Social Psychology Special Issue
Dominic Abrams and the Group Processes Lab
The Contribution Of Stereotype Threat To Social Psychology
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‘Easy to access and free, and a mine of useful information for my work: what more could I want? I only wish I’d found this years ago!’
Dr Jennifer Wild, Consultant Clinical Psychologist & Senior Lecturer, Institute of Psychiatry

‘The selection of papers suits my eclectic mind perfectly, and the quality and clarity of the synopses is uniformly excellent.’
Professor Guy Claxton, University of Bristol
Editor’s Column: A Social Psychology Special Issue!
Charlotte R. Pennington

‘Psychologists have a penchant for irrational exuberances, and whenever we discover something new we feel the need to discard everything old. Social psychology is the exception. We kept cognition alive during the behaviourist revolution that denied it, and we kept emotion alive during the cognitive revolution that ignored it […] . But psychological revolutions inevitably collapse under their own weight and psychologists start hunting for all the babies they tossed out with the bathwater. Social psychology is where they typically go to find them. So the challenge for social psychologists watching yet another revolution that promises to leave them in the dustbin of history is to remember that we’ve outlived every revolutionary who has ever pronounced us obsolete.’
Professor Daniel Gilbert (2008)

I AM VERY PLEASED to introduce you to the 97th issue of the PsyPAG Quarterly, which is a Social Psychology Special Issue! Given that 2015 marks the 20th anniversary of stereotype threat research, my reasoning for this special issue is to showcase the importance of Social Psychology and the contributions this field has made to the understanding of our social world. For me, social psychology is what bridges psychology sub-disciplines together; something that is certainly evident in the above quote! September 2015 also saw the British Psychological Society (BPS) Social Section join with the Developmental Section to host their annual conferences, highlighting the multi-disciplinary nature of these two fields.

This special issue is packed with an array of fantastic articles, reflections and conference and book reviews. Kicking us off, Ioanna Kapantai, Catarina Morais, and Fatima Tresh interview Professor Dominic Abrams about the Centre for the Study of Group Processes (CSGP), and discuss the future of social psychology in relation to intergroup relations research. Next, I discuss the contribution of stereotype threat research to social psychology, and review what we have learnt about this situational phenomenon over the past two decades. Candida Darling then discusses readiness for reconciliation in Northern Ireland; Michael Walton provides hints and tips for undertaking community research; and Tommy Van Steen provides an interesting account of the arising ethical issues that researchers may encounter during field research. Then, Professor James Hartley analyses the writing patterns of famous academics, and asks the interesting question; are postgraduates morning people?

Reflecting on receiving the PsyPAG Rising Researcher Award, Craig Harper discusses his research looking at ontological insecurity on social and political values. Following on nicely, Amrita Ahluwalia discusses using Moral Foundations Theory as a social psychological framework to understand moral intuitions. Providing further food for thought, Kimberly Hill discusses Psychology as a STEM subject, and looks at the scientific rigour of our discipline.

We also have three conference reviews: I am extremely excited to have received two conference reviews for the BPS Social and Developmental Conference. First, Kiran Purewal and Chloe Tyler provide a reflective account of their experiences as first time presenters. Marianne Erskine-Shaw and I then discuss the conference programme and reflect on the success of combining both the Social and Developmental sections.
Next, Astrid Coxon reflects on presenting her research at the PsyPAG conference, and provides a fantastic account of why qualitative research should not be viewed as being of lesser value than quantitative research.

We finish with two book reviews; Laura Oxley provides a fantastic review of Noreena Hertz’ book *Eyes Wide Open: How to make smart decisions in a confusing world*. Finally, I review Claude Steele’s page-turning account of his research into stereotype threat and how it came about in the book *Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do*.

Taken together, I feel that the articles presented in this issue merge beautifully. I want to end this editorial column by saying a huge thank you to all the authors included for their excellent contributions. It has been a fantastic experience to be the Lead Editor of this Social Psychology Special and I really hope that our readers enjoy it! As always, we hope that you will think about contributing to future issues of the PsyPAG Quarterly to showcase the excellent research that you, as UK postgraduates, are conducting!

**Charlotte R. Pennington**

*On behalf of the PsyPAG Quarterly Editorial Team.*

**Reference**

HELLO AND WELCOME to the Winter 2015 issue of the PsyPAG Quarterly!

I hope you are now well settled into the new academic year and are looking forward to the Christmas break. As we reach the end of our 30th Anniversary year, I am happy to report that there has been lots of PsyPAG activity over the last few months since I was elected as Chair.

Firstly, we successfully launched our PsyPAG book: A Guide for Psychology Postgraduates: Surviving Postgraduate Study. This has been posted free of charge to UK psychology postgraduate departments across the UK and can also be downloaded here: www.psypag.co.uk/psypag-book/. Timed to celebrate our 30th Anniversary, this book contains articles to help navigate challenges typically experienced by postgraduate psychology students. Articles are both newly commissioned and recent PsyPAG Quarterly articles, written by current postgraduates and PsyPAG alumni. We have received great feedback on the book so far but please contact me on the details below with your comments. We also posted a piece promoting the work of PsyPAG and the book in the October issue of the British Psychological Society’s magazine The Psychologist.

Secondly, we are busy with preparation for PsyPAG’s 31st Annual Conference at the University of York on 27–29 July 2016. PsyPAG’s annual conference is our flagship event where approximately 170 delegates over the three days come together, including UK psychology postgraduates currently studying for MSc’s and PhD’s, as well as practitioners in training. The conference is a fantastic opportunity to network with other postgraduates and present your work to a supportive audience. We hope to see many of you in York next July!

We have also funded some brilliant workshops for postgraduates this term. These include ‘The Data has already been collected? Using secondary data in Psychology’ in London, and ‘Negotiating the PhD’, running in Glasgow, London and Oxford, hosted by us and the Society’s Psychology of Education Section.

Please consider applying for our range of funding opportunities, including workshops (http://www.psypag.co.uk/workshops/) and our range of bursaries (http://www.psypag.co.uk/bursaries-2/). Funds include our relatively new Research Grant Bursaries, providing funds for research costs such as participant payment and travel costs. We received fantastic quality applications for our October 2015 bursary round and look forward to continue supporting many more postgraduates in the future.

We still have some vacant committee positions available, with details found towards the back of PsyPAG Quarterly. If you would like to apply, please contact Vice Chair Bernadette Robertson at: vicechair@psypag.co.uk

As ever, thank you to the Society’s Research Board for their continued support and the PsyPAG committee for their hard work and commitment to supporting UK psychology postgraduates. I wish you all a relaxing Christmas and very Happy New Year!

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Psychology people in profile:

Professor Dominic Abrams

Ioanna Kapantai, Catarina Morais & Fatima Tresh

The Centre for the Study of Group Processes (CSGP) was established in 1992 at the University of Kent. It is a research centre that emphasises the significance of groups in Social Psychology and intergroup relations. Professor Dominic Abrams founded the Centre along with five other social psychology researchers: Professor Rupert Brown, Professor Noel Clark, Professor Steve Hinkle, Dr Lorne Hulbert and Professor Geoffrey Stephenson. The Centre holds an excellent international reputation and remains a prominent influence in Social Psychology research, postgraduate training and teaching. Anna Kapantai, Catarina Morais and Fatima Tresh interviewed Professor Dominic Abrams, the current Director of the CSGP, to gain some insight into some of the research being conducted at the Centre.

Why did you start the Centre?

And how did it start?

The UK had been a major centre for a unique brand of ‘European’ social psychology but after Henri Tajfel’s research group in Bristol dispersed it was clear that Kent, which had originally been established as the Social Psychology Research Unit by Professor Geoffrey Stephenson, had the largest concentration of researchers with expertise in group processes and intergroup relations in the UK and we wanted to continue that important legacy.

What kind of subjects and topics are studied at the CSGP? Could you describe a bit more in detail what you do here at the CSGP?

This has grown and changed over the years. To begin with, our work mainly examined intergroup prejudice and contact, and organisational and community relations but by the mid-1990s there was a larger group of academics and our interests widened to include small group decision making, political engagement, equality and diversity, developmental aspects of prejudice and social cognition. After that and through the last 10 years we became a really wide ranging centre that researches almost every aspect of the psychology of group membership and group categorisation. One or two areas have been less prominent though such as neuroscience and evolutionary approaches. The Centre reflects the shared interest of its members which largely focus on connecting up with wider societal questions.

Could you give some examples of how such research findings can be applied in everyday life?

Some research has indirect application – experiments are particularly useful for shedding light on why things happen or could happen in the future. Other research has direct application – large-scale surveys and studies of whole organisations can help to explain the way things are or provides an insight into a particular event or situation. We do both types of research. For example, our experiments on leadership help us to understand why there are so many instances where leaders of large organisations engage in questionable or corrupt practices and it also helps us to understand when and why leaders are most able to introduce changes or innovations. Our studies of organisations have shown how the combination of people’s satisfaction with their work and their identification with their organisation influence their commitment to remain a member of the organisation. This sort of insight can make a
huge difference to an organisation’s competitiveness and viability. Our developmental experiments give us insight into the different ages at which children figure out how other members of their groups will respond to conformity and non-conformity (deviance). These sorts of studies tell us a lot about when and why children may include or exclude one another from social relationships at school, which in turn has implications for their psychological health and wellbeing. We also do archival research, such as our analysis of the composition of lynch mobs which showed that the severity and barbarity of lynchings increased as the proportion of the number of crowd members increased relative to the number of victims.

Could some of your research/knowledge also be applied in the general public rather than specific crowds?

Some early research examined the rise of Scottish nationalism amongst 16- to 18-year-olds during the 1980s. We were recently able to conduct a survey of a similarly aged group of young people in Scotland and to test whether our theory of political change accurately predicted their choices to vote ‘Yes’ in the referendum on Scottish independence. This work has been very exciting because it offers a really tough test of a psychological theory and at the same time reveals how that theory can really help to make sense of social change.

A different type of research has been our work on ageism and age-related attitudes. We’ve worked with major charities such as Age UK as well as the Government Department for Welfare and Pensions over a number of years. Here we led an international team to design part of the European Social Survey. Using evidence from over 50,000 participants from 27 countries we have been able to show how age discrimination is linked to people’s wellbeing, how psychological definitions of age are culturally framed, how serious a problem age discrimination is, and on international differences in age stereotyping. A third core of our work is to understand how prejudice and discrimination work across society. We’ve done extensive work with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (and are just about to commence a new project) which addresses the question of how different types of prejudice are connected and how they occur. For example a recent paper based on this work revealed a phenomenon we called ‘equality hypocrisy’ – people’s willingness to advocate greater equality for some groups but not others.

Collaborations and work outside the lab…

‘The School of Psychology started as the Social Psychology Research Unit, and later became the Institute of Social and Applied Psychology. The commitment to application of research has been there from the outset and we have conducted a great many field studies and projects working with external organisations. Examples include Race Equality Sandwell, the Department for Communities and Local Government, as well as other organisations such as the Anne Frank Trust and People United. These organisations tend to have fantastic networks and connections into local communities and we have often tried to help them evaluate or develop their strategies. For example, with People United and the Anne Frank Trust we have jointly funded PhD studentships that have combined academic research on topics such as prosociality and kindness or prejudice reduction with testing the sort of direct interventions that these organisations use. This means we are able to make use of the creativity and amazing scope and ambition that goes into their work to really discover how well our theories work. And we complement that by providing our research skills and insights to test out the potential benefits of their work. It is a win-win relationship and always generates fascinating questions, problems and opportunities.’
Why is it important to have a diverse community involved?

It is hard to imagine researching group processes without encompassing different types of group! Diversity is crucial for our research in many different ways but I’ll mention two. First, it is great to have a diversity of researchers – colleagues and students in CSGP always comprise a very broad national and cultural mix as well as a good age and gender balance and other diverse characteristics. This means that our work is constantly building on insights from different perspectives and comparisons, which is a great strength. I think at present we have members from more than 10 different countries (England, Scotland, the US, Portugal, Poland, Italy, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Australia, Belgium, Turkey, Greece, visitors from Chile, etc.).

The CSGP also includes postgraduate students. How do they contribute?

Students are at the heart of much of our work. We involve students in collaborative activities with each other and with academic staff as early as possible, for example, by joining our weekly research meeting (GroupLab) and by co-supervising undergraduate students and getting them involved in projects that are different from their own so that they build wider experience and expertise. Personally I get greatest satisfaction from seeing students build their knowledge and ambition and ultimately being able to pursue the questions and careers that they really care about.

Do you think GPIR has helped attract more social researchers to the UK particularly?

It would be very nice if that is the case but I’m not sure how I’d estimate that. What I think we have done is to define the field for psychology, and that has created a larger space for particular types of research. Our explicit goal was to link research on what happens inside groups to research on what happens between groups – previously two completely different traditions of work. It’s not that each piece of research has to do that job but by constantly putting research of both types side by side it helps to generate cross-connections and integration. These days I guess ‘Group Processes and Intergroup Relations’ is viewed as a coherent concept, as illustrated by the frequent use of this title for preconferences at the major scientific conferences.

Where do you think you owe the success of creating a world-class journal?

We had academic credibility and connections on our side so that we were supported from the start by a very distinguished and high profile set of editorial board members from across the world. And these people...
How the CSGP led to the *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* journal (*GPIR*)...  
‘Despite the success of European social psychology it had set itself in a confrontational position in relation to American research. A key aim of the journal was to create a bridge between these contrasting traditions. And actually it was my wife’s idea, we just followed her instructions!’

**The success...**  
‘There are half a dozen journals specialising in the psychology of groups, and some have been around for many decades and are extremely well respected. Within about five years of launching *GPIR* it had established itself as the leader amongst these journals, and has sustained that position ever since.’

(one of whom is still one of our Associate Editors) were all very committed to the project and devoted a lot of effort to attract good contributions from authors and to ensure the operation was highly professional from the start. We’ve also been supported by a succession of outstanding editorial assistants, most of whom started as PhD students at Kent and all of whom have gone on to have successful careers.

*Since the start of GPIR, there must have been different trends/emphases in group and intergroup relations research... Where do you think research is headed towards now?*  
That’s an excellent question. There are always fashions and fads but the central questions largely remain the same (social influence, prejudice, change). I think that *GPIR* is a natural place for continuing to make cross-level connections (that is, linking the individual, group, intergroup, and societal levels). As issues become more globalised (such as climate change, migration, responses to human crises, demographic shifts, and cross-national/cultural relationships) and as modes of communication and information sharing are changing rapidly, there is an ever growing need for social psychological research to address how people respond and approach such issues. Research techniques and types of data are always developing too so the field is constantly moving.

**A few pints of beer... there came a world-class journal.**  
‘At the time the door was fairly open, we just had to find a publisher and come up with a good proposal. As it turned out, this transpired at a BPS conference and our discussions commenced over a few pints of beer. But these days the commercial pressures are different and even if it is technically much easier to launch a journal, ensuring that it succeeds and getting substantial investment from a publisher is a big challenge. The main challenge though is to identify a potential long-term audience for the content of the journal. With *GPIR* we knew that the existing mainstream journals simply did not have the capacity to cope with the growing volume of excellent research. One of our members has actually recently launched a new multidisciplinary journal, *Contention*, which is doing extremely well and for which we have very high hopes.’
Other than professionally, has the GPIR affected you personally?
Aside from being a pleasure to edit? It has given me a chance to get to know a wider set of people, some of whom have become very longstanding friends. So, as well as being a lot of work, it has given me a lot of fun and great relationships that I am very grateful for.

Looking backwards and forwards, what would be interesting to discover about CSGP?
I’m looking forward (some day) to creating a time line and sort of family tree of CSGP to see just how many (and who) people are in some way connected with it. It may be that it turns out we are all connected to the Queen or Barack Obama (or perhaps some less savoury characters!), but even if we restrict ourselves to an academic network going back in time there are clear links to Tajfel and other historic figures in social psychology and I suspect the network now fans out to all sorts of countries, careers, research areas and organisations. I hope that we continue to be an inclusive, outward looking and socially engaged group and that CSGP continues to make a positive contribution to psychology and society.

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@ Group_Lab
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Introduction

Do social psychological processes play a significant role in the academic under-achievement of certain minority groups? Twenty years ago, Steele and colleagues set out to answer this question. In their seminal experiments, Steele and Aronson (1995) assigned African Americans and Caucasian students to one of two experimental conditions. In one condition, students were primed that a verbal ability test would be evaluative of their intellectual aptitude. In the second condition, students were told that the test was a problem solving exercise that was not linked to their ability. Results indicated that African American students underperformed in relation to their Caucasian peers when a negative societal stereotype about their group identity was made salient. However, their performance did not suffer when the same test was presented as non-diagnostic of ability. Steele and Aronson (1995) termed this phenomenon ‘stereotype threat’ to refer to the situational predicament that an individual experiences when they perceive that their performance will confirm a negative stereotype about a group to which they belong. Offering more than the reductive suggestion of genetic differences in intellectual ability between groups (c.f. Jackson & Rushton, 2006), this theory suggests that the mere salience of negative societal stereotypes may be great enough to hinder performance.

Since this pioneering work, researchers have extended and replicated these effects across a diverse range of groups, situations, and tasks. For example, stereotype threat effects have been demonstrated for women’s mathematical achievement (Spencer, Steele & Quinn, 1999), older adults’ memory recall (Hess, Hinson & Hodges, 2009), and drug users’ cognitive ability (Cole et al., 2005). Given these robust effects, researchers have turned their efforts to elucidate the underlying mechanisms of stereotype threat.

Moderators and mediators of stereotype threat

Research has focused on factors that may exacerbate performance decrements and has identified numerous moderators that heighten individuals’ vulnerability to stereotype threat. For example, stereotype threat...
effects are more pronounced for difficult tasks, particularly for those who have lower working memory (Régner et al., 2010). Moreover, research indicates that individuals are more susceptible to stereotype threat effects when they value the performance domain, identify strongly with their social group, and for those high in stigma consciousness (c.f. Nguyen & Ryan, 2008, for a meta-analysis).

Although evidence has been accrued regarding the moderating variables that may influence the strength and direction of the stereotype threat-performance relationship, research aiming to elucidate mediating mechanisms has been met with varying degrees of empirical support. For example, although Spencer et al. (1999) found that increased anxiety partially mediated the stereotype threat-performance relationship, further studies were unable to replicate this effect (e.g. Keller & Daunheimer, 2003). In addition, numerous proposed mediators such as self-handicapping, evaluation apprehension, cognitive interference and performance confidence have resulted in non-significant findings (c.f. Smith, 2004).

Furthermore, it is plausible that different mediators govern the effects of stereotype threat for diverse groups and performance outcomes (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007). For example, converging evidence suggests that working memory may mediate the effects of stereotype threat on women’s mathematical performance. However, research has also demonstrated that stereotype threat harms proceduralised skills, such as golf putting, which operate largely outside of conscious awareness and thus, do not rely on working memory (Beilock et al., 2006). This research, therefore, supports the notion that stereotype threat may operate through multiple affective, cognitive and motivational pathways to bring about performance deficits, and may be induced by independent mechanisms in different tasks (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007).

Reducing stereotype threat

Given that stereotype threat is an environmental construct, there is reason to suggest that researchers can reduce the effects of stereotype threat and improve the performance of stigmatised social groups. Existing interventions include asking individuals to self-affirm a positive personal characteristic that is unrelated to the stereotyped domain (Martens et al., 2006) and enhancing the salience of a non-stigmatised social identity (e.g. multiple social identities; Rydell, McConnell & Beilock, 2009). Theory and research regarding the efficacy of same-sex schooling has also informed the development of stereotype threat interventions. For example, stereotype threat effects are lessened when targeted group members are exposed to positive role models (Marx & Roman, 2002), complete a test in same-sex environments (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000), and view their intelligence as a malleable rather than fixed trait (Aronson, Fried & Good, 2002). These interventions are particularly noteworthy as they may help to elucidate the underlying mechanisms of stereotype threat, which have received less support. Nevertheless, the practical effectiveness of these remedial strategies has also been questioned (Johns, Schmader & Martens, 2005). Overcoming such issue, Johns et al. (2005) proposed that teaching individuals about the harmful effects of stereotypes might present as a particularly effective and convenient remedial strategy to bolster performance. Replicating the typical stereotype threat effect, they found that women solved fewer mathematical problems compared to men when they perceived a mathematical test to be diagnostic of gender-related ability. However, women who learned about stereotype threat and the anxiety that it may evoke did not show these performance impairments. This research therefore suggests that informing people about the pervasive nature of group stereotypes may present as a practical means of reducing their deleterious effects.
Limitations of stereotype threat and future directions

Despite the success of stereotype threat research over the years, researchers have argued that studies have been based upon small and non-representative samples in laboratory settings, thus, raising concerns about the theory’s external validity (Brown & Day, 2006). Recent research, however, has begun to document the applied efficacy of stereotype threat. For example, in a naturalistic study, Rothgerber and Wolsiefer (2013) demonstrated that females’ chess ability was undermined by the presence of a male component. Furthermore, stereotype threat has been found to occur in job promotion contexts, with African Americans underperforming in comparison to Caucasians on a written knowledge test (Chung et al., 2010). Such findings add weight to the assertion that stereotype threat is a very valuable construct for understanding and reducing real-world achievement (Aronson & Dee, 2011).

Issues have also been raised regarding the ecological validity of stereotype threat primes. In real world testing environments, it is unlikely that educators would indicate to test takers that they were examining, or expecting to find, race differences on a test of cognitive ability (Brown & Day, 2006). Similarly, it is unlikely that a teacher would explicitly state a negative stereotype regarding women’s mathematical ability before a maths test commences. Nevertheless, research has suggested that the pervasive nature of negative cultural stereotypes may be ingrained in the educational system, and may be transferred to students by their parents and teachers (Gunderson et al., 2012). In a similar vein, studies have shown that seemingly benign factors in the testing environment, such as the gender composition of the classroom, may elicit stereotype threat effects, and have demonstrated that these effects may be heightened when a stereotype is implicitly primed (c.f. Nguyen & Ryan, 2008, for meta-analysis). As such, it is plausible that when targeted group members take standardised ability tests, such as in educational admission or employment selection contexts, their performance may be undermined when they encounter cues that evoke the salience of a discredited social identity.

The past two decades of research have advanced our understanding of how negative societal stereotypes can hamper achievement and limit opportunities for success. A closer look at the literature, however, reveals that stereotype threat has been traditionally perceived as a singular construct, experienced similarly across individuals, groups and situations (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007). That is, stereotype threat is viewed typically as a threat to social identity; a situational predicament which occurs when individuals perceive their social group to be devalued by others. Nevertheless, targeted individuals may also experience stereotype threat when they perceive that their performance to be self-characteristic of personal ability (e.g. Steele & Aronson, 1995). As such, previous research has overlooked the distinction between the self and the social group as potential targets of stereotype threat, although most stereotype threat manipulations focus on one or the other. More recently, Shapiro and Neuberg (2007) developed the multi-threat framework, which acknowledges the existence of multiple stereotype threats that operate through qualitatively distinct pathways. According to this theory, individuals may experience a self-as-target stereotype threat when they apprehend that stereotype-relevant performance will reflect poorly on one’s own abilities. Conversely, individuals may experience a group-as-target stereotype threat when they perceive that their social group lacks a valued ability. Moreover, this theory acknowledges that different experiences of stereotype threats may emerge due to concerns about who will evaluate performance (i.e. the self, outgroup others, or ingroup others. Nevertheless, to date, no research has empirically examined the effects of these distinct stereotype threats on
performance, and generally utilises the overarching term ‘stereotype threat’ when examining this phenomenon. Future research would therefore benefit from distinguishing between different stereotype threats as this may assist in the elucidation of underlying mechanisms and the development of remedial strategies to lessen performance deficits.

**Conclusion**

The past two decades have documented the pervasive effects that negative societal stereotypes exert on performance. Over the years, research has advanced our knowledge of this situational phenomenon to elucidate the underpinning mechanisms of the stereotype-threat performance relationship and has replicated these effects across a diverse range of social groups. Stereotype threat therefore presents as a high-impact theoretical framework to explain the damaging effects that negative stereotypes can exert on test performance and, more generally, signifies the consequences of societal stigma and inequality. From this perspective, the theory of stereotype threat demonstrates the power of social psychology. It identifies social barriers that hinder achievement and allows for the development of interventions to bring about long-term improvement. Given that stereotype threat is inherently a social psychological phenomenon, there is reason to suggest that we can: Challenge negative societal stereotypes, improve the achievement outcomes and opportunities for minority group members, tackle inequality and stigma, and ultimately, promote social change. It is, therefore, hoped that this article enables readers to consider how negative societal stereotypes may impact and imperil those targeted by them, and appreciate the practical educational findings that Steele and Aronson (1995) presented to us 20 years ago.

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A difference of opinion; hope and fear in post-conflict society: An exploration of readiness for reconciliation

Candida Darling

Seventy-nine per cent of conflicts around the world that became active in the last 10 years were conflict relapses—occurrences of resurgent, armed violence in societies where conflict had been settled for at least a year (Sandole, 2013). It is suggested that the major cause of this resurgence is that the conflicts were not truly settled, that there was no reconciliation (Auerbach, 2009).

The conflict in Northern Ireland was, undoubtedly, an identity conflict (White, 2001); it ran for at least 30 years causing individuals, who had once lived a relatively peaceful co-existence to commit many acts of violence and wreak bloody revenge. This conflict has been officially over for nearly 17 years, yet there are violent flare-ups every day including bombings, shootings and a refusal by many in civil society to consider actions necessary to end this cycle of violence (Robinson, 2014).

This article is going to discuss PhD research in progress and the preliminary findings at this stage. This research explores readiness for reconciliation, employing semi-structured interviews with a sample of opinion formers from Northern Ireland. The data is analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2013). Overwhelmingly, the people interviewed wanted understanding, they wanted their stories to be heard and their opinion validated. There are, though, differences regarding the extent to which forgiveness is possible and the need for keeping the sectarian divide active. It appears a threat to the divide is a threat to the fundamental personal identity of much of the population of Northern Ireland.

The conflict: A very short introduction to the main narratives

The first English involvement in Ireland as a whole is reported to have begun as early as 1170; this date is often cited by Catholic Nationalist Republicans (CNR) as the commencement of an 800-year struggle for control of the Irish state. These struggles ultimately culminated in a division of the state into two separate entities: the Irish Free State (Eire) and Northern Ireland – part of the British state in 1922 (Mulholland, 2002).

‘The Troubles’, 1968(9)–1998, was a 30-year period of intense political violence in Northern Ireland. Over 40,000 people were injured and more than 3600 people died during ‘The Troubles’, which are repeatedly cited as the start date of the conflict as a whole by most in the Protestant Unionist Loyalist (PUL) community; although, this community also has significant emotional investment in many historical dates, chiefly from the 17th and 18th century.

Official peace

This conflict officially came to an end with an Irish Republican Army ceasefire in 1994 and the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, which was put out for referendum. It was ratified by a yes vote of over 70 per cent of the people of Northern Ireland and over 90 per cent from the population of Eire (Edwards & McCrattan, 2012), clearly
indicating a large consensus for an end to the conflict.

Since then, there have been concerted efforts to bring about peace, with millions of pounds invested in community programmes and government initiatives. The need for reconciliation has been deliberated for some time, with the term reconciliation appearing in Northern Ireland government documents a total of 46 times in the last nine years (OFMDFM, 2013).

Is peace progressing today?
This conflict has been officially over for nearly 17 years, yet there are violent flare-ups everyday (over 1300 a year); including bombings, shootings and a refusal by many in civil society to consider actions necessary to end this cycle of violence (Nolan, 2014). Can psychology offer an insight into the reasons for this?

Firstly, this 30-year conflict will have considerably impacted upon the nature of group identity in Northern Ireland, thus raising the stakes for ‘identity fusion’ to manifest. Swann et al. (2009) propose that identity fusion occurs when individuals become so attached to their social group they behave as though their personal and social identities are functionally equivalent. Consequently, a real or perceived challenge to group ideals or principles is perceived as an attack on the self. Subsequently it is suggested that there is more group support for extreme actions such as violence, ideologies are entrenched and there are accompanying strong associations with ingroup responsibility and an extreme reaction to the out group (Swann et al., 2009). This fusion of personal with social or group identity could be the reason that it is seemingly impossible to end the sectarian nature of Northern Irish society; a significant emotional investment is likely to endure in belonging to one community or another. Thus challenging the sectarian nature of post-conflict society in Northern Ireland to bring about sustained peace impacts not only politically but endangers self-concept and self-knowledge (Gomez et al., 2011; Turner, 1982). This self-concept is bound up in group adherence to meta-narratives (Auerbach, 2009), however, reconciliation is determined by a move towards shared narratives; causing a paradox which has real consequences for peace in post-conflict Northern Ireland. This leaves the state in a tenuous position regarding its future peace.

Method
Participants
Twelve community leaders; journalists, education professionals, political leaders and cross community workers, recruited via targeted snowball sampling, took part in the study. Respondents were aged between 26 and 62 years (five male and seven female); prospective participants were approached via telephone or email and, post-interview, were asked to recommend someone else in their field.

Materials
Respondents were questioned for approximately an hour using semi-structured interviews with a schedule based on Auerbach’s conceptions of reconciliation. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and data was analysed using IPA.

Preliminary results
Given that the conflict in Northern Ireland is complex it is unsurprising that there are many versions or narratives of events. For example, as I have indicated, the length of the conflict is highly contested as evidenced by a participant whose husband was killed in 1972, who stated:

‘We were all living together you know, there were no problems and then one day out of nowhere the Catholics went mad… they hate us… they are trying to take everything from us.’

She was talking about the start of ‘The Troubles’ in 1968. Others, as I have specified, have suggested they were the culmination of years of colonial intervention and was the final result of a deliberate contrived
sectarian divide, initiated by the British state. Additionally, there is not even agreement between the opposing parties on who the ‘other’ actually is. It is argued that, for Protestants, the ‘them’ are Irish Catholics. Conversely, I have had one participant very clearly identifying other protagonists:

‘In the early stages, in the aftermath of the civil rights movement, being shot off the streets in Derry, whatever happened was the British government took the decision to take the British army off the streets and put them into barracks and then put Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) on the front line. This was influenced by Vietnam and the body bag effect; so what the British were saying was if we push the UDR and RUC we can Ulsterise the conflict, localise it and, ultimately, if they’re being killed – it’s protestants being killed… and we can divide the conflict along sectarian lines and we can be the neutral broker or arbitrating between two warring tribes; when ultimately they are the cause!’ (Community relations worker language (CNR), 2013)

Is it possible to draw society together when even the protagonist is contested? I am not sure at this stage, particularly when akin to other identity conflicts. Both parties have deeply rooted narratives based on ‘victim and victimiser’; as shown in this response to the question – who are the main victims and what do they think about victims on the other side?

‘I think no one has a hierarchy a monopoly but there are different narratives to the conflict.’ (Community relations worker language (CNR), 2013)

Compared to:

‘Innocent victims are victims… people going about their daily business or doing their job, not planting bombs.’ (Political Leader Unionist, 2014)

There are structural reasons for continuing to commit to one group or another. One participant pointed out that, instead of inter-community engagement, society is funded on the basis of sectarian division, out working through duplicate services and a zero sum mentality which pervades all society and exacerbates division:

‘For whatever reason, however, in Northern Ireland the political leaders give them legitimacy. It is less twin-track diplomacy and more two-track dialogue with a pound for Paddy and a pound for Billy leaving everyone in need or perceived need.’ (Community relations worker language (CNR), 2013)

There appears to be a real fear amongst both communities of losing out, even if the leading Republican Party espouses equality:

‘We base everything on the principle of equality and where all the citizens are cherished for their input into Irish society no matter what religion or political views or ethnic origins or sexual orientation.’ (Political Leader Republican, 2014)

She completed with the statement that ‘they’ hope that there will one day be a United Ireland. Clearly then this hope of equality on one side conversely brings the ultimate fear on the other. Threatening social identity in this manner can cause a more extreme adherence to it (Gomez et al., 2011). Thus, for Protestant Unionist Loyalists, Republican dialogue is always tainted with hidden agendas, no matter how egalitarian the rhetoric. Therefore, identifying as a ‘Republican’ ultimately ‘others’ anyone who identifies, not only as British, but, even Northern Irish; creating a stalemate as each side feels the other has usurped their legitimate rights to express their national identity. Consequently, continued peace between the parties involved remains elusive, the crux of the matter could be summarised by this participant:

‘Well you have two distinct identities there is Nationalism and there is Unionism; and that basically translates down into loyalist and republicanism and I suppose that’s really how people see themselves. I know you mentioned about Northern Irish… okay so that, for me, I’m not Northern Irish I’m a Republican. So if you don’t have any particular sort of politics or anything then you sit on the fence.'
You would probably see yourself as being Northern Irish.’ (Political Leader Republican, 2014)

Does this mean there is something craven in adopting a moderate point of view? This is potentially a leap into the unknown which is inducing real fear; however many of the people I have spoken to have a genuine faith in the healing effect of statutory equality and bottom-up approach.

When talking about being Northern Irish some of the responses have been encouraging:

‘I… people say I’m British AND I’m Irish and there is no tension there. Yeah especially when you’re talking to people on that programme and now again they would be obviously erm… I don’t think there are too many people on the Nationalist side who would say that I’m British and Irish, but obviously it’s a step that’s happened and that’s when you do get to hear, especially young people saying, having that distinctive Northern Irish identity and recognising that you don’t all fit, not, do you know, it’s not necessarily fitting into a British or Irish box but that it’s a unique thing.’ (Community relations worker interface, 2014)

It is evident that identity similarities and markers of this identity are involved in a move towards reconciliation, however, there is the enigma of a statistical rise in violence. Could this be due to the threat to identity posed by peace? As more significant moves towards a cohesive identity may cause extremists to regroup if they feel threatened at the very core of their existence (Gomez et al., 2011). Still, there are sustained moves towards a more accepting and pluralist society; a strong agenda for integrated education, an Alliance party with an expanding vote (whose manifesto is cross community) and rises in immigration from other nations including Poland, Lithuania and East Timor bringing many new identities under the banner of Northern Irish (Political Leader Republican, 2014). Perhaps this will aid in reconciliation.

Whilst many call for a more transparent and adversarial political system, suggesting it is a political stalemate that is continuing an illusion of a divided society; others are sure that the division is not only very real but becoming more entrenched every day.

‘The political system helps with that, you know, it sort of gives them permission to stay in that way because they are used for political gain by their leaders.’ (Cross community project leader, 2014)

Auerbach (2009) states the need to ascertain responsibility, bring about justice and apology as vital steps for reconciliation. Therefore, it is sensible that an independent truth commission has been suggested, but, for some this lacks legitimacy even before it is instigated.

‘…truth recovery is fine but in large you are dealing with terrorists who will not tell the truth!’ (Political Leader Unionist, 2014)

Although it’s called for by others:

‘Well again you know with regards to reconciliation its then independent international truth commission.’ (Political Leader Republican, 2014)

A cross-community worker explained this further

‘…most people are very suspicious about others’ stories about what happened in the conflict, because everything has been propagandised for so long that nobody really has the skills or there is no trust… I mean really no trust and few skills to ascertain the truth.’ (Cross community project leader, 2013).

It is hard to imagine how this society will overcome the past and reconcile, the evidence so far is dichotomous. The favoured method of dealing with the past in contemporary Northern Ireland is to bury and forget, memories are suppressed and victims are compelled to disremember as their civic duty. Nevertheless individual families cannot let go of the tragedy of their loss, seeking justice and truth.

‘No matter how much individuals are duty-bound to forget in the name of
peace, they can’t; all that happens is disenchantment with a government system that appears to be selling them out.’ (Cross party high office, 2014).

This is not effective and is harbouring resentment and entrenching sectarian identities. It is time to move tentatively toward truth recovery and there is a will for it. However, several participants closed with the statement tiocfadh ár lá (our day will come) CNR, or similarly never surrender! PLU; these cries alienate the out-group whilst they unite the in-group. There is still hope that the ‘rational people win the day’ (Equality officer (political), 2014) but how can one in lamentation be healed, when past sorrows are considered an obstacle to peace and the only people listening are dissidents with an agenda for more conflict?

Conclusions
Although most of the peace building literature states we must slay the monster of structural inequalities before we can have lasting peace and reconciliation (Barnett, 2008; Kriesberg, 1998; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2011), the findings from this study suggest that even this is a problem that exacerbates and compounds the sectarian divide. Statistics show 70 per cent of the poorest communities are from the Catholic Nationalist Republican population (Nolan, 2014), therefore, an equal sharing of the subvention from Westminster cannot be considered before a level playing field is established (Community relations worker language (CNR) 2013). This, in turn, causes Protestant Unionist Loyalist communities’ to cry, ‘we are losing everything’ (Political Leader Unionist, 2014). It would appear logical that if 70 per cent of public poverty spending is to go to the other side then you must be losing out.

Sadly, there is systematic ‘brain drain’ in place where few are prepared to stay once they are qualified, forming a process of constant refinement of opinion, a concentration of ideologies like a slow squeezing of the juice of rationality (Community relations worker language (PUL), 2014). Yet still people flock to aid in recovery, reconciliation and peace building.

Northern Ireland is, now as ever, a beautiful paradox: As the title suggests there is hope for peace in Northern Ireland, despite fear inducing a retrenchment of identity in some. Psychology can add to the understanding of the causes of violence and add rationality to what, at first glance, seem irrational outpourings of hate.

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Community research: Opportunities and challenges

COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY considers health within its social and political context, with particular emphasis on researchers working towards creating beneficial social and community change (Murray et al., 2004). Through working with communities, researchers can develop partnerships which can have a number of benefits, for instance; partners can advise whether research methods are likely to work in the community, help with recruitment, and provide opportunities to apply the research. Community research, however, is not without challenges. Some examples include establishing partnerships, gaining access to participants, and negotiating complex issues around whom the research is for and who will benefit from it.

Currently I am two-thirds of the way through my PhD, which explores how people cope with adversity by using local ‘places’. This article outlines some techniques I have found helpful when conducting community research. Here, it is important to note that when doing community research at a doctoral level, the importance of great supervisors can never be understated. My supervisory team have experience in community research and connections within the services that I am working with, without which this research would be a greater challenge. I will now outline some hints and tips in relation to; getting to know the community, community participation; employing multiple and mixed methodology; creativity and researcher reflexivity.

1. Getting to know the community

For a number of reasons, it is important to firstly get to know the community you will be working with. Finding out about local needs and interests can inform the aims of research. You can also identify sites to conduct the research in, and find out which type of research is likely to work (i.e. will people actually fill out questionnaires or will interviews be more successful?). Getting to know the community can be a two-way process, as you also want to give communities the opportunity to get to know you. This can build trust, which can be very important, especially when asking for access to participants.

There are number of different techniques which can be employed to get to know a community, such as attending community events, using participant observation (see Reflexivity for a discussion on field notes), community audits (a project which develops a report of a community), and community walks (Kagan et al., 2011). Discussions with people who are important in community life (i.e. counsellors and directors of local organisations) can also be rich sources of information. Secondary sources of information can also be useful, such as websites, policy documents, and reports produced by local services.

At the beginning of my research, I identified opportunities for partnerships by using community mapping to explore the services that were available locally. Mapping has a history in social geography and is often used...
to spatially represent various types of data (Israel et al., 2013). This process of mapping has become its own piece of research and presents as a useful tool for the community. As my research progressed, I also explored the history of the communities and the ongoing regeneration work on local housing and services. This information was useful for developing my aims, and for providing an in-depth description of the communities for my thesis.

Getting to know a community can be very helpful in the early stages of research. Sometimes researchers go beyond to involve community members in conducting the research. This is known as community participation and is discussed next.

2. Community participation
Participatory research by definition involves community members in designing, conducting and sometimes analysing research (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). It differs from ‘traditional’ approaches to research where community members are not just participants but also co-creators of research. This also goes beyond getting to know the community, to actually involving them in research.

Biggs (1989) distinguishes between four different approaches to community participation (see Figure 1). As Figure 1 shows, these forms of participation lie on a continuum, with community members gaining greater control over the project as you move down through each stage. One example of a collegiate approach to participation is ‘community researchers’. Community researchers are members of the community who are partners in deciding the aims of the research, and are trained in research including: designing methods, collecting data and analysis. According to Goodson and Phillimore (2012) this approach can give researchers access to ‘hidden’ populations which would be difficult to access by a researcher who is not already a part of the community, and thus, provides richer data owing to the rapport established between the community researchers and participants.

Despite these benefits of a collegiate approach, allowing the community to decide upon research aims and conduct the research may not always be appropriate; particularly when a researcher has their own agenda and criteria they need to meet (i.e. for a PhD). Alternatively, member validation is one method of community participation that involves community members without them setting the direction of the research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) member validation involves checking the accuracy of research with the respondent population. Different versions of member validation include: (a) strong: where members evaluate the final research report; and (b) weak: where members comment on the accuracy of some interim documents, such as interview transcripts. Member validation can also be extended to checking the design of the study and asking for advice on data collection.

Although it has been argued that ideally community-based research should be collegiate, consultation can still have benefits. It can build the credibility and authenticity of research by enabling researchers to access a richer source of information (Seal, 1999). Furthermore, it can uncover local knowledge and expertise and can make the research more sensitive to local people’s needs and issues. I used member validation to align my research with areas of interest to the communities, and worked with them to design the presentation of a community map so they could benefit from it. I have also consulted with practitioners who run local services to explore the suitability of methods, received advice on recruitment and worked with them to check the ‘authenticity’ of my findings.

Community participation has a history of yielding rich research when it works well. However, it can involve negotiating different and potentially conflicting agendas. Reflexivity (discussed later) is an important skill for developing an awareness of the dynamics of partnerships.
3. Multiple and mixed methods
Goodson and Phillmore (2012) argue that ‘the most important thing about community research is that it must be flexible. Methods that work in one setting or at one time may not work in other circumstances’ (p.30). Multiple or mixed methods of data collection is one way of introducing flexibility into community research. These involve using numerous methods of data collection (i.e. interviews, diaries, and focus groups) either in combination as part of one piece of research (mixed methods), or independently as part of multiple related research projects (multiple methods). Mixed methods research often involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. It has the added benefit of being able to overcome the relative weaknesses of using qualitative and quantitative approaches separately, for instance, providing the depth of interviews and the breadth of questionnaires (Bergman, 2008). However, mixing qualitative and quantitative methods does have its challenges, particularly in reconciling opposing epistemological tradition (Bergman, 2008).

Both mixed and multiple methods can be used as a process of ‘triangulation’ where the results of the different approaches are used to provide a richer analysis of the overall topic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seal, 1999). It also means that different approaches can be used flexibly with different groups of participants. Thus, enabling researchers to tailor their methods to the participants they are working with. This approach is particularly beneficial when working with different members of a community.

Combining methods opens up opportunities to collect data and combine results in variety of ways. Once methods have been decided upon, recruitment becomes the next challenge. Introducing creativity can be helpful when dealing with this.

4. Creativity
A further challenge in community research is engaging participants’ interest. Creative methods (i.e. photography) have been found to be an effective means of doing this (Deacon, 2006). By using creative methods you can also give a voice to participants who
might be unable or unwilling to take part in traditional research processes. There are a range of creative methods which researchers can use including sculpting, photography, videography, art, drawing, roleplaying, written exercises, metaphors and timelines (Deacon, 2006).

Creative methods can be used in addition to traditional forms of data collection, for instance, photo elicitation interviews that use photographs (often of the participants choosing) as a talking point during interviews (Harper, 2002). Doing so can keep the ‘quality’ of traditional methods, whilst also benefiting from the creative aspects of research.

Creative research does not require too much skill to be effective, for example, I took a simple approach and used card, paper and coloured pens and used this to create mind maps of places that are important for resilience. It can be helpful to meet with participants before using creative research to judge if it is likely to work. Reflexivity is an important skill for making such decisions.

5. Researcher reflexivity
Willig (2001) outlines the idea of ‘personal reflexivity’, which involves critical self-appraisal of a researcher’s thoughts, feelings, and actions and how this could influence the research. For example, Crang and Cook (2007) suggest that researchers could reflect upon the language they use, how to present the research to multiple audiences, and the impact their (perceived) identity could be having on the research.

For my research I found that keeping field notes and a diary has been important for reflexivity, as well as for keeping an audit trail of my research. I use field notes to record my meetings with the community; doing so provides a good opportunity to reflect upon my experiences and consider how potential issues could be resolved. Cloke et al.’s (2004) guidelines on field notes suggest that researchers should reflect on their expectations before meetings with the community, whether these expectations are met, and any surprises they may have encountered. They also suggest that field notes can include reflections on the effect that the researchers’ presence seemed to have and how problems could have been resolved differently.

Research journals or diaries are used to record the research progress and can also be used for reflexivity (King & Horrocks, 2010). Diaries can provide a useful record of the decisions that were made in the project and why, and show researchers how their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about the findings have changed over time. Unlike field notes, this can be used both when a researcher is just working with a community and when working on the project generally.

From start to finish, reflexivity can be a useful skill to use in research. It takes time to develop but it is worth the effort. Even if a project runs smoothly, it can still be a useful tool for personal development.

In summary
In many ways community research is an interdisciplinary exercise and drawing upon interdisciplinary methods can be helpful. Indeed, the tips above are drawn from a range of fields. For example, the field notes discussed under ‘reflexivity’ are drawn from ethnography, and the community mapping I used in member validation was drawn from social geography. Similarly, exploring the health demographics and practices of local organisations is an approach used in public health.

These are not a ‘one size fits all’ approach and others may find other approaches useful. Community research is often messy, and has many challenges not inherent in other research, but can be rich and rewarding.

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During my undergraduate studies, I heard a story about a group of first-year students who were designing a study as part of their coursework. Their idea: throw a life-sized doll off the top of a 20-storey building on campus and measure the responses of bystanders, in this case, students and staff members. Their supervisor rejected this idea on ethical grounds, which won’t surprise anyone, but an interesting question is why will such a study never receive ethical approval? Is it the risk of physical injuries to the crowd; or the risk of creating a traumatic experience? Researcher safety, perhaps? Or is the lack of informed consent the vital missing part in this idea?

Regardless of the importance of informed consent, this is not always viable in field studies. Consider a classic study by Milgram, for example, who had a group of confederates (group size ranging from one to 15) standing still on the street, looking at the top of a building to see how many bystanders would follow their example (Milgram, Bickman & Berkowitz, 1969). In such setting, asking bystanders to sign an informed consent form that explains the goal and methods of the study is not feasible.

In lab studies, informed consent is easy to obtain, as you can inform participants before the study and debrief them afterwards in a systematic manner. In natural experiments or field studies where the sample is not clearly defined before the data collection starts (as was the case in the Milgram study) obtaining consent is nearly impossible. However, the choice not to ask for consent before collecting data is one that is made after discussing this with the researchers’ institutional ethics board. The researchers can explain why they believe asking for consent is not an option and the ethics board can decide whether such a study is acceptable and what precautions need to be taken to ensure participants’ safety. This is all relatively straightforward. The issues with field studies arise when the project is run by companies, or collaboratively between companies and academics.

When academics conduct research, their proposed methods, procedures, and possible negative outcomes have been closely examined by a research ethics committee, as required by local national organisations such as the British Psychological Society (BPS), who provide guidelines on how to conduct research in an ethical manner. In industry, this is less common. Companies might have their own ethics board, but no general guidelines really exist and companies are not obliged to adhere to any ethical guidelines related to research.

Reflective paper:
Ethical issues encountered in field study collaborations with organisations outside of academia
Tommy van Steen
One example that highlights how this might be problematic comes from a study published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS)* in 2014 (Kramer, Guillory & Hancock, 2014). Researchers from Cornell University conducted this study in collaboration with Facebook. Facebook manipulated the timeline of users; a process that Facebook is always trying to improve as the time users spend on the website is vital to Facebook’s business model. By itself, manipulating what people see on websites is common practice for any company, as A/B testing of websites is one of the key methods companies use to create more traffic. This time, however, Facebook manipulated the number of positive or negative updates by friends that users would see on their timeline. As an outcome variable they analysed the status updates of users who had seen more positive or negative updates, to see whether their own statuses were more positive or negative after these manipulations. Their results showed that a reduction of positive status updates by others resulted in less positive and more negative status updates by the users. Reducing the negative status updates resulted in an opposite effect.

The paper was written up as a collaboration between Cornell University and Facebook and eventually published in *PNAS*. What followed was an outburst of anger by the general public and criticism from fellow academics. On the one hand, members of the public attacked Facebook for manipulating what users saw on their timelines, and for priming them with negative feelings (priming users with positive feelings seemed to receive less criticism), while academics criticised the lack of informed consent in the study and the fact that neither institution’s ethics board had assessed the study.

The authors stated in their paper that consent was obtained as the methods were in line with the terms and conditions that users accepted when they created their Facebook account and defended their publication by repeating this. *PNAS* published an editorial expression of concern (Verma, 2014), in which they quote the authors stating that as Facebook collected the data, the internal reviewing board of their university did not need to approve the data collection of the study. This was also the view of the researchers’ institutions.

The paradox in this research lies in the idea that if Facebook had conducted the study, and there had been no attempt to write up and publish the results by academics, there would not have been a debate regarding whether or not Facebook adhered to the ethical guidelines, as these guidelines do not apply to industry. Facebook is not bound by the ethical guidelines applicable to data collection within academia and could have used the results of the study to optimise their platform’s algorithms. Instead, they choose to share the outcomes with the general public and other researchers through publication and got into trouble as a result. The criticism is understandable and one could argue that academics should know better. However, the likely result of the criticism is that companies who conduct research will be less likely to share their findings with others since they do not adhere to the same ethical research guidelines (such as informed consent) expected within the scientific community. Arguably criticising a lack of ethical guidelines will not change the way that companies collect data.

An additional issue with conducting studies this way, is a tension between the goal of academics (e.g. understanding a phenomenon, improving quality of life), and industry (e.g. increasing profits), and how this, in turn, affects the ways in which the results of a study may lead to a change in policy.

To illustrate this, I will use an example described by Thaler and Sunstein (2008) in their book called *Nudge*, which explains how to utilise using nudging as a behaviour change technique. They use the example of research that shows that changing the order in which healthy and unhealthy snacks appear in a school cafeteria can influence
children’s choices about buying a healthy or unhealthy lunch. To paraphrase their reasoning; once we know that the order in which we offer snacks influences behaviour, there is no ‘neutral’ option anymore, whichever order of the snacks is chosen, it will always influence what children buy and we cannot pretend that we do not know this.

This example serves to highlight the differences between approaches by academics and industry even further. Academics carrying out this research could focus on questions such as ‘Does the order in which we present snacks influence which snacks children buy?’, or ‘How can we make children choose a healthy snack?’, while the same study carried out by a school cafeteria might ask ‘How do we get children to buy the products with the highest margins?’ And in this example, these products with the highest margins might be the exact same unhealthy snacks that an academic might want children to avoid.

Returning to the Facebook study, the social networking site might be interested in seeing what makes users stay on the platform for longer periods of time, but what would they do if it turned out that reading negative status updates did just that? And similarly, where ethical guidelines would suggest that participants who are primed with negative moods should get some treatment to reduce the effect as part of the debriefing process, can we expect the same procedure when companies collect data for reasons that are different from those of academics?

In conclusion, the shift from lab studies to large-scale field studies (the Facebook study had a total of 689,003 participants) is laudable. And given the increasing amount of data that some companies possess or have access to in a short timespan, this application of big data to conduct research is likely to become more popular as collaborations between companies and academia strengthen. However, the issue that remains is that a company like Facebook can conduct this type of research without having to adhere to any guidelines. So where should the responsibility lie when industry and academia collaborate on research projects? While I do not have a definite answer, a solution could lie in focusing on the main reason for conducting the research; is it the academic who proposes a collaboration with a company so they can collect data that would be unobtainable otherwise, or is it the company that needs the academic’s expertise in a certain field to help them investigate their target group? I would say that as long as there is a lack of adherence to universal ethical guidelines by companies, whenever academics instigate the collaboration, they should apply for ethical approval by their own ethics committee, regardless of which terms and conditions users of the company’s services have agreed to in the past. In other situations, the need for ethical approval by the academics’ institution(s) might be less likely, but as stated by the Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2010, p.4) ‘thinking is not optional.’

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SOME POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS work best in the mornings, some in the evenings, and some at any time. Such students are sometimes labelled ‘larks’ or ‘morning’ people, and ‘owls’ or ‘evening’ people. In this article I discuss previous research on this topic and outline some possible methods of furthering this research in the area of postgraduate academic writing.

Table 1 shows that differences between morning and evening types have been examined across the age range in order to see whether or not they have important implications for education and other activities. But how have famous writers differed in this respect? Table 2 summarises the times of day that highly respected authors have reported when they wrote best. To create this table I relied on the work of Mason Currey, whose fascinating (2013) text, Daily Rituals, provides brief biographies for over 150 ‘great minds’. These biographies provide descriptions of the working habits of famous novelists, playwrights, artists, musicians, philosophers, poets, economists, and politicians. You name the discipline and its best representatives are here (although it is a bit thin on the ground when it comes to psychologists).

In Table 2, I have summarised the daily writing habits (as recorded by Currey, 2013) for 21 people in and relevant to the social sciences, and I have tried to group them in terms of whether or not they were morning persons, evening persons, or mixed. For example, Currey describes Henry James’ working habits as follows:

‘He wrote everyday, beginning in the morning and ending about lunchtime.’

(p.82)

Thus I classified him as a ‘morning-person’. Not everyone was so easy! Nonetheless, my overall results suggest that six (i.e. approximately 30 per cent) of these 21 writers appear to be morning people, eight (approximately 40 per cent) to be mixed, and six (approximately 30 per cent) night owls. Such data suggest that the times that well-known people work are normally distributed, with some extreme larks (e.g. Jung & Skinner) and owls (e.g. Freud).

Table 1: A selection of recent studies of ‘larks’ and ‘owls’.

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There are, of course, limitations to such data. Only one of these 21 authors is female, when there might be sex differences (Randler, 2007). The data are based on the short accounts provided in Currey’s text. And short accounts can vary. Here, for instance, are excerpts from two other short accounts of the life of Henry James:

‘Between 1895 and 1898 James ‘went modern’. He used a bicycle, he installed electric light, he went to one of the first cinema shows and he bought a new-fangled machine – a typewriter – to overcome his writer’s cramp. In 1897 he hired an assistant to act as an amanuensis and from that date he dictated his novels which were taken down in type.’ (Hartley, 1980, p.66)

‘In a rather different area, the aging Henry James gave up handwriting altogether and took to dictating his novels – a shift in efficiency which enabled him to write his last three novels in successive years...’ (Hensher, 2013, p.72)

Unfortunately, at the moment, I am ill-disposed towards reading the various full biographies of Henry James, let alone the 21 authors listed in Table 2. I am more interested in using qualitative and quantitative questionnaire measures to assess the writing habits of current academics and postgraduates because such data will tell us more about how academics write in this modern technological age. Possibly much more can be written in shorter times and different places than before?

Some possibilities I am exploring are different ways of getting at the data. Some simple questionnaires require the respondents to write down what they were doing every hour in a 24 hour day, and to repeat this, say over a week (see Excerpt 1). It might be easier, however, to ask them to list what hours of the day they spent doing certain activities – writing, studying, exercising, sleeping, etc. (see Excerpt 2).

My preliminary data in this respect, obtained from questionnaires like these, indicate that academics’ writing habits are much more varied than those suggested by the simple label – ‘morning’ or ‘evening’ type. And I wonder, indeed, if there are any simple patterns shown by different groups of students?

At the moment I’m coming down in favour of asking academics and postgraduates to keep an electronic diary, noting down the times when they do any academic writing – with possibly some broad details like: Tuesday: All morning drafting the Introduction: Wednesday: 3.00 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.: Checking the details required by the APA reference section. Electronic diary studies, of course, also have their own problems (Gleave, Walker & Grey, 2007)!

### Table 2: Famous authors classified in terms of their favoured times for writing.

Entries based on accounts provided in Mason Currey's (2013) *Daily Rituals*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Afternoon</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Evening</th>
<th>Night</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>Boswell</td>
<td>Eco</td>
<td>Freud</td>
<td>Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descartes</td>
<td>Sartre</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Mencken</td>
<td>Kant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Voltaire</td>
<td>Hobbes</td>
<td>Schiller</td>
<td>Kafka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jung</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kierkegaard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mead</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mann</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinner</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marx</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Excerpt 1: Excerpt from a sample questionnaire.

Thank you for agreeing to respond to this questionnaire. Here are eight questions related to how you write. In answering them, can you please circle the one response that best describes your writing activities over the last month.

5 = very often; 4 = often; 3 = sometimes; 2 = not very often; 1 = not at all

How often during, say, the last month have you:

Thought of how you could free up more time for writing for publication? 5 4 3 2 1
Spent time writing for publication at weekends? 5 4 3 2 1
Spent longer on writing sessions than you originally intended? 5 4 3 2 1
Worked in order to reduce feelings of guilt, anxiety, helplessness or depression? 5 4 3 2 1

Excerpt 2: Excerpt from another sample questionnaire.

Thank you for agreeing to respond to this questionnaire. Here is a list of times for a 24 hour day. Can you please enter for each hour of your average working day the appropriate abbreviation for each of the activities listed below:

S; sleeping, E; eating, X; exercising, AR; academic reading, AW; academic writing, ADMIN; administration, Em; e-mails, PREP; preparation for teaching, T; teaching, M; marking/assessment, and TRAV; travelling.

Activity

7.00 a.m.
8.00 a.m.
9.00 a.m.
10.00 a.m.
11.00 a.m.
12.00 a.m.
etc.

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Discussion paper:
How can social psychology help us better understand political orientations?
Craig Harper

At the recent 30th Annual PsyPAG Conference in Glasgow, I was fortunate enough to be awarded the organisation’s Rising Researcher Award. As part of this award, I was invited to present work that myself and colleagues have been doing at the University of Lincoln on the social psychology of social and political orientations. In this article, I review some of the key theories currently used in this area, before describing some data that we’ve collected prior to the 2015 British General Election. I then conclude the article by outlining some potential avenues for further research.

SINCE R.D. LAING (1960) coined the phrase ‘ontological insecurity’ in the mid-20th century, various literatures have sought to develop this concept in a way that can be applicable to social cognition. Defined broadly as the feeling attached to the stability (or lack thereof) that people perceive in both their self-identity and their surrounding environments (Giddens, 1990), ontological insecurity has been linked to a range of issues – most notably mental ill health (Laing, 1960) and a hardening of social attitudes (Young, 1999).

According to Young (1999), ‘the precariousness of human existence and the need for a viable Umwelt necessitates a whole series of defensive mechanisms’ (p.97), with one such mechanism proposed to be a (re-)hardening of social values and attitudes. In Jonathan Haidt’s TED talk, he exemplified this through a reference to Hieronymus Bosch’s triptych, ‘The Garden of Earthly Delights’ (Figure 1). In this painting, Bosch provides a schematic that is akin to social decay, based on liberalisation and a lowering of Government control (Bosch painted this as God). Haidt contended that this schematic can act as a metaphor for why we revert to more conservative outlooks following a period of liberalisation.

Existing theories within the social psychological literature
Social psychological inquiry into the roots of political orientations has traditionally been based around the notion that these ideological stances help to address particular psychological needs. Moral Foundations Theory (MFT; Haidt & Graham, 2007), for example, asserts that political identities are driven largely by the extent to which people subscribe to different moral domains, each of which describes a particular set of political values. Six of these moral domains have been identified (Haidt, 2012):

1. Care: looking after vulnerable people or groups.
2. Fairness: support for the fair distribution of social resources.
3. Loyalty: pride in one’s group and national identity.
4. Authority: respect for established social hierarchies.
5. Sanctity: a drive to avoid exposure to socially-taboo or harmful behaviours.
6. Liberty: a desire for economic and/or lifestyle freedom from Government interference.

Haidt and colleagues have, over several years, examined the moral profiles of self-identified Liberals, Conservatives, and Libertarians from a number of societies (e.g. the US, UK, Japan, India) through data...
collected using a publicly-available research website, and found significant differences in the endorsement of these moral foundations between ideological groups. Liberals, for instance, strongly endorse statements derived from the care domain, followed by the fairness domain (conceptualised by Liberals as equality of outcomes), and the (lifestyle) liberty domain, but typically reject items from the other domains. By comparison, Conservatives endorse all moral domains equally highly, whilst Libertarians reject all of the moral domains, with the exception of economic and lifestyle liberty. According to Haidt’s group, these differences are fundamental when trying to explain the increasingly polarised nature of American politics.

Other theories of worldview defence have also sought to explain the impact of the need for a clear and coherent perception of the social world on social and political attitudes. Terror Management Theory (TMT; Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon, 1986) offers an empirically-tested theoretical paradigm for understanding why attitudes toward social issues may become hardened in the face of perceived external threats, such as political criticism, and immigration. According to TMT, having a strong cultural worldview acts as an emotional buffer when contemplating mortality by providing a sense
of purpose to a time-limited lifespan. TMT studies artificially induce mortality salience in order to examine the effects of this on views about potentially worldview-threatening issues. Studies have found that mortality salience contributes to the expression of more conservative and insular attitudes about a range of political topics, such as support for the ruling Government (Landau et al., 2004), patriotism (Pyszczynski et al., 2006), military action against foreign enemies (Motyl, Hart & Pyszczynski, 2009), and the endorsement of enhanced interrogation (torture) techniques (Luke & Hartwig, 2014). In addition to these ‘nation-strengthening’ effects, experimentally increasing mortality salience, has also been associated with prejudicial judgements of immigrants (Motyl et al., 2011), and punitive responses to lawbreakers (Jost et al., 2003).

Further, System Justification Theory (SJT; Jost & Banaji, 1994) asserts that people not only require a clear and consistent worldview, but also need to see this worldview, and its central social structures and hierarchies, as being fair and just. SJT studies examine this phenomenon by manipulating levels of ‘system threat’ (typically through the presentation of a mock criticism, advocated by an outsider in the form of a news story or similar vignette) in relation to the participants’ home culture (e.g. Kay, Jost & Young, 2005). Studies have repeatedly found that participants in high system threat conditions are motivated to endorse the prevailing social status quo, and advocate that social structures and hierarchies are fair, even if this means derogating social victims and attributing blame to those at the bottom of the societal hierarchy for the positions in which they find themselves (Kay et al., 2005).

Synthesising sociological and psychological work, van Marle and Maruna (2010) suggested that linking the sociological concept of ‘ontological insecurity’ with an empirical approach like TMT could provide a more valid context to TMT theorists trying to explain the social significance of their lab-based findings, whilst simultaneously providing experimental support for the sociological literature on ontological insecurity. Van Marle and Maruna (2010) cited van den Bos et al.’s (2005) work on ‘uncertainty reduction’, which suggested that ‘mortality salience’ may be replaceable by other free-floating existential anxieties (through, for example, societal inequality) and achieve the same effects in relation to social and political attitudes.

More recently, Malka et al. (2014) examined needs for security and certainty (NSC) in relation to social and economic conservatism in a large sample of over 73,000 participants from over 50 countries. What they reported was a more nuanced relationship between NSC and conservatism than would have been expected using these previous theories. Whilst participants who scored highly in relation to NSC (measured using selected items from the World Values Survey) expressed more conservative attitudes in relation to social issues (e.g. an opposition to homosexuality, abortion, immigration, and support for the harsh punishment of criminals), these same participants were typically more left-leaning with regards to economic policies (e.g. support for welfare programmes, and an opposition to income inequality). This effect, however, was only present within participants low on a measure of political engagement. Highly politically engaged participants in Malka et al.’s (2014) study who also scored highly in relation to NSC expressed the expected trend, and supported both culturally and economically conservative policies. With these findings in mind, it is important to consider political ideology as a multifaceted phenomenon.

What have we done?
The studies described above all used different measures to examine each of the pivotal variables involved in this area. With no standardised measures of ontological insecurity currently available within either the sociological or psychological literatures,
we sought to address this gap in the lead-up to the 2015 UK General Election.

My supervisor (Professor Todd Hogue) and I collaborated with a local news organisation, The Lincolnite, to collect data on voting intentions before the Election last May. We drafted a 25-item measure of ontological insecurity, based on factors that were outlined in the sociological literature. Data were collected from 550 participants, and we were able to confirm the four-factor structure of an 18-item, psychometrically reliable Ontological Insecurity Scale (OIS), which was differentially associated with conservative and liberal attitudes.

High scores on the ‘Social Change’ factor of the OIS were associated with conservative social and political attitudes, whilst participants with high scores on the ‘Societal Inequality’ OIS factor were more likely to endorse liberal attitudes (Figure 2).

We found no significant differences in relation to ontological insecurity scores between the supporters of specific political parties, with the exception of UKIP, whose voters scored significantly higher on the OIS than participants supporting any other party. However, when divided into ‘high’ and ‘low’ (based on their scores on the OIS), participants who expressed supporting either the Conservatives or Labour differed significantly in relation to their social and political values. In both cases, participants scoring higher on the OIS scores expressed more conservative sentiments (lower scores) on the political attitudes questionnaire. This trend was also observed among ‘Undecided’ voters, indicating the potential impact of communication styles (in either increasing or decreasing OIS-relevant sentiments) on voting behaviour and electoral outcomes. Figure 3 graphically shows these differences.

**Figure 2:** The relationship between OIS scores and social and political attitudes.
We are currently preparing two papers based on this data, each of which outline the development and validation of the measurement tools used. We hope to have these ready for journal submission prior to the end of this year.

**Where next?**

There are a number of potential avenues for further research that are open on the basis of these data, which predominantly fall into three areas: partisanship, political communication, and implicit processing styles based on OIS scores.

British-based research into the demonisation and partisanship hypotheses made by Haidt’s team in the US could be conducted in conjunction with an analysis of the role of ontological insecurity levels in forming judgements about specific policy proposals. Studies examining this interaction could use labelled and label-free policy suggestions, with a key hypothesis being that if partisanship guides policy support, judgements would be dependent upon the party to which they were labelled as belonging to, regardless of OIS scores. However, if ontological insecurity has an impact on policy support, it would be expected that label-free conservative policies would receive more support from those scoring high on the OIS, independent of participants’ party affiliations.

Another potentially fruitful area of research is in political communication. For example, could it be that people who are ontologically insecure attend and respond more to affect-based information than those scoring lower on the OIS? Vignette studies could be conducted here, with a possible hypothesis being that affectively-laden vignettes would have more of an influence on the social judgements of those scoring high on the OIS than those scoring low.

![Figure 3: Social and political attitudes of party supporters, by OIS score grouping.](image-url)
Finally, it may be possible to use indirect methodologies (e.g. implicit association tests, or mousetracking) to assess the processing styles of high/low OIS scorers in relation to contentious social issues, such as criminal justice, immigration, and welfare. Using this paradigm, it would be expected that differences in the implicit processing of information about these issues would be detectable in people with high or low scores on the key OIS factors of ‘Social Change’ and ‘Societal Inequality’.

Conclusions

From the data that we have collected, ontological insecurity seems to have the potential to be pivotal in political behaviour. The social and political attitudes of undecided voters in our sample varied significantly as a function of ontological insecurity scores, and with up to a third of voters still being undecided in the final week of election campaigns, how political parties capitalise on (or alleviate) levels of ontological insecurity could play a major role in electoral outcomes. By studying these processes experimentally, it may be possible for psychologists to become engaged within the political process to a greater extent than seen before, and advise politicians on how to maximise their potential for electoral success.

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References

Discussion paper:

‘Let your conscience be your guide’: Using Moral Foundations Theory to further understanding of moral intuitions

Amrita Ahluwalia

Moral Foundation Theory (MFT) was coined by a group of social and cultural psychologists. This theory proposes that several innate sets of moral concerns or ‘foundations’ underpin moral judgment. Theoretically, MFT posits that moral judgments tend to be intuitive and affective. Nonetheless, despite this commitment to intuitionism, most MFT research is conducted using self-report measures. Where work has examined intuitive processes, this tends to explore foundations in isolation and, therefore, does not provide an understanding of how an individual’s moral intuitions relate to one another and to their deliberated moral judgements. MFT makes an important contribution to social psychology by seeking to explain the diversity of moral beliefs and values found across people and cultures. However, there are still significant gaps in MFT research. This paper outlines the need to develop ways of mapping moral intuitions within the context of MFT.

Making Moral Decisions is an important part of what it is to be human and people have been pondering moral questions for centuries. However, Western traditions have tended to place importance on the role of rational processes in moral judgments, and until fairly recently, so did psychologists. But these approaches ignore the role of moral intuitions. Over the past decade, moral psychology has begun to investigate automatic bases of moral judgment, moving away from tendencies to view morality as solely the result of reasoning. This growing field suggests that moral judgments are affected by manipulations outside of conscious awareness or that would not be endorsed as the causes of judgments. Resultantly, in more recent years some social psychologists have proposed theories which suggest that most moral judgments tend to be the result of quick intuitive and affective processes rather than rational ones. Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) presents as one such example.

Drawing from evolutionary and cultural psychology, MFT provides a social psychological framework to account for why moral beliefs vary so much across individuals and cultures (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). MFT explains this divergence by suggesting that people are born with innate sets of moral values that are shaped by their cultural context, such that some values become more important than others over time. These values are referred to as ‘moral foundations’. In contrast to other conceptions of morality, MFT appreciates the importance of social learning and proposes that moral systems should be defined as sets of values that bind communities and make social life possible (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Haidt & Kesebir, 2010).

MFT contrasts traditional explorations of moral judgment that focus on justice and harm, and consign concerns around things like purity and patriotism to a non-moral sphere. MFT draws on evolutionary psychology to suggest that foundations are sets of related adaptive modules that have evolved in response to recurrent social challenges (Graham et al., 2012). Foundations thus provide an innate structure that constrains the moralities that can be formed.
across cultures. At present there is good evidence for five foundations. These are outlined in Table 1, along with related adaptive problems and intuitive responses (adapted from Graham et al., 2012).

Table 1: Moral Foundations and related adaptive challenges and intuitive responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation</th>
<th>Adaptive Challenge</th>
<th>Intuitive Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care/Harm</td>
<td>Protecting offspring</td>
<td>Compassion, anger at perpetrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority/Subversion</td>
<td>Forming beneficial relationships</td>
<td>Respect, fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness/Cheating</td>
<td>Gaining reciprocal benefits</td>
<td>Anger, gratitude, guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctity/Degradation</td>
<td>Avoiding disease</td>
<td>Disgust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty/Betrayal</td>
<td>Forming cohesive coalitions</td>
<td>Group pride, anger at traitors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theoretically, MFT is committed to the following four claims: nativism – there is an innate and universal ‘first draft’ of morality (Graham et al., 2012) prepared to learn social values and norms; cultural learning – this ‘first draft’ results in a hardwired aptitude for learning and can, therefore, be edited by cultural context (Graham et al., 2012; Haidt & Joseph, 2004); intuitionism – moral judgments tend to occur as a result of automatic and non-conscious intuitions, rather than by explicit and deliberative reasoning (Haidt & Joseph, 2004); and pluralism – there are multiple moral foundations (Graham et al., 2011).

Whilst a major objective of MFT has been to provide an account of moral diversity across individuals and cultures, it was initially developed to explore moral conflict between differing political ideologies (Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt et al., 2009). MFT predicts that the intractability of moral disputes associated with liberal/conservative divides can be explained by differences in patterns of moral foundations, where liberals and conservatives prioritise contrasting sets of values (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Koleva et al., 2012). Multiple studies show that liberals place greater emphasis on Care and Fairness, also referred to as individuating foundations, while conservatives place greater emphasis than liberals on Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity, the binding foundations (Graham et al., 2009, 2011; Nilsson & Erlandsson, 2015). For example, in debates about gay marriage, liberals are unlikely to encounter Care or Fairness violations and so do not have moral objections, while conservatives perceive violations of Loyalty (outsiders infiltrating wholesome families and communities), Authority (disrespect for tradition and traditional family life), and Sanctity (as disgusting or unnatural). MFT can, therefore, go some way to explaining attitudes towards policy issues. For example, Koleva et al. (2012) found that self-rated endorsements of moral foundations predicted moral attitudes and disapproval across 20 controversial topics (e.g. abortion, death penalty, gay marriage, etc.), even after controlling for political ideology. Furthermore, Day et al. (2014) found that relevant foundation-related framing bolstered political attitudes in both conservatives and liberals. Findings such as these suggest that MFT provides a useful empirical framework for mapping moral diversity.

However, the empirical work outlined thus far has relied on self-report measures of moral foundations, specifically the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (Graham et al., 2011), to map individual moral domains and explore links to political ideology. This begs the question: If intuitionism is a core tenet of MFT, why rely on self-report for identifying participants’ moral mappings?

As an intuitionist theory, research on intuitive foundation-related moral judge-
There is presently a need in MFT research to adapt methodology to be able to examine participants’ intuitive moral domain. Thus far, a number of methods have been used to bypass self-report to measure foundation-related intuitions more directly (Graham et al., 2012). These have included: evaluative priming – foundation-related word primes flashed before positive/negative adjective targets; affect misattribution – foundation-related image primes flashed before neutral character targets; and financial trade-offs – quick responses to dichotomous questions about the amount of money required by participant for different foundation-violations. Nevertheless, these methodologies have yet to be adapted to develop an intuitive version of self-report scales and allow researchers to map the intensities of each foundation in a participant’s intuitive moral domain and further a more holistic understanding of individuals’ moral intuitions.

By proposing that a handful of innate, but variably developed, psychological structures are the foundations of human morality, MFT is able to account for why moral systems vary so much across different people and cultures, yet also show so many recurrent themes. MFT, therefore, provides a social psychological theory that can explain differences and similarities in moral decision-making, social attitudes, and political ideology. However, to date this work has been mainly limited to explicit moral reasoning and there is currently a dearth of research exploring how moral intuitions vary across individuals and cultures. Addressing this gap will be essential for future social and moral psychologists.

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References


"The PsyPAG Guide for Psychology Postgraduates: Surviving postgraduate study"

To celebrate PsyPAG’s 30th anniversary, we have developed a postgraduate degree survival guide. This provides a variety of guidance articles to help students navigate all stages of postgraduate study, from Master’s to PhD. A breadth of topics are included, such as practical issues in finding conference funding and planning work, to emotional issues such as managing your supervisor and dealing with ‘imposter syndrome’.

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Psychology is a science that contributes greatly to a number of other Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. Unfortunately, it is not often recognised as a STEM discipline. This discussion paper considers psychology’s membership as a STEM subject and the impact that it has had on our everyday lives. The author suggests that postgraduate students working on innovative, inter-disciplinary research can not only contribute to psychology’s standing, but can also help to communicate the value of what psychologists do. Reflections from the author’s experiences as a STEM Ambassador are also included, with reference to The University of Northampton’s unique STEM Steering Group and STEM Champions programme.

Over time, the public are becoming more receptive to the work that psychologists do, but these perceptions may not always be accurate. For example, if you were to ask a member of the public what a psychologist does, how closely would this description reflect what you do on a daily basis? The many reasons for these often inaccurate perceptions are beyond the scope of this article (see Klatzky, 2009), but it is our responsibility as psychologists to communicate the value of what we do to others and to consider the impact of our research. As Miller (1969) suggested, wherever possible, we must give away innovative methods, inter-
ventions or results which contribute to the public good.

There are a number of ways to do this, from publishing research to presenting at conferences. One way that I achieved this as a postgraduate student was by becoming a National STEM Ambassador. STEM Ambassadors support students, teachers and educational establishments by enriching and enhancing the psychology curriculum. For example, by going into schools and informing students about psychology-related careers, or helping to support teachers in lessons. Following training, I found myself helping to organise and taking part in a number of STEM events, including A-level research conferences, open days and Science Bazaar festivals.

Research students aiming for a career in academia are often told that a PhD is not enough, leaving many students trying to find ways to enhance their skills and stand out from other candidates. My own experiences as a STEM Ambassador were so much more than something I could add to my CV. As well as improving my own professional skills, experience and confidence, I really felt as if I was contributing to the futures of young people by enthusing and motivating them to find out more about psychology. For example, I fooled children and adults into thinking a rubber hand is their own hand; used magic tricks to teach students about awareness and attention; and explained how the visual system works using impossible objects and visual illusions.

Now as a lecturer at The University of Northampton, I have had the opportunity to build on the relationship between Psychology and STEM. Many universities have a faculty-based STEM programme, which potentially isolates psychology from other disciplines. Northampton has a unique interdisciplinary STEM Steering Group and its own STEM Champions programme. This brings together all areas of Science and ensures that psychology has a clear STEM membership. One of our most recent Getting the Buzz from Science days involved more than 80 Year 3 girls from 10 Northampton primary schools. For the first time at this event, an interactive psychology workshop appeared alongside other sessions on atomic science, biodiversity and engineering.

Being a psychologist requires individuals to be problem solvers. Therefore, it is up to us as psychologists to make sure that psychology has a clear STEM membership. For me, psychology is clearly a science, but it is important that we continue to communicate this and increase our involvement with other disciplines. Even if we do not have the opportunity to become a STEM Ambassador, we can still promote the impact and applications of our research to local communities and ensure that others can see the value of our work. Not only will this improve our own professional practice and employability skills, but it might even inspire others to forge a career in psychology.

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Information about the national STEM Ambassador scheme can be found at: http://www.stemnet.org.uk/ambassadors/

To find out more about STEM at The University of Northampton please see: https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/stem/ or follow: @STEMatUN on Twitter.
References


Conference review:

The British Psychological Society Developmental Section and Social Section Annual Conference 2015

Kiran Purewal & Chloe Tyler


For the first time, the British Psychological Society held a conference that joined together the Developmental and Social Sections. The event was held over three days (9–11 September) at The Palace Hotel, in the heart of Manchester. Researchers often fall into both the Developmental and Social Sections and can find it difficult to decide where to present their work. This joint annual conference provided the perfect opportunity for such researchers to present their work to audiences of both developmental and social psychologists. With four keynote speakers, a ‘meet the experts’ session, and a vast array of posters and talks, organisers of the event should be proud to have planned and hosted such a large-scale and well thought-out conference. This article discusses the range of talks and workshops presented at the event, along with two postgraduate researchers’ experiences of presenting their research for the first time.

SEPTEMBER 2015 saw the first-ever joint Developmental Section and Social Section Annual Conference, which was held in the beautiful and grand backdrop of The Palace Hotel in Manchester. And what better setting for this conference than the diverse and multicultural city of Manchester, with its vibrant gay village, edgy Northern Quarter, China Town, and sprawling universities?

The conference programme provided an extensive and well-provisioned list of presentations, workshops, symposia and posters from both sections, affording attendees the opportunity to reflect on research from psychologists from across the UK and overseas.

Some of the research presented included topics as diverse as the effect of ‘Sexist humour on women’s perception of joke funniness’ (Manuela Thomae et al., University of Winchester), ‘The prevention and reversal of childhood learnt fear’ (Chris Askew et al., Kingston University), ‘The conflicting nature of adult Autistic Spectrum Disorder diagnosis’ (Jennifer Mayer & Paul Dickerson, University of Roehampton), and ‘Leadership and deviance’ (Carola Leicht, University of Kent). The only difficulty attendees had was choosing which talks to attend!

The University of Kent was well represented at this event with Professor Dominic Abrams opening the conference with his keynote speech and a number of Kent academics and students showcasing their research through posters and talks. Other keynote speakers included Professors Hazel Rose Markus, Tania Zittoun, and Malinda Carpenter. The lunches provided a wonderful opportunity for networking and for delegates to meet all four keynote speakers during a lunchtime ‘meet the experts’ session, hosted by PsyPAG. The conference dinner provided a further opportunity to meet with academics and students alike, all whilst being serenaded by the evening’s jazz-swing entertainment performed by Paul Pashley.
Both Kiran Purewal and Chloe Tyler (University of Kent) were first-time presenters at this year’s joint conference, and reflect on their experience as speakers and delegates.

Chloe: ‘Having just completed an MSc in Group Processes and Intergroup Relations at University of Kent, I presented my findings on piloting a novel experiential mental health stigma-reduction approach. While I was nervous, my presentation was chaired well by Dr Keon West and the audience were sympathetic and understanding to the fact that it was my first time presenting at a British Psychological Society (BPS) conference. It was a valuable and worthwhile experience, and I received positive feedback and interest in my research. The conference was particularly valuable as the members present were in similar fields to my own research (i.e. forms of intergroup contact), providing the perfect opportunity to disseminate the novel area of research I focus on. I presented my research which examines experiential intergroup contact, this intervention simulates intergroup contact through role-playing characters of an outgroup. The questions I received were appreciated, and peers approached me following my presentation to discuss this new area of research in the field of intergroup contact. As a new postgraduate researcher, and a second time BPS conference attendee, I found the conference to be well prepared and the talks to be interesting and varied, especially thanks to the joint inclusion of both the social and developmental sections. I would very much enjoy returning next year when I have more findings from my first year researching as a PhD researcher!’

Kiran: ‘As a social and developmental researcher I was excited to hear that both sections would be joining forces for this year’s annual conference. Along with presenting a poster on influences on adolescents’ body satisfaction, I was honoured to be presenting my research on children’s social inclusion intentions as part of Dr Nicola Abbott’s (Canterbury Christ Church University) social exclusion symposium, with Professor Adam Rutland (Goldsmiths University) as discussant. I enjoyed presenting my research to a supportive and interactive audience, who were eager to learn more about our research. In addition to learning about some fantastic work over the course of three days, I thoroughly enjoyed the workshop on ‘intergroup contact among children and young people’. This workshop provided a fast-paced overview and summary of the findings and research methods used in developmental intergroup contact experiments. In my opinion, the best part of this workshop was hearing from both experts and audience members on the directions that they would like to see intergroup contact take in future research and brainstorming creative and novel methods to further develop the theory. For me, the BPS Developmental and Social Annual Conference provided a lot of motivation for the second year of my PhD and inspired me to consider new approaches in my work on children and young people’s prejudices. The #devsocconf Twitter-feed provides further evidence of just how brilliantly organised the event was and what an enjoyable time all delegates had!’

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Developmental Section
Annual Conference 2016
14–16 September 2016, Hilton, Belfast

Conference Dinner to be held at Titanic Belfast on 15 September.
Keynotes and conference themes announced shortly.
Submissions open in November 2015.

www.bps.org.uk/dev2016 #devconf
Conference review:
The British Psychological Society Developmental Section and Social Section Annual Conference 2015
Marianne Erskine-Shaw & Charlotte R. Pennington


Developing socially

The British Psychological Society (BPS) section conferences provide a great atmosphere to network with others in your research field. However, choosing which conference to attend can be difficult if your research overlaps between various sections. For example; investigating cognition in social contexts, or neuropsychological changes across development. For this reason, it is exciting to see that sections are occasionally joining forces to provide bigger conferences, which still have the advantage of more specific research areas. In 2013, the Developmental Psychology Section (DPS) teamed up with the Cognitive Psychology Section at the University of Reading, to hold a joint conference (c.f. Kwok, 2014). Two years on, in September 2015, the DPS came together with the Social Psychology Section (SPS) to host another joint conference, which attracted over 200 delegates. The conference consisted of four keynotes speakers, a number of symposiums and papers, and two workshops. Further, the DPS and SPS PsyPAG representatives organised a ‘PsyPAG: Meet the Experts’ event for postgraduates (PG). Additional social events included a networking wine reception, a North West Branch sponsored ‘Psychology in the Pub’ event, and a conference dinner, all situated in The Palace Hotel.

Wednesday 9 September

Wednesday saw the opening of the conference and as registration began it was clear that the conference had drawn an impressive number of delegates from many research areas and locations. You could see that on arrival many of the delegates were fascinated by the Victorian structure of the venue, with high ceilings, large pillars and beautiful architecture. When 10.30 a.m. approached, delegates made their way down to the Grand room for the opening welcome and the first keynote of the conference invited by the DPS, Professor Dominic Abrams; a prominent figure in both social and developmental psychology. Professor Abrams’ talk provided an interesting insight into social development, and in particular, the processes involved in children’s navigation of social groups. It was clear throughout his talk that Professor Abrams showed great enthusiasm and expertise of the research areas. Following on from this, the conference saw two parallel symposia; a social symposium discussing leadership and deviance, and a developmental symposium around the role of executive functioning in the development of mathematical ability. Additionally, a number of papers were presented before moving on to lunch (which was delicious!). Following lunch, alongside papers and symposiums, Dr Atsushi Senju was awarded the ‘Developmental Margaret Donaldson Award’ for his outstanding early career contributions to developmental...
psychology. Dr Senju was awarded this prize for his research investigating the development of spontaneous social cognition. The day then continued with more papers and symposia including a social invited symposium on the relevance of Social Representations theory today, and papers discussing the numerical/mathematical proficiency of children (to name just a few). One of the highlights of the afternoon was a paper that was presented in ‘Copper Face Jacks’ (a pub in The Palace Hotel). Here, Dr Alana James presented her research on university students’ definition of bullying. The paper highlighted the issues around the lack of an agreed definition of bullying in higher education (HE). It was interesting to learn that many people were unaware that bullying is an issue within HE, and highlighted that this research requires further exploration. The first day of the conference ended with a workshop led by the Chair and Conference Officer of the SPS, Dr Abigail Locke and Dr Jane Montague. The workshop discussed ‘Teaching Contemporary Social Psychology’, with much emphasis on the need for an increase of taught social psychology at A-level. This was a particularly engaging session as delegates were asked for their input into the skills that psychologists may be able to offer to the teaching of Psychology in the A-level curriculum. Following the last session of the conference, delegates networked over drinks at the wine reception and many stayed to take part in ‘Psychology in the Pub’ hosted by the North West Branch.

**Thursday 10 September**

The second day of the conference was an early 9.00 a.m. start. Yet, with the range of papers and symposiums, it was definitely worth the early rise. The vast majority of parallel papers meant that there was generally something that would interest everybody, but this also meant that it was a difficult process to decide which talks to attend. Luckily, the conference had its own smart-
phone application which allowed delegates to plan their days by selecting which talks/workshops to add to their itinerary. Further, the app allowed delegates to communicate with one another, including the keynote speakers. This is something that we feel should be available at more conferences! Following the symposiums and papers, was the second keynote of the conference invited by the SPS, Professor Hazel Rose Markus. Professor Markus discussed ‘how to thrive in a multicultural world’. She provided a fascinating talk highlighting the effects of multiculturalism in the workplace and communities. Professor Markus engaged the audience throughout and utilised a number of proverbs to underpin and give more clarity to her argument. For example, discussing participation in the classroom across various cultures, Professor Markus displayed the proverbs ‘the squeaky wheel gets the grease’ to describe Western participation, and ‘the duck that quacks loudest gets shot’ for Eastern participation. This reflected that those in Western cultures may be more likely to vocally participate in class compared to Eastern children, due to differences in cultural beliefs. After Professor Markus’s well-received talk the delegates joined in the Tempus Bar and restaurant for yet another delicious lunch.

For the last talk of the second day, Professor Malinda Carpenter was invited as a keynote speaker by the DPS. Professor Carpenter’s talk was titled ‘affiliation, alignment, and belonging in infancy and early childhood’. As with the other keynotes of the conference, the talk delved in to areas of both developmental and social psychology, with discussion of social-affiliation and ‘group-mindedness’. Many delegates feel tired from a day full of intellectually stimulating presentations and discussions. However, the engaging presentation from Professor Carpenter on an interesting and inspiring topic provided an uplift to delegates, which was much needed to progress on to the conference dinner.

The conference dinner provided delegates with even more stimulating conversation and delicious food. The event was an ideal platform for all to let their hair down, but also to network in a comfortable and fun environment. The starter served was definitely a conversation starter, as the course was served with the appearance of a dessert, rather than a starter. The mushroom and bay panna cotta with beetroot jam could certainly be compared to the description of Marmite: ‘you love it or you hate it’. After the delegates had (easily) made their way through the main and dessert, the evening’s entertainment began. Paul Pashley and his band serenaded the delegates with jazz-swing arrangements, which brought many to their feet on the dance floor – those psychologists can sure dance! Sadly the night had to come to an end but fortunately there was still one more day of the conference with many more exciting and interesting talks and events.

Friday 11 September
The final day of the conference began with possibly a few sore heads and feet. However, the atmosphere was just as positive and exciting as the previous days. Starting slightly later than the previous day, a range of symposiums and papers were presented in the morning, including discussions around social identity (SI) and stereotype threat (ST) such as enhanced SI as an intervention for ST (Charlotte R. Pennington), ST on female online gaming performance (Dr Linda Kaye), and SI in music fans (Dr Rachel Taylor on behalf of Dr Daniel Bowers). The final keynote of the conference, SPS invited Professor Tania Zittoun highlighted the reconciliation of social and developmental psychology, with her discussion on development in a social world. To do this, Professor Zittoun presented a sociocultural approach to the life-course, focusing of the inclusion of not only social places, but also on an individual’s memories and dreams. Lunch came directly after the final keynote, which included a ‘PsyPAG: Meet the Experts’ event. The meet the experts event allowed post-
graduates to question the keynote speakers of the conference on ‘anything psychology’. Professor Abrams, Professor Carpenter and Professor Zittoun received questions from postgraduate students such as: ‘what has been your biggest achievement?’, and ‘have your research interests changed since your PhD?’ Additionally, PGs asked for hints and tips for their viva voce, and securing a lectureship and further on, a professorship. It was interesting to hear that Professor Abrams felt that his biggest achievement was obtaining his undergraduate degree. Further all the keynotes emphasised theoretical knowledge preparation for the viva voce. To gain lectureship and professorship the keynotes talked of the importance of publication, networking, international research and collaboration. In all, the ‘Meet the Experts’ event was engaging and intimate and provided a great platform for PG’s to comfortably question some of the big names of the conference.

In the afternoon, Dr Victoria Simms received the ‘Developmental Neil O’Connor Award’, which recognises outstanding published research into developmental disabilities. Here, Dr Simms presented her work on educational cognitive outcomes following pre-term birth (c.f. Simms et al., 2013). Dr Simms suggested that there is a need to understand the underlying origins, and the specific nature of pre-terms’ academic abilities, in order to develop targeted intervention strategies. Parallel to this, Professor Dominic Abrams, Dr Keon West and Dr Sofia Stathi led a workshop on intergroup contact. This centred on the intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954), which suggests that contact between members of different groups can reduce prejudice and enhance social relations. To start, Professor Abrams presented current work on intergroup relations and group processes and encouraged audience participation (for research on effects of intergroup processes on children’s prosocial behaviour see Abrams et al., 2015). Specifically, each member of the audience was asked: What interests us most about intergroup contact theory? And what direction do we think future research should follow? Dr Keon West then went on to explain that much previous work had utilised self-report measures to examine prejudice reduction, and outlined new methodologies (c.f. West, Holmes & Hewstone, 2011). For example, he suggested that it might be fruitful to examine both peoples’ explicit and implicit attitudes, as these can be incongruent. Dr Stathi then
explored the practical implications of intergroup contact theory, suggesting that direct contact between members of different groups may not always be feasible. She then presented her research, demonstrating the practical and applied efficacy of imagined positive group interactions for prejudice reduction (c.f. Crisp et al., 2008).

In all, the Developmental and Social Section conference was a vibrant and intellectually stimulating event. The atmosphere at the conference was extremely supportive and some great ideas were shared. It is great to see Sections coming together to provide more versatile and collaborative conferences. Moreover, it was easy to observe that there were many postgraduates presenting at the conference. Indeed, presenting with a variety of people at various stages of their career is beneficial for PG’s and including PG presentations in the core programme, as opposed to assigning a specific day or location for these presentations, is a positive move forward to ensure that the research is disseminated to a wider audience. From the conference, we have both brought back many ideas and thoughts for consideration, which will greatly shape our PhD research. In 2016, the sections will hold individual conferences (SPS in Cardiff and DPS in Belfast). However, we do also hope that in future, sections will come together more often to provide joint conferences as successful as this one!

Acknowledgements
Marianne would like to thank the Social Psychology Section for funding her conference attendance and providing an exhibitor stand for PsyPAG. Charlotte thanks the PsyPAG North West Branch who provided a bursary towards her attendance. We would both like to thank Dominic Abrams, Melissa Carpenter and Tania Zittoun for taking park the ‘PsyPAG: Meet the Experts’ event.

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References
Social Section
Annual Conference 2016

31 August – 2 September,
The Mercure Holland House, Cardiff

Keynote speakers to be announced shortly.

www.bps.org.uk/social2016

#spsconf
Conference review:

Purls of Wisdom: Reflections on presenting qualitative research
Astrid Coxon

ON WEDNESDAY 22 JULY 2015, in Glasgow, at PsyPAG’s 30th Annual Conference, I presented a piece of qualitative research for the first time. No, let me qualify that: I presented a piece of research for the first time, in front of a room full of my peers. It just happened to be qualitative. Not only am I a relatively new convert to qualitative research methods, but I had never before given an academic presentation at a conference, and to say I was nervous is an understatement.

That is not a typo in the title, by the way. The spelling ‘purls’ is deliberate, echoing the title of my first foray into conference presentation, ‘Close-knit communities: cross-generational social cohesion through knitting together’. I had, flippantly, imagined that this process would be a cake-walk. Because the study was light-hearted, I assumed it would be fun (and easy!) to present it to a room full of my colleagues and peers. What could be more straight-forward than getting up in front of a room full of fellow postgraduates, and talking about the wonders of social knitting? But then the conference programme was released, and I realised: I was the only qualitative presentation in my symposium. In fact, I was one of only a small handful of qualitative presentations being given at PsyPAG2015. For some reason, this filled me with trepidation. And, like any self-respecting philosopher and psychologist, I felt it was important to explore why I reacted this way.

I think I have a bit of a chip on my shoulder, still. I used to think that if a study did not involve statistics, it was not worth the paper it was written on. I have since changed my views on this significantly (p-values notwithstanding) – I ended up conducting a qualitative study for my MSc dissertation, and my current PhD research uses primarily qualitative research methods. However, old opinions die hard, and I find myself constantly feeling defensive about the validity of my research, even in the absence of an explicit question.

Qualitative research is legitimate and meaningful; I know this to be true. Since being ‘converted’ to qualitative research during my MSc, I have been surprised and encouraged by the meaningful impact that qualitative research can have. There is still an implicit hierarchy between qualitative and quantitative research methods: anecdotally, qualitative colleagues often bemoan the lengths they must go to defend their methods. I still have to regularly revisit the supporting literature, seek the advice of experienced qualitative researchers and the support of peers, to strengthen my resolve. I am definitely more certain of the value of my qualitative work than before. I set off to Glasgow with confidence.

As my Hour of Judgement drew closer, however, I began to doubt. My slides had no graphs, no tables, and no p-values to cling onto. These were things I would traditionally...
point to, to say ‘look, we did the research, and here are the concrete findings from which we can draw objective conclusions’ (I have since revised my understanding of the term ‘objectivity’ thanks to qualitative research discourse). All I had now were colourful slides, some pictures of women knitting and a handful of wordy quotes to back me up. I felt uneasy, insecure. Would it be enough?

I needn’t have worried. It turns out the PsyPAG conference environment is one of the most supportive and encouraging environments in which to fledge your presentation skills. I didn’t feel as though my work was of lesser merit, or that it would be overlooked. I had lovely feedback from peers: Claire Forbes thanked me for a relaxing and interesting start to the day, and I spoke with Julie Pattison, who drew comparison between my study, and her work in old age gambling. The experience lead to lengthy discussions about the merits of qualitative research, and has given me increased confidence in my subsequent presentations (and replying to reviewers!).

So for those of you yet to give your first conference presentation, I say go for it. If like me you are unsure about how best to present qualitative findings, then seek out support and guidance from your peers. PsyPAG is a great environment for testing your wings: everyone is in a similar position and keen to support and learn from each other.

I’m already looking forward to next year’s PsyPAG conference in York. I hope to see you all there!

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The premise of this book potentially has universal appeal. After all, everyone wants to think that they are making the right decisions in all areas of life, so a book offering hints and tips on how to improve our decision making is one that many of us would be interested in reading. The author presents the chapters as a series of steps, leading the way towards better decision making. The book is written in an engaging manner with interesting facts and statistics dotted throughout. For example, did you know that we each make around 10,000 decisions every day, and that around 227 of these are about food? (p.3)

Much of the book deals with the different ways in which we acquire information in the modern age. The author suggests that we are ‘in the midst of an information revolution’ (p.132) with the traditional ways of acquiring information, such as from published books and newspapers, being challenged by the impact of technology. As many people now have constant access to the Internet we tend to gather much of our news from social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter without any ‘filtering’ by conventional media outlets. Without this ‘filtering’, where the media outlets, such as news programmes or newspapers, decide what it is important to draw our attention to at what time, there is a much higher volume of information to consider and much of this is likely to be unverified. Our ability to wade through a vast amount of readily available information and select the specific parts that are relevant to us, as well as being able to evaluate the reliability of the source, takes certain skills which are not only applicable in professional and personal life, but particularly as a PhD student conducting research.

We may think that these skills are common sense but it is important to keep your eyes wide open, as the title of the book suggests, when relying on online sources. The author gives the example of Amina Abdallah Arraf al Omari, a Syrian-American blogger living in Damascus, whose profile was featured in *The Guardian* and whose story was reported on by the BBC. However, all was not as it seemed. Without giving the exact details away, it turned out that Amina’s story was not true, yet experienced journalists had believed the source to be reliable. This draws our attention to how important it is to think critically about the sources that we use.

I feel that the most interesting element of this book is a discussion about the psychological factors that can impact on our ability to make decisions. These range from obvious...
indicators, such as the way in which information is presented to us and who presents the information, to the more subtle cues that can influence our decision making, such as our emotional state at the time of making the decision. For example, if we are feeling stressed, we are less likely to contemplate alternative courses of action and more likely to default to familiar habits (p.224).

According to the author, the sensory information available to us in a particular environment can have a significant impact on our decisions. Something as seemingly simple as colour can play a major role. The book reports on studies that have found that football referees are more likely to give penalties to teams wearing black stripes than any other colour, that waitresses receive more money in tips when wearing red, and that we are more likely to buy shares when the information is presented to us on a green background. Another example, that could be pertinent for anyone with an upcoming conference presentation to prepare for, is that speakers presenting with colour slides give the impression of having higher quality data than those with black and white slides (p.66).

Our other senses also have a role to play. Music can impact our decision making, with various examples being given such as people spending more money in restaurants that play slower-tempo music, and wine merchants selling more French wine when they play French music in their shop (p.67). One example that many of us will be familiar with is using the pleasant smell of freshly baked bread to entice people into making purchases at the supermarket bakery, but did you know that people are also more likely to make an offer on a house if it smells of freshly baked bread? (p.69)

Being hungry can impair our decision making significantly, with hunger being identified as a key factor that can affect a surgeon’s performance, and whether the judge had eaten or not being a significant factor in whether or not prisoners are granted parole (p.237). On the other hand, needing to go to the bathroom with a full bladder can actually improve our decision making. People tend to make more rational choices when they need to go to the bathroom. The author suggests that this could be because the awareness of needing to go and being unable to may make us more conscious of controlling our impulses (p.238).

For a book themed as ‘popular science’, it is well referenced, which means that readers can easily locate more detailed information elsewhere and look up particular anecdotes or studies that catch their interest. Each of the chapters ends with a summary and a ‘Quick Tips’ section which presents the key information as a set of bullet points. This format is slightly contradictory as in the second chapter of the book, the author warns us to beware of information presented in exactly this fashion, urging us to ‘look beyond the large font and bold headline points’ (p.29). However, the author also suggests that we should not entirely place our trust in ‘experts’ whilst acknowledging the irony of being in an ‘expert’ position herself by virtue of writing this book.

Overall I would recommend this book as a light read when you need to take a break from more academic texts. This interesting book made me think about how I filter information and how subtle cues, like sensory information, may be factors that influence my decision-making. Many of the hints and tips are generally common sense, but the more in-depth discussion about the psychological factors impacting our decision making abilities did catch my attention and this is the aspect of the book that I think would appeal most to fellow psychology students.

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Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do
Claude M. Steele
W.W. Norton & Company Inc, 2010
242 pp; Softback; £11.99
Reviewed by Charlotte R. Pennington

This book is set around the experiences of a young African American boy who whistles Vivaldi as he walks down the street to disconfirm the negative stereotype about ‘violent black youths’. By whistling classical music as he walks, he feels that passers-by will evaluate him as an educated young man. He buttresses the contingencies that accompany his racial identity. This book tells the story of stereotype threat: A situational predicament where an individual perceives that they will be judged by, treated in terms of, or confirm a negative stereotype about their social group. ‘Stereotype threat is a predicament of life’, says Steele. ‘It springs from our human powers of inter-subjectivity – the fact that as members of society we have a pretty good idea of what other members of our society think, including the major groups and identities in society’ (p.9). Indeed, each and everyone one of us can think of a negative stereotype that is applicable to the social groups to which we identify. For example, stereotypes regarding gender, age, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, and many more. Steele powerfully observes this in the opening of his page-turning book: ‘I remember the first time I realised I was black. I was walking home from school with neighbourhood kids on the last day of the school year – the whole summer in front of us – and I learned that we ‘black’ kids couldn’t swim at the pool in our area park, except on Wednesday afternoons’ (p.1). This realisation, and many others throughout his early years, was the reason Steele became interested in the dramatic effects that negative stereotypes can exert on our behaviour – whether we know it or not. This reflection sparked two decades of research demonstrating how situational factors – and not innate differences – may help to explain on-going societal segregation and the racial and gender-achievement gaps in education. For example, in one of his first experiments, Steele and his colleague Joshua Aronson (1995) demonstrated that African American students performed, on average, four more items incorrectly on a verbal ability test when they were knowledgeable of the negative stereotype that governed their intellectual ability. A large difference on a 30-item test that, if sustained over a long period of time, would be fundamental in shaping these individuals’ scholastic achievement. Now cited as a ‘modern classic’ (Fiske, 2003), Steele reflects on this initial ground breaking research to examine how prolonged experiences of ‘identity threats’ may lead to academic turmoil, limited opportunities and even health consequences.

Throughout the start of this book, the reader may evaluate this as a solemn story of how society shapes our behaviour and may wonder how we, as individuals, can take steps...
to change this. Importantly, this book documents strategies to alleviate the experiences of stereotype threat for those targeted by them. For example, Steele focuses on interventions such as self-affirmation and ‘multiple social identities’ which teach individuals to reflect on their most positive characteristics and how these attributes are related to a positive social identity. Moreover, he suggests that enhancing people’s ‘identity-consciousness’ by educating them about the consequences of negative stereotypes and their malleable nature may offer a practical means of reducing stereotype threat effects. As such, a central policy implication of this research is that, if we don’t make people feel comfortable in their surroundings, and if we don’t break down these negative identity contingencies, then we won’t succeed in reducing group achievement gaps and contributing to an equal society. This is where the practical implications of Whistling Vivaldi lie. That is, if our behaviour can be influenced by society, and if these effects are not the inevitable outcome of inherent differences between individuals, then we have the power to overcome these effects and shape social policies and practices. Steele masterfully reflects on the improvements to Western societies, stating: ‘When I look over my life as an African American, I see improvements in the contingencies attached to that identity. The swimming pool restrictions of my youth are gone’ (p.212). Yet, Steele suggests that although our attitudes are improving, we still have a long way to go.

Overall, this book makes a statement about the importance of social psychology and contributes to our understanding of how our social world, implicitly and explicitly, affects both individual and group behaviour. It is an accessible and page-turning account that pinpoints the importance of acknowledging how identity contingencies can threaten our personal progress. Furthermore, it highlights how combating these contingencies can improve pressing issues such as academic achievement and group relations, and contribute to societal progress. This book presents the research journey that Claude Steele and his colleagues went on, and the mountain they climbed, to reflect on the following conviction: An equality driven dream should be the founding dream of every society.

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Reference
## PsyPAG Committee 2015/2016

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About PsyPAG

PsyPAG is a national organisation for all psychology postgraduates based at UK institutions. Funded by the Research Board of the British Psychological Society, PsyPAG is run on a voluntary basis by postgraduates for postgraduates.

PsyPAG’s aims are to provide support for postgraduate students in the UK, to act as a vehicle for communication between postgraduates, and represent postgraduates within the British Psychological Society. It also fulfills the vital role of bringing together postgraduates from around the country.

- PsyPAG has no official membership scheme; anyone involved in postgraduate study in psychology at a UK institution is automatically a member.
- PsyPAG runs an annual workshop and conference and also produces a quarterly publication, which is delivered free of charge to all postgraduate psychology departments in the UK.
- PsyPAG is run by an elected committee, which any postgraduate student can be voted on to. Elections are held at the PsyPAG Annual Conference each year.
- The committee includes representatives for each Division within the British Psychological Society, with their role being to represent postgraduate interests and problems within that Division or the British Psychological Society generally. We also liaise with the Student Group of the British Psychological Society to raise awareness of postgraduate issues in the undergraduate community.
- Committee members also include Practitioners-in-Training who are represented by PsyPAG.

Mailing list
PsyPAG maintains a JISCmail list open to all psychology postgraduate students. To join, visit www.psypag.co.uk and scroll down on the main page to find the link, or go to tinyurl.com/PsyPAGjiscmail.
This list is a fantastic resource for support and advice regarding your research, statistical advice or postgraduate issues.

Social networking
You can also follow PsyPAG on Twitter (twitter.com/PsyPAG) and add us on Facebook (tinyurl.com/PsyPAGfacebook).
This information is also provided at www.psypag.co.uk.
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