Psychologist** by Gail Steptoe-Warren, 25th November 2019
- o **A varied psychology profile** by James Au-Yeung, 10th December 2019 at 11am BST

BPS events

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

❖ **Careers in Psychology 2019** ([Sheffield, UK: 16th November](#) and [London, UK: 30th November](#))

Attendees will be exposed to the different careers in Psychology, with talks from psychologists in various fields giving an insight into their career journeys.

❖ **Psychology and Climate Change Talk** ([Manchester, UK: 12th November](#))

Caroline Hickman will lead a discussion on our current climate and biodiversity crisis, examining how psychotherapy can engage with this emergency

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

Other Events

❖ **Bristol Neuroscience Festival** ([University of Bristol, UK: 28th March, 2020](#)).

There will be the opportunity to explore the 'Evolution of the Brain' exhibition and attend talks by University of Bristol academic researchers. Tickets available soon.

Contributing to the next edition of the newsletter

I would like to thank all contributors to the first 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: December 2019.