

**PSYPAG**

Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group

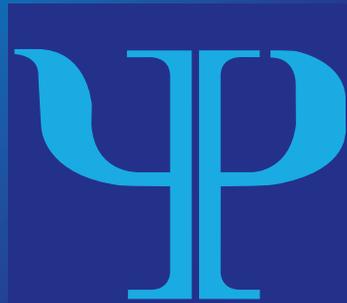
**Quarterly**

Issue 112 October 2019

**Dealing with the issue of student stress:  
Is mindfulness a solution?**

**Callous-unemotional (CU) traits in school:  
Why are CU traits linked to poor academic outcomes?**

**More methods can result in more knowledge:  
Why psychology needs to use multi-method approaches**



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**The 21st Annual Conference of the International Society  
for Bipolar Disorders**



# Editorial

Charlotte Scott

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**I**T BRINGS ME great pleasure to introduce the October 2019 edition of the *PsyPAG Quarterly*! I would like to begin by welcoming all of the new postgraduate psychology students who are beginning their courses this September! I hope you'll find the *Quarterly* to be a great resource and I encourage you to get involved with all that the wider PsyPAG community has to offer.

I write this editorial fresh from attending the 34th PsyPAG Conference in sunny Sheffield which was a huge success! Our annual conference provides a safe and welcoming space for postgraduates wishing to disseminate their work, and an excellent opportunity to network and learn about the fantastic research other postgraduates are conducting from across the UK. The editorial team thoroughly enjoyed meeting with delegates and received some brilliant article ideas which we hope to bring to you in upcoming issues. Following the conference's Annual General Meeting (AGM), we bid farewell to Claire Melia who has been with the *Quarterly* for two years. Thank you Claire for all of your hard work, dedication and innovation, you will be missed! Congratulations and a warm welcome to Bradley Kennedy from the University of Chester who has been elected onto the *Quarterly* editorial team. I look forward to working with you on future issues! In line with the theme of this year's conference, I am excited to announce that the December issue will be a Mental Health special, lead edited by Josie Urquhart. Please do get in contact with us if you have any contribution ideas!

In this issue we include an excellent range of articles from discussion papers and research in brief, to hints & tips, conference reviews and more – there's certainly something for everyone! We begin with a series of thought-provoking discussion articles; firstly Suhlim Hwang explores how

callous-unemotional traits (e.g. low empathy, lack of guilt) are related to poor academic outcomes in antisocial children. Next, Adam Natoli puts forward the case for psychology to employ multi-method approaches in both research and clinical practice to better understand people. Following this, Nicholas de Cruz eloquently summarises what constitute 'scientific' and 'unscientific' practices in qualitative research. The final article in our discussion paper section is written by Aleksandra Isham who highlights the utility of mindfulness-based interventions in managing student stress.

Following this, we have an excellent piece by Sophia Carleton who reflects on her experiences as a primary school teacher and suggests the need for the education system to become more psychologically orientated, encouraging children to become well-rounded individuals rather than focusing on targets and league tables. Moving on to our Research in Brief format, Edward Noon employs a novel 'think aloud' protocol to investigate the role of social networking sites in the formation of opinion and adolescent identity development.

With regard to more practical advice, we also have a couple of hints and tips articles. The first is by Shereen Sharaan who has reflected on her time collecting data in the United Arab Emirates to provide *Quarterly* readers with an important resource for undertaking overseas data collection. Next, Tamsyn Hawken carefully considers the challenges for those attending an academic conference with a mental or physical health condition, and provides some excellent hints and tips for making the most out of the experience.

In our conference review section, Aigle Raouana discusses her highlight talks and reflects on the experience of presenting

a poster at the 21st Annual Conference of the International Society for Bipolar Disorders, held earlier this year in Australia. As part of the *Quarterly's* Big Interview series, this edition is concluded by Laura Oxley's informative interview with Dr John Tillson and Dr Winston Thompson, who provide some fascinating insights into their multi disciplinary pedagogies of punishment project.

As you can see, we have a wide range of articles to suit postgraduate psychology students from all disciplines and at different stages of their studies. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the authors who have contributed submissions to the *Quarterly* over the last few months! Without your submissions there wouldn't be a *Quarterly*. As readers, we hope you enjoy this issue as much as our authors and editors have enjoyed creating it. With the start of the new academic term upon us, we are keen to hear your ideas and suggestions for ways in which we can continue to improve. Please don't hesitate to contact us if there is some-

thing you would like to see in the *Quarterly*, or if you have a vague idea and want to know whether to write it up – we look forward to hearing from you!

Finally, best of luck for the new academic year and happy reading!

**Charlotte Scott**

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## Need a reason to write for us?

- Great addition to the CV.
- Engage with the wider academic community.
- Provides experience in the process of publishing (i.e., responding to peer-review etc.).
- Most importantly, it is good fun!

More information can be found on our website ([www.psypag.co.uk](http://www.psypag.co.uk)), or on the back pages of this issue.

Alternatively, e-mail or Tweet us ideas: [quarterly@psypag.co.uk](mailto:quarterly@psypag.co.uk) / @PsyPAGQuarterly

We look forward to hearing from you.

# Chair's Column

## Madeleine Pownall

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**H**ELLO AND WELCOME! It's such an honour to be stepping up as Chair of PsyPAG (2019–2021). To briefly introduce myself, I am a first-year PhD student at the University of Leeds and my work is broadly interested in gender stereotypes and parenting. I have previously held various BPS and student representative roles, such as Chair of the BPS Student Committee, Associate Editor of *The Psychologist*, and PsyPAG Undergraduate Liaison Officer. I am genuinely delighted to be elected to represent such a collaborative, diverse, and ambitious group of postgraduates and hope to continue the excellent work of my predecessors in this role.

On that note, I would like to extend a huge thank you to Dr Holly Walton, the brilliant outgoing chair of PsyPAG. Holly leaves behind a strong legacy from the past couple of years and has contributed to important work, including editing and coordinating the second edition of the *PsyPAG Guide*, increasing postgraduate visibility in broader issues through the Research Board, and setting up the Undergraduate Award to recognise and inspire students at all levels. Holly has given me a wonderfully supportive handover for the past couple of months and is certainly a hard act to follow. Thank you for everything, Dr Walton!

I would also like to thank our outgoing Information Officer, Becky Scott, who has done an excellent job at liaising and coordinating our various stands, merchandise and bursaries over the past few years. I'm also very pleased to welcome Oliver Clark, our new Information Officer and Ben Butterworth, our new Treasurer!

I have just returned from an energising and exciting PsyPAG Annual Conference 2019 at Sheffield Hallam University. It was great to meet so many researchers, trainees,

and students all sharing a common vision of improving lives through psychology. Congratulations to our excellent PsyPAG award winners: Ellen Ridley (Masters Award), Catherine Talbot (Rising Researcher), Navya Sharan (Undergraduate Award), and Ashleigh Johnstone (DART-P). The future of our discipline is looking very bright!

The Sheffield Hallam team did a wonderful job of hosting a supportive and inclusive conference with a keen focus on wellbeing (particularly important given the 35 degree heat we had!). Suzy Hodgson and Martin Lamb co-chaired the conference team and did an excellent job. It is also my great pleasure to announce that the PsyPAG Annual Conference 2020 will be held in my own academic home, the University of Leeds! We can't wait to welcome you there.

As many of you may have seen, during the Annual General Meeting many new committee members were elected. Although we have just elected many new committee members, we do advertise positions throughout the year. So, please keep an eye out for upcoming committee positions. Details of these can be found on our website or at the back of the *PsyPAG Quarterly*. If you would like any more information or would like to apply, please contact Vice Chair Catherine Talbot at [vicechair@psypag.co.uk](mailto:vicechair@psypag.co.uk)

Finally, I would like to say a huge thank you to the BPS research board for their ongoing support. Remember that PsyPAG has many funding opportunities available for postgraduates for workshops and bursaries (details can be found on [www.psypag.co.uk](http://www.psypag.co.uk)).

Best wishes,

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# Meet the Readers

*Over the last couple of issues, our now regular 'Meet the Readers' section has had a fantastic response! The ultimate goal of this feature is to showcase you, the reader, with the view to facilitate research collaboration and build connections with postgraduate psychologists you might not otherwise have come across. If you are a Quarterly reader, we invite you to share a little bit about yourself, what excites you about your research and answer a wildcard question of your choosing. If this sounds like something you may be interested in doing, please contact us at [quarterly@psypag.co.uk](mailto:quarterly@psypag.co.uk) to obtain a template questionnaire. Read on below to find out more about our fabulous readers.*

## **Louise Thomas**

### ***What is your current research project?***

I am researching individual differences in social contagion effects, with a focus on autism. I am conducting behavioural and neuroimaging experiments to explore social contagion on value preference in temporal, risk (percentage), and effort discounting tasks. I'm exploring group differences, and trait differences, and I'm using a combination of computational modelling of behaviour, and neuropsychological questionnaires.

### ***What do you find most exciting about your research?***

I love the process of developing research from an initial idea to completion of the experimental protocol, and the excited feeling that I get when I start recruiting! I'm also really looking forward to starting my neuroimaging experiments and getting some new skills under my belt!

### ***Wildcard: What do you like to do outside of your research?***

My main hobby outside of my research is climbing (mainly bouldering). This really helps to refine my problem-solving skills (which is great for my PhD!). As the routes get harder, I need to think more about how to approach them, where to place my body and limbs, and plan route sequences in advance. It's also a great way to destress and focus my mind elsewhere after a long day!

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## **Aysha Bellamy**

### ***What is your current research project?***

My PhD project is 'the gene-culture coevolution of group identities'. The theory of gene-culture coevolution suggests that both traditional genetic evolutionary forces and our socialisation affects our behaviour. I'm particularly interested in how people make decisions in a group. An important aspect of my research is conformity. This has been intensively studied in social psychology with names like Asch probably springing to mind right now. My project focuses on studying

conformity to see how it allows groups to uphold norms, or opinions, at a group-level. My PhD will investigate conformity in a variety of situations, from an asocial task where we play for our own benefits through to tasks where we interact with others to get benefits. I'm also interested in traditional Evolutionary Psychology and comparing this theory to gene-culture coevolution as two lenses to explain human behaviour. Another big aspect of my project therefore is to use computational modelling to compare the predictions of these two theories. This involves making a group of 'people' on the computer and allowing them to evolve over time. These models will show us in which scenarios conformity and group-living make good survival strategies.

***What do you find most exciting about your research?***

I've been interested in evolutionary psychology since my undergrad, and I tailored my dissertation and a lot of my modules to study evolutionary aspects to psychology. It is also quite rare to study evolution intensely in the UK, so I was beyond excited when I saw this project advertised at Royal Holloway, University of London. What I like about this project is that, by considering gene-culture coevolution, we are looking at both the evolutionary and the social forces that drive human behaviour. In this way the approach is very integrated and considers many routes which can explain human behaviour, which I find very fascinating. I can also see the value in it. It is very theoretical and abstract now, but it is important to understand why, and how, groups uphold shared opinions to then challenge group opinions that may be maladaptive. A common example would be gangs or cults. By understanding where the opinions are coming from, and why they are upheld, then we can start to understand and reverse these maladaptive opinions, without ever resorting to telling another group that they are 'wrong'.

***Wildcard: What is the weirdest piece of psychology-related trivia you know?***

The weirdest psychology-related trivia I know may be a cheat, as it is probably more history/anthropology depending on your opinions! I am very interested in cooperation as it is the most important behaviour we show within a group and is a real mystery to traditional evolutionary accounts, which suggests that survival is selfish. We are perhaps all familiar with the idea that our decision to behave altruistically depends on the ratio of benefits to costs, and our genetic relatedness to the individual requiring help. *The Altruism Equation* is a book by Dugatkin that explores just how this equation emerged, starting back at Darwin. It describes altruism by looking at the lives of seven major players who helped develop the theory, and let's just say their lives are strange! We hear about Thomas Huxely, the man lovingly referred to as 'Darwin's bulldog'; and another man who created a scandal by having an affair when married. He was stalked by Private Investigators – it sounds very celebrity instead of our traditional stereotypes regarding professors! This book documents some tragedies as well: one man involved in the altruism equation actually committed suicide as he was so depressed by the thought that altruism could perhaps be explained by entirely selfish reasons. The scandals behind the scenes reveal at times an underhanded world where researchers 'fight' to find the best theory (and of course, claim who got there first). Essentially, it's *Game of Thrones* but about psychology researchers. And I recommend you all give it a read!

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## **David Hamilton**

### ***What is your current research project?***

My current research examines the applications of virtual-reality (VR) technology in higher education institutes from a psychological perspective. The recent revolution in powerful and affordable VR headsets, offering immersive and graphically sophisticated experiences has challenged the very definition of what we consider a learning environment. My research seeks to understand which educational skills and tasks can be best taught using immersive virtual worlds; especially when this confers a higher learning outcome than using traditional pedagogical methods. Additionally, my research also examines whether virtual lectures and seminars are a viable alternative to the customary university set-up.

### ***What do you find most exciting about your research?***

Being able to apply cutting edge and sophisticated technology to my research is what I find most engaging and interesting. With universities all over the world seeking new and exciting ways to engage learners, teach skills, and deliver information, my research has huge ramifications for the future direction of pedagogical technology not just in higher education, but also in primary and secondary schools. It is extremely exciting to be involved in a research area that does not stand still, with new advances in graphical fidelity and educational experiences being made on a regular basis.

### ***Wildcard: What do you plan to do after your PG degree?***

I hope to be able to move into lecturing and teaching after I have finished my PhD. I've been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to teach and interact with students when I was both an undergraduate, and postgraduate. Being able to teach a subject that you're passionate about appeals greatly to me, especially when I consider that it was my own lecturers and seminar leaders who first ignited my interest in psychology. I can only hope that when that times comes, my current research will prove instructive in whether VR should be used as a teaching method or not.

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# Callous-unemotional (CU) traits in school: Why are CU traits linked to poor academic outcomes?

Suhlim Hwang & Jennifer Allen

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*Callous-unemotional (CU) traits are a temperament dimension associated with more severe antisocial behaviour. Children with CU traits are low academic achievers, but unlike antisocial children without CU traits, they do not possess poor intelligence. This suggests heterogeneous risk pathways for poor academic performance in antisocial children with, versus without CU traits. However, most research has been conducted on parenting, with the school context largely neglected. This article aims to provide an overview of the theory explaining the relationship between CU traits and poor academic outcomes and how it can be expanded to inform school-based interventions for children with CU traits.*

**T**HERE is substantial evidence for heterogeneous pathways to antisocial behaviour in children, with multiple risk factors influencing these pathways relating to both child characteristics (e.g. gender, temperament and cognitive ability) and the environment (e.g. family, peers, school and neighbourhood factors). The presence of CU traits has been identified as one influential pathway helping to explain differences in the presentation, correlates, trajectory, and treatment outcomes for antisocial behaviour in children (Frick & Viding, 2009). CU traits are a temperament dimension characterised by low empathy, lack of guilt, deficient affect and a lack of concern for performance. High levels of these traits are associated with a greater variety, severity and persistence of antisocial behaviour (Frick et al., 2014). While existing research demonstrates that antisocial children with CU traits show particularly severe problems across multiple domains of functioning, most of this research has focused on the family context. In contrast, little is known about risk and protective factors for the poor academic, social and behavioural adjustment of children with elevated CU traits in the school domain.

## **CU traits in the school domain**

The available evidence for CU traits in school settings shows that children with CU traits show more severe disruptive behaviour inside and outside of the classroom and therefore elicit more discipline from their teachers (Allen, Morris, & Chhoa, 2016). In addition, they are more likely to bully their peers in direct and indirect ways (Viding et al., 2009), report less peer support and feel less connected to their school (Fanti et al., 2017). They also have poor quality teacher-child relationships and low academic achievement (Allen, Bird, & Chhoa, 2018; Horan et al., 2016). Academic underachievement is a common problem for antisocial children, with both academic and behavioural problems exerting a negative impact on school and later life outcomes (McEvoy & Welker, 2000). Several potential risk factors for poor school performance (e.g. family adversity, IQ and neurodevelopmental delay) have been explored, and one of the most robust findings is the relationship between low verbal intelligence and antisocial behaviour (Maguin & Loeber, 1996). This relationship between intelligence and delinquency remains significant even after controlling

for socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and test-taking motivation (see review by Moffitt, 1993). However, CU traits do not appear to be associated with lower verbal or nonverbal intelligence (Allen et al., 2013; DeLisi et al., 2011), therefore this explanation is unlikely to account for the association between CU traits and poor academic outcomes.

Nonetheless, existing studies have consistently found a significant negative relationship between CU traits and low achievement. DeLisi et al. (2011) examined the relationship between CU traits and the reading comprehension performance of 432 American middle school students. The group who possessed the highest scores on both student and teacher report of CU traits had the lowest mean scores across all three reading comprehension tests. Vaughn et al. (2011) used regression models to examine the association between CU traits and reading achievement in the same sample. Findings indicated that both self and teacher ratings of CU traits were inverse predictors of reading test scores. Ciucci et al. (2014) assessed teacher ratings of academic achievement and CU traits in 540 Italian children in grades 6 and 8. Low teacher ratings were associated with CU traits, and this relationship was largely accounted for by the callousness and uncaring trait scales of CU traits. More recently, Horan et al. (2016) examined the relationship between CU traits and standardised math and reading test scores in 942 3rd grade primary school students in New York City. CU traits were associated with lower achievement in Math and Reading exams even when controlling for child behaviour problems.

### **Explaining the link between CU traits and underachievement**

Different explanations have been proposed to explain why CU traits are linked to poor academic achievement. DeLisi et al. (2011) suggested that the indifference of children high in CU traits towards school performance and in obtaining the social approval of others with others leads them to under-

perform academically. That is, children high in CU traits are not as distressed by the negative consequences from poor academic outcomes compared to children low in CU traits and lack the motivation to perform up to others' expectations. A recent study provided some support for this theory, with qualitative analysis of teacher interviews indicating that they perceived the low grades of children with elevated CU traits to be due to low intrinsic motivation to engage in school work as opposed to a lack of academic ability (Allen et al., 2018). On the other hand, DeLisi et al. (2011) pointed out the decreased sensitivity of children with CU traits to punishment and social cues (e.g. teacher discipline or peer rejection) might prevent these children from learning prosocial behaviours and engaging in schoolwork. Likewise, Horan et al. (2016) also identified the social context as important in explaining the relationship between CU traits and poor academic achievement. Based on their finding that CU traits are associated with poorer quality of teacher-child relationships, they speculated that CU traits may elicit harsher responses, less encouragement, and less feedback from teachers. Hence, these negative interactions and relationships with teachers may exacerbate CU children's poor academic and behavioural adjustment. However, to date, all studies have relied solely on teacher-report to assess the student teacher relationship and child characteristics, overlooking the perspectives of young people. Finally, there is the view that emotion processing deficits contribute to poor academic outcomes in children with CU traits (Hiatt & Newman, 2006). It is well known that CU traits are associated with a poorer understanding of emotion-laden information, and academic tests, especially reading achievement test, inevitably rely on an understanding of emotions to some degree (Vaughn et al., 2011).

## Limitations and future research directions

Although several theories have identified different factors that may affect the relationship between CU traits and academic achievement, existing studies have all been cross-sectional. Therefore causal inference cannot be made and it is unclear why CU traits predict poor academic outcomes. In addition, existing studies are limited largely to Western countries and relied on teachers as the sole informant of the quality of teacher-child interaction. Therefore, more studies should address the applicability of CU traits and their associations with child outcomes in Asian cultures. My PhD research will be longitudinal and will examine CU traits and their relationship with school-related outcomes in a South Korean sample using a multi-informant approach. In particular, my research will examine CU children's interpersonal relationships, such as with teacher or peers, and how these relationships serve as risk and protective factors for poor behavioural and academic adjustment in school. Since positive parenting strategies, parental warmth and good parent-child communication have been found to reduce CU traits and anti-

social behaviour in several studies (Waller et al., 2013), a close teacher-student relationship and positive peer interactions may motivate these high-risk children to engage in their schoolwork. School success is vital in establishing healthy emotional, behavioural, and interpersonal development (Henry et al., 2012). Identifying the mechanisms linking CU traits to underachievement will make a substantial contribution to our understanding of potential targets for school-based prevention and intervention, in order to promote prosocial behaviour, school engagement and academic achievement in high-risk children.

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# More methods can result in more knowledge: Why psychology needs to use multi-method approaches

Adam P. Natoli

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*There is an overabundance of mono-method approaches and research designs used in psychology. Mono-method approaches (use of a single method of measurement) are problematic because, surprisingly, different methods for measuring the same thing often do not yield comparable scores. Multi-method assessment, however, often leads to more complete and precise findings. To better understand people, multi-method approaches in research and clinical practice need to become common practice in psychology. Intervening at an early stage of education might be the most fruitful tactic for initiating this change. Doing so by addressing current insufficiencies in psychological assessment training might be an advantageous route for facilitating successful transition.*

**W**HETHER ATTEMPTING to understand a mental process, behaviour, symptom, or any other psychological construct, at its core, the field of psychology seeks to understand people. Luckily, people are easy to understand: 1) hand person a questionnaire, 2) calculate that person's scores, 3) read-off what those scores mean, and 4) understand that person. Some – hopefully all – of you reading will disagree with the process I have just enumerated. Good! This process is the traditional mono-method approach to assessment and measurement. Specifically, mono-method approaches involve the use of a single method of measurement to study a construct. In contrast, multi-method approaches involve different types of tests (e.g. self-report, informant-report, implicit, performance-based, behavioural, etc.) with results integrated to gain knowledge about the construct or individual of interest. Unfortunately, mono-method approaches have been the prevailing practice in psychology. In fact, Bornstein (2003) found 81 per cent of published studies on personality pathology between 1991 and 2000 relied

exclusively on self-report data. More recent surveys have found a similar overabundance of mono-method approaches in clinical practice and psychological research (Bornstein, 2011; Cizek et al., 2008; Hogan & Agnello, 2004).

## **Different types of tests don't necessarily measure the same construct even when designed to, but that can be helpful**

But what if they are really good tests? The issue is not with the individual test. Rather, the problem is that different types of tests designed to use different methods to measure the same construct often do not yield comparable scores (Meyer et al., 2001). Different types of tests are actually measuring slightly dissimilar things because each method of measurement requires respondents to use different psychological processes (Bornstein, 2007). For instance, self-report questionnaires call for self-reflection, asking respondents to consider their feelings or behaviours in order to choose the most appropriate answers. Scores on a questionnaire measuring interpersonal dependency for example, can be more precisely understood to reflect the indi-

vidual's self-perception of how dependent on others they are, or how dependent they wish to appear to others (Natoli & Bornstein, 2017). Scores on other types of tests, like those using implicit methods, tend to represent the more hidden elements of a construct (e.g. aspects about which the respondent might not be fully aware). Although the scores from these different methods of measurement each represent an individual's level of interpersonal dependency, the meaning of the scores slightly differ.

As different methods will each provide a 'different piece of the puzzle,' it is advantageous to use multiple types of tests and then integrate these data in order to draw conclusions. This multi-method approach offers researchers the opportunity to improve the validity of their studies (Bornstein, 2011). Multi-method approaches are also gainful in clinical application, as a recent assessment case of my own demonstrates. An adolescent male was referred to me for testing to understand his academic and emotional difficulties. Self-report data suggested average emotional experiences and an above average positive self-concept, whereas other types of tests indicated considerable emotional distress. Taken together, these seemingly contradictory findings revealed a degree of emotional restriction that was hidden by a compensatory inflated self-presentation in an effort to, as the adolescent later clarified, not burden others. These hidden emotions interfered with his ability to perform well in school. Fortunately, the findings made available by taking a multi-method approach encouraged the adolescent to enter therapy and his grades and emotion regulation have since improved.

### **Psychology needs to use multi-method approaches, a shift in common practice must be made**

The over-abundance of mono-method approaches in psychology is a pervasive issue which can be damaging to both research and clinical practice (see Huprich et al., 2011; Mihura, 2012). Compared with

mono-method approaches, multi-method assessment leads to a more complete and precise understanding of individuals and research questions. But, even when multiple methods are used, many approaches to interpreting results emphasise score convergence across methods. Furthermore, the descriptive meaning for a given test score is often found by comparing it to a 'normal score'. Since different test methods require individuals to engage different psychological processes, multi-method assessment offers the ability to interpret test scores within the context of the psychological processes tapped by different methods (see Bornstein, 2015, for review of a process-focused approach to psychological assessment).

### **Psychology needs to use multi-method approaches to better understand and treat people**

This will require a shift in what is considered common practice in our field. One way we can generate such a shift is to modify the training of students. Modifications to how students are trained in psychological assessment are of key importance. Currently, many doctoral programmes emphasise the learning of specific tests, without emphasising multi-method assessment or teaching students how to integrate results from multiple tests when writing a report (Mihura et al., 2017). One of the core competencies in psychological assessment, the ability to assimilate information from multiple sources into a comprehensive and coherent description of the client, is rarely being addressed (Clemence & Handler, 2001; Stedman, 2007). The attention paid training students to integrate multi-method data to most effectively answer a client's question might facilitate a shift in a student's approach to their research and other clinical work. That is, building an appreciation for a multi-method approach to psychological assessment could foster a parallel appreciation for the use of multiple methods of measurement in research and other domains of clinical work (e.g. psychotherapy).

## Conclusion

Overall, the work of clinicians and researchers can benefit from the use of multi-method approaches, especially when idiosyncratic measurement characteristics of different tests are considered. Intervening at an early stage of education might be the most fruitful tactic for generating a shift in psychology away from mono-method approaches; addressing current insufficiencies present in psychological assessment training might be a particularly advantageous route. It should be noted that there are many resources available to assist in this undertaking, including textbooks on conducting integrative assess-

ment (e.g. Hopwood & Bornstein, 2014; Wright, 2011). There is also a multitude of yearly workshops offered at conferences, and a plethora of information on psychological assessment and international training opportunities made available by the Society for Personality Assessment ([www.personality.org](http://www.personality.org)) if you would like to learn more.

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# Appreciating different research practices in psychology: A student's notes on research paradigms

Nicholas P. de Cruz

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*To communicate the paradigmatic differences of quantitative and qualitative research, this article seeks to provide a balanced argument of what constitutes 'scientific' or 'unscientific' research. I begin by clarifying some of the known issues in interpreting terminology from a qualitative perspective. I then explain the influence of common qualitative criteria and how they impact the pursuit of knowledge. This leads to an exploration of the contested nature of quantitative and qualitative practices, where I discuss the strengths and criticisms of both paradigms. From this, I conclude by highlighting the rationale and logic of qualitative researchers that may be misunderstood.*

**T**HE DEBATE TO ESTABLISH if qualitative research is scientific when compared against the standard of quantitative research can be traced back to the 'paradigm wars' which concluded with a consensus that both methodologies contribute and advance various fields within social science (Sparkes, 2015). However, as the genesis of the social sciences was nurtured in the shadow of the physical sciences, the tradition of employing quantitative methodologies has become the dominant language of research, rather than that of a particular paradigm (Smith, 2009). According to Westerman and Yanchar (2011), one explanation why such views are relatively rampant in social science is due to the predominant positivist or 'natural science' approach to research. This reoccurring comparison with quantitative paradigms as a standard of scientific research is often misleading and unhelpful, as qualitative approaches embrace different methodologies and epistemologies, which mean different things to different researchers (Smith & Caddick, 2012).

To address the various views and opinions within this philosophical debate, this article will attempt to provide a balanced

argument of what constitutes 'scientific' or 'unscientific' research, by illuminating and reconceptualising the standards by which qualitative research is interpreted and judged. However, it would be hypocritical to say that this article can provide an objective and impartial view of the qualitative paradigm, as it would directly conflict with the ontological and epistemological beliefs of qualitative researchers. To supplement the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research, much of what follows will be influenced by my constructivist epistemology as a postgraduate sport psychology student, who firmly believes that qualitative research is indeed scientific.

## Appreciating beliefs

As the researcher's ontological, epistemological, and methodological commitments constrain which methods can be used, not all methods are compatible with all paradigmatic assumptions or methodologies. According to Lincoln (2010), our beliefs matter because they tell us something about what the researcher perceives as knowledge, and given that all research is already theory laden, to disregard the ontological and epistemolog-

ical paradigms which inform theory would be problematic. Arguably, qualitative researchers may care more about philosophy of science issues because they are more necessary when defending their work in comparison to quantitative researchers (Martin, 2011). However, if social science is to advance, there is a need for both camps to have, at the least, an appreciation and reflexive awareness of the philosophical assumptions which drive their respective research practices (Sparkes, 2015). For example, post-positivists may employ more rigid strategies such as experimental and manipulative techniques to find what is perceived as observable and quantifiable knowledge (one reality), whereas constructivists tend to embrace the subjective interpretations of the researcher as a co-creator of meaning in the research process (multiple realities). This highlights the significance of how the different beliefs of each paradigm influence the purpose of research, the role of theory, the choice of research design, the researcher's role, and the criteria used to judge the research (Sparkes, 2015).

### **Qualitative perspectives**

The critique of qualitative research as unscientific arose as researchers moved away from using instruments that represented the objective nature of a phenomenon to that of researchers being acknowledged as part of the research process. Within this qualitative paradigm, the subjective interpretations of the researcher facilitate a dynamic co-construction of meaning with participants, that envision multiple versions of readings of phenomena and experiences, which all reflect a true 'reality' relative to the context being studied (Smith & Caddick, 2012). However, the processes of obtaining data through verbal interaction or observation may be perceived as threats to the 'standards of science' given the subjective and interpretive nature of the data and analysis (Morse, 2015). As such, qualitative researchers have had to turn to arguments grounded in the philosophy of science to defend the value of qualitative inquiry.

One issue which has been constantly raised is that of validity. Defined as, 'the degree to which inferences made in a study are accurate and well-founded' (Polit & Beck, 2012, p.745). This is usually operationalised, albeit incompatibly, in qualitative inquiry by how well the study represents the actual phenomenon (Morse, 2015). However, as qualitative researchers avoid converging on a unitary set of methods, assumptions and objectives to be consistent with their subjective and constructivist epistemology, this can result in uncertainty regarding the validity of findings in qualitative inquiry (Smith & Caddick, 2012). Other common standards of judgement which qualitative research has been exposed to are that of reliability and generalisability (Tenenbaum & Eklund, 2012). Reflecting the criteria of positivist and postpositivist paradigms, the replication of a study and application of findings to a wider population may not be applicable to qualitative paradigms as they are informed by different philosophical assumptions (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). For example, qualitative researchers tend to work with naturalistic generalisations, whereby unique personal experiences are used to provide a rich and in-depth perspective of specific phenomena, to allow readers to make connections with their own experiences (Smith & Caddick, 2012). A relevant approach to fairly judging the quality of research is therefore needed, as a standard that is not within the same paradigm as the form of inquiry under scrutiny may be considered poor scientific practice.

### **Pursuit of the truth(s)**

The qualitative paradigm advocates that 'truth', 'knowledge', and 'reality' are dynamic constructs which are actively created by the communal construction of meaning in our daily lives and academic endeavours as scientists. It is noteworthy that even among qualitative researchers there is no universal code of practice as to what constitutes good research, as fixed criteria to establish truth and knowledge would conflict with the qualitative paradigm (Smith & Caddick, 2012).

However, criteria can be useful to provide a guiding framework to learn and refine practice, if their interpretation is consistent with the beliefs of qualitative inquiry (Tracy, 2010).

Despite the myriad of proposed criteria to judge qualitative research, the most common concepts from the literature are that of transparency (did the researcher clearly illustrate the research process), trustworthiness (is the study credible, dependable, transferable, and confirmable), and reflexivity (has the researcher openly reflected on the impact of his or her assumptions, intentions, and actions on the research (Smith & Caddick, 2012; Sparkes, 2015; Tracy, 2010). These strategies can – and do – have value in facilitating good qualitative practices if their application is dependent on, and influenced by, the specific purposes of the study and on what seems important at the time, rather than a predetermined set of rules (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). In contrast to the quantitative paradigm, the characteristics which define good qualitative work should always be open-ended and subject to constant reinterpretation. As such, the notion of ‘quality’ is a somewhat elusive phenomenon as the nature and diversity of conceptions in qualitative research prevent an absolute or preordained standard of what constitutes ‘legitimate’ research (Sparkes & Smith, 2009).

### **Quantity and quality**

The creative complexity of qualitative inquiry presents a sharp contrast to the relative consensus of the quantitative community, where good research adheres to the standards of validity, reliability, generalisability, and objectivity. While qualitative researchers are concerned with specific situations and personal experiences of individuals, quantitative studies focus on factors or relationships based on a large sample with hard numbers and *p*-values (Morse et al., 2002). However, rather than focus on the typical distinctions between both paradigms, it may be more prudent to perceive each ‘way-of-knowing’ as two separate philosophies which

can complement and augment the other (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2011). Moreover, what is being studied, like all social knowledge, is dependent on the local contexts in which they are situated (Tracy, 2010). In essence, the debate as to what is scientific or unscientific can be traced back to the different ways we perceive and evaluate our social world as quantitative and qualitative researchers, who follow different paths to knowledge generation (Horn, 2011).

Ironically, what makes a good scientist may be the demand for researchers to constantly critically evaluate the information portrayed in the literature. For example, quantitative researchers are often critiqued as reductionistic due to their focus on one theory, but similarly, the use of scripted interview questions by qualitative researchers can also be conceived as reductionistic (Martin, 2011). Additionally, the use of statistics as a neutral and objective tool is itself a product of social and cultural influences, which were created with an intended purpose, rather than something ‘awaiting discovery’ (Smith, 2009). Likewise, despite the value attached to the ontology of qualitative researchers (i.e. multiple realities), what is presented in the literature is one version that has been prioritised over others (Martin, 2011). Against this backdrop, the negative connotations associated with each limitation may actually be perceived as a strength within their respective paradigms, highlighting the importance of how the views of researchers impact this ongoing dialogue. In making clear the contrasting nature of either approach, Denzin (2010) suggests that there needs to be an openness to alternative paradigm critiques to find new strategic and tactical ways to work together, rather than against each other.

### **Logic of qualitative researchers**

Despite being portrayed as linear in methodological literature, qualitative research is dynamic and interactive as the researcher constantly shifts between design and implementation (Morse et al., 2002). It is

interesting that unlike the positivist stance, which focuses on physical-law-like generalisations for knowledge generation, qualitative researchers seek to gain a more nuanced description of what is being investigated by answering questions such as 'what?', 'why?', and 'how?'. Qualitative researchers explicitly delve into the process of observing and generating data through embracing the uncertainty and complexity of emotions, societies, and cultures, rather than attempt complete impartiality through methodological rigour (Smith & Caddick, 2012). Thus, what is presented is a joint construction, between the researcher(s) and participant(s), that represents multiple perspectives that are developed and refined throughout the research process (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2011). In this sense, qualitative research can naturally evolve as a function of the data acquisition process. With this 'evolutionary flexibility', it can lead to unexplored areas of knowledge which may have gone seemingly unseen if a more traditional 'scientific' design had been used (Eklund et al., 2011).

The appraisal of qualitative work as a scientific paradigm is just as complex and diverse, as there is no consensus to define or evaluate the myriad of studies in the qualitative domain, or even if a set standard is possible or desirable (Sandelowski, 2015). Thus, the art of appraisal is similar to that of music and painting, as it also involves interactive and subjective processes between the subject matter and the audience or reader at a specific time and place (Smith & Hodkinson, 2009). Of course, this ambiguity to base scientific judgements may not aid the interpretation of qualitative writing as the research area is riddled with vague terminology and abstract jargon (Martin,

2011). However, if we as scientists can equip ourselves with a stock of knowledge to draw upon, we can develop the ability of what Sparkes and Smith (2009, 2014) describe as connoisseurship. Instead of the passive consumption of a definitive set of criteria, connoisseurship facilitates the continual refinement of research practices by appreciating the complex and subtle qualities within the respective scientific paradigms, both familiar and unfamiliar (Sandelowski, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

Research paradigms and the judgement of their quality have been and will always be dependent on the researcher, and what is perceived as attainable. As such, it would be naïve to claim that a single theoretical or methodological approach can represent a universal standard to base all research on. Armed with this knowledge, researchers should be willing to critically evaluate their own actions through the eyes of others in order to transcend the perceived barriers which determine what is 'scientific', and to gain a more enlightened appreciation that other paradigms beyond their own can represent good scientific practice. As so eloquently described by Smith (2009), 'Those who use the "scientific method" are no less storytellers than those who do autoethnographies' (p.99).

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# Dealing with the issue of student stress: Is mindfulness a solution?

Aleksandra Eriksen Isham

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*Many students experience high levels of stress which may adversely impact their health, life satisfaction, and academic performance. In the search for ways to reduce student stress, mindfulness has shown promising results. This article summarises findings on the effects of mindfulness-based interventions on student stress and related outcomes. It also highlights some issues that require further attention in order to advance our understanding of how mindfulness may benefit students experiencing stress.*

**A**TTENDING UNIVERSITY is a time full of novel experiences. Most of these experiences are exciting and rewarding, such as acquiring new knowledge, relationships and extracurricular activities. However, for many students, attending university also brings with it some less welcoming experiences; namely high levels of stress and expectations. According to a university student wellbeing report released by Unihealth (2017), 8 out of 10 UK students experience stress and anxiety. Pressure to succeed constitutes a key stressor among young people in the UK (Mental Health Foundation, 2018) and young individuals in higher education report that exams, concerns about career prospects, and money concerns are major causes of stress (NUS Scotland, 2010). These findings are discouraging, especially as high levels of stress may adversely impact students' health (Hudd et al., 2000), life satisfaction (Weinstein & Laverghetta, 2009) and academic achievement (Vaez & Laflamme, 2008).

On a more encouraging note, interventions have shown the potential to reduce stress and increase wellbeing in students. Mindfulness-based interventions constitute one group of interventions which promise a less stressful student life. Derived from Buddhism these ancient practices are now gaining increasing attention for their poten-

tial relevance to modern life. Focusing on the present moment and on 'being' rather than 'doing', mindfulness-based interventions may act as a welcome break from the expectations of performance that students deal with. Indeed, in a review of mindfulness-based interventions in student-populations, (Bamber & Schneider, 2016) concluded that, overall, mindfulness-based interventions show promise as stress reducing interventions in university student populations. Findings from a number of studies suggest that a wide selection of mindfulness-based practices of differing lengths and contents may successfully reduce student stress. For example, Hindman et al. (2015) found that both brief and extended weekly mindfulness exercise combined with discussion and psychoeducation over a six-week period significantly reduced student stress compared to a control group. The exercises employed in this study were based on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Another study (Gallego et al., 2014) found that undergraduates who participated in an eight-week intervention based on MBSR, reported significantly reduced stress compared to a physical education group and control group. Assessing the effects of two brief MBSR exercises (hatha yoga and body scan), Call et al.

(2014) found that three weekly 45-minute sessions of either hatha yoga or body scanning were equally efficient in decreasing stress in female undergraduates compared to a waitlist control group. These findings suggest that mindfulness exercises may be beneficial for students who are experiencing stress.

Other mindfulness studies have focused on additional but related issues in student populations, including overall psychological distress, wellbeing and coping. In a randomised controlled trial Galante et al. (2018) found that students who received an eight-week mindfulness course adapted for students in addition to mental health support, reported reduced psychological distress during the exam period compared to students who only received mental health support. In another study, medical and clinical psychology students received a seven-week mindfulness course based on MBSR during their second or third semester, followed by booster sessions twice a year (de Vibe et al., 2018). The students who had received the mindfulness intervention reported significantly greater increases in wellbeing and adaptive coping over a six-year period compared to a control group.

These studies suggest that mindfulness constitutes an area with potential to positively impact student stress as well as related variables. Adding promise to these findings, some studies suggest that training in mindfulness may have long-lasting effects on stress, wellbeing and coping. In an eight-week randomised controlled trial, medical students who received a mindfulness intervention reported significant decreases in perceived stress compared to a waitlist control group (Warnecke et al., 2011). These decreases were maintained at a 16-week follow-up. In de Vibe et al.'s (2018) study, participants who received mindfulness training reported increased wellbeing and adaptive coping at a six-year follow-up compared to controls, despite low adherence to twice-a-year booster sessions that extended beyond the primary eight-week mindfulness course.

This preliminary evidence for the stress reducing effects of mindfulness in student populations is promising. However, further research is required to have a deeper understanding of factors that influence the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions. One such factor is participant adherence; this should be taken into consideration both to assess students' willingness to practice mindfulness, and to assess dose effects (Irving et al., 2009). Second, there needs to be a greater understanding of the utility of different mindfulness practices. Studies on mindfulness employ a range of different mindfulness-based interventions, making it hard to compare the efficacy of specific approaches. Further, there needs to be a greater understanding of individual factors that may impact upon the effectiveness of mindfulness programmes, such as symptom severity (Kinnunen et al., 2018). Increased knowledge about such factors would improve our understanding of the advantages as well as limitations in the ability of mindfulness to reduce student stress.

Overall, there is compelling evidence for the utility of mindfulness-based interventions in dealing with the issue of student stress. Interventions may reduce stress as well as improve related issues such as student coping and life satisfaction. With further research we will have a better understanding of how mindfulness training can benefit the needs of broad student populations.

If you are interested in giving mindfulness a go you can visit <https://palousemindfulness.com/>. The webpage offers a free online Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course created by a certified MBSR instructor.

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## Reflective piece

# Are the kids alright? How to support the learning of the next generation, and to make them as emotionally and mentally healthy as possible

Sophia Carleton

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*This article discusses whether there is any room for the fundamentals of developmental psychology left in the education system, and talks about why addressing children's mental wellbeing is as important as their academic achievement. I reflect on my seven years in the primary classroom, both in the UK and internationally. I also highlight the importance of recognising developmental psychology in education, and suggest that a more psychology orientated education system is the way forward to ensure academic and personal success in future generations.*

**A**S THE UK education system pushes ever forward with their campaign to 'improve' the standards of teaching and learning; and as teachers, parents, and even students push back on these standards citing too much pressure, too much paperwork and too many exams, the need for clear guidance on what children can and should be taught in their vital formative years is now more pressing than ever.

There are few educators that have not at least heard of names such as Bowlby, Vygotsky, and Piaget; researchers that between them have generated a wealth of knowledge on child development and learning. This is not even mentioning lesser known pioneers of learning such as Susan Isaacs, John Dewey and Alfred Binet, whose influences on child rearing and testing are still seen today. Through these psychologists and their work we know that children reach certain developmental milestones at the age their brain is developed enough to do so, an idea first introduced by Piaget (1936), and reinforced in the paper by Pierre Barrouillet (2015). We understand the importance of play in the first few years, and that we should

harness children's natural curiosity to help them learn, according to Isaacs (1929) and supported by Nestor and Moser (2018). First and foremost, we know children need to feel safe and nurtured in their environment before we even begin to think about teaching them, an issue first discussed in Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory.

Yet look in most UK classrooms, and on a daily basis these principles based upon what we've learnt about development are being ignored. Test prep, spelling drills, and a pressure to maintain Ofsted and league table results are drastically shaping our children's educational experiences. Furthermore, these expectations keep getting higher. When I first started teaching in 2008, children were required to know at least one letter, or combination of letters, for each phoneme, and how to use these to read and write words by the end of year one (5 to 6 years of age; Archived National Literacy framework, 2008). By the time I left teaching in the UK in 2013, schools were preparing for the new Early Years framework, where this standard is expected by the end of Reception – a full year before (UK Early Years

Foundation Stage Framework, 2014). The fact that this phonics knowledge needs to come after a strong foundation of phonological awareness that children at four years old may not possess yet (Osewalt, ND), and only comes with maturity (Tunmer, 1991; Vanderelden & Siegel, 1995), does not enter the picture. Our educational frameworks and policies are setting teachers and students up to fail before schooling has even begun.

Of course, these ever increasing demands on our teachers and students create pressure. There is no denying that such pressure is damaging to the education profession. Teachers are leaving schools in droves (Department for Education, 2018), students increasingly feel stress and anxiety over exams, which more than ever is leading to mental health issues (The Key, 2017). Unsurprisingly, it is not anyone's goal to make the next generation into the most over-tested, underconfident and mentally unhealthy cohort yet. However, unintentional or not this seems to be what is happening. I say this not to disparage my former UK teaching colleagues, but out of concern for what we are doing to the pupils in our care. What does this constant pressure and acquisition of knowledge before they can comprehend it mean for the next generations as they mature? Should we not be using all tools at our disposal to support children and young people, instead of forcing them to adhere to standards that do not benefit them? Crucially, this is where psychology can help us.

As well as studying for my Masters in Applied Psychology at Robert Gordon University, I am now a classroom teacher and a special needs leader in an international school in southern Switzerland. I am still teaching 5-year-olds, but through the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB-PYP) which has different standards and priorities which fall more in line with how children naturally learn and grow. They care about the child's whole well-being: mental, physical, and emotional – not just how much knowledge they can cram in between the ages of 3 and 18.

The International Baccalaureate's (IB) philosophy is that we cannot hope to teach children to become fully global-minded individuals, ready for unknown future jobs through traditional knowledge-based teaching. The IB focuses on developing desirable attitudes and attributes that children should ideally cultivate in order to become a world citizen. These include traits such as independence, tolerance, and curiosity, all developed through units of inquiry. These units are child-led and follow the child's natural interests, focusing very much on play, as opposed to the topics used in the UK system which are very much imposed on the child and staff alike, in spite of any relevance or interests to the class. Teaching an inner-city London class a topic about the seaside when they had never even seen the ocean was a challenge when I attempted it a few years back, and did not resonate with them at all. Conversely, giving the children the opportunity to pick an area of interest and curiosity from a broad topic like the IB means children are learning more and applying it naturally to their own lives. For example, when giving a unit on animals last year, my class of five-year-olds independently decided the thing they were most curious about was endangered species and how we could help protect their habitats. This led to some creative research and action taken by them all when they spread their newly found knowledge to their families. While the parents were bemusedly being lectured by their child for wasting paper, I was admiring the skills being demonstrated by my class that would have been impeded by the rigid curriculum of the UK system. From this, you can see the principles of the IB come from a secure knowledge of how children learn, develop, and grow, from past research all the way back to Susan Isaacs who found children learn best when their natural curiosity is stimulated (Isaacs, 1929).

Luckily, it is not just the IB which is learning from psychological knowledge. More schools are becoming aware of the vital role they play in a child's upbringing, and

are recruiting counsellors, creating Nurture Groups, and working with universities to research the best ways to help children with attachment issues feel safe and secure in school. This can only be a positive influence on UK education. What children need is well informed teachers and policy makers, who both know how children learn best, and are interested in supporting them to do so, rather than concentrating on league tables and targets. As both a teacher of young children and a student of psychology I am aware of the vital importance of teaching and getting the first vital years of education right. We need to understand the abilities and limitations of children at their current age. We should support and extend their learning without challenging them beyond what they are capable of and destroying their self-esteem and love of learning. We desperately need to

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- start caring for the whole child, their mental and emotional welling being and academic success are equally as important. This links back to the significance of psychology, it gives us the fundamental tools to understand how children and young people develop. To adapt teaching and child-rearing practices to suit children’s needs, interests, and developmental stage. To raise and teach the next generation to be the most well-rounded, mentally-resilient, and knowledgeable members of society that they can be. And then, everybody benefits.

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## Other resources

International Baccalaureate Mission:

[www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/mission/](http://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/mission/)

Nurture Group Network UK

[www.nurtureuk.org/](http://www.nurtureuk.org/)

Attachment Aware Schools

[www.bathspa.ac.uk/education/research/attachment-aware-schools/](http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/education/research/attachment-aware-schools/)

An introduction to attachment and the implications for teaching and learning

[www.bathspa.ac.uk/media/bathspaacuk/education-/research/digital-literacy/education-resource-introduction-to-attachment.pdf](http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/media/bathspaacuk/education-/research/digital-literacy/education-resource-introduction-to-attachment.pdf)

# 'He must have been bad because no one I saw supported him': Social networking site social comparisons of opinion and adolescent identity development

Edward John Noon

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*There is emerging evidence which suggests that when young people use social networking sites, they make social comparisons of opinion to support identity development. In an attempt to further understand this phenomenon, the present qualitative investigation drew upon semi-structured interviews with two female adolescents. Findings of an interpretive phenomenological analysis suggest that respondents generally compared their opinions to similar others in an attempt to increase self-certainty and engender a sense of belonging, while disengaging with, and/or distancing themselves from, dissimilar others. Further research is required to determine whether this is an ongoing trend among adolescent social networking site users.*

**I**DENTITY DEVELOPMENT is the key psychosocial task of adolescence (Erikson, 1950). During this critical developmental period, young people are expected to transform their childhood identifications in line with their current interests and abilities, and identify valued life goals (Newman & Newman, 2012). This is a complex and often challenging task, and in order to find an identity which truly 'fits', young people tend to experiment with a range of different roles and value systems before making commitments in identity relevant domains, such as a career choice or political persuasion.

Over the past decade, young people have increasingly been using social networking sites as locations for identity exploration (Patchin & Hinduja, 2017). Research concerning social networking sites and identity development has thus far been dominated by the notion that such platforms provide convenient and powerful venues for self-disclosure and self-presentation. Nevertheless, such technologies also present their users with almost limitless opportunities for social comparison. Although limited, there

is an emerging literature which suggests that both adolescents and young adults are utilising social networking site social comparisons of opinion to support their search for a synthesised and coherent sense of identity (Noon, 2018a; Yang et al., 2018).

In times of uncertainty, individuals often compare their opinions to those of others as a means of evaluating whether their own beliefs and preferences are accurate or socially acceptable (Suls et al., 2000). With this in mind, it is unsurprising that young people who are actively exploring their identity are indeed utilising the comparison opportunities afforded by social networking sites. Interestingly, however, all published studies in this area have, to date, drawn upon quantitative frameworks. Quantitative studies have provided an important understanding of the statistical trends regarding the social networking site social comparison behaviour of young people. However, very little is known about who adolescents are comparing their opinion to online, why they are comparing their opinions to these specific individuals, and the extent to which young people believe

that this process influences their identity. This preliminary study seeks to shed light on this gap in the literature.

## Methods

### Participants

Two female adolescents from a Catholic secondary school and sixth form college in the East Midlands were purposively invited to participate in this study. Sophie (pseudonym) aged 13 and Amy (pseudonym) aged 18, both self-identified as regular users of social networking sites, particularly Instagram.

### Procedure

Each participant took part in a semi-structured interview lasting around 40 minutes. Interviews began by inviting participants to sign in to their favourite social networking site on an iPad; both participants chose Instagram. Drawing upon a think aloud protocol (Charters, 2003), respondents were then asked to discuss what they saw and how it made them feel and think. Participants were left to decide how they navigated the social networking site, but were prompted to share their views regarding the content they chose to engage with. Alongside this task, a pre-planned interview schedule was also utilised to help guide the flow of conversation. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith, 2004). IPA was used to enable the researcher to focus on both the unique characteristics of individual participants and connections across cases (Noon, 2018b). Ethical approval was granted by the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection.

### Results

Analysis of the data revealed that comparison behaviour and the outcomes of such comparisons appeared to be dependent upon perceived similarity with the comparison target. Two themes were identified: (1) Comparisons with similar others and (2) Distancing oneself from dissenting others.

### Comparisons with similar others

Both participants generally elected to ‘follow’ individuals who have similar attributes, interests, and/or beliefs to themselves. As a result, opinion comparisons were predominantly with like-minded others. Such comparisons tend to provide individuals with a sense of validation, closure, and stability (Kruglanski, 1989), and this can have a significant impact on one’s attitudinal and self-certainty. This was exemplified by Amy, who – when discussing her burgeoning interest in left-wing politics – recognised that opinion comparisons with similar others on social networking sites increased her confidence in her political preferences. Specifically, Amy reflected upon comparisons that she made during the 2016 US Presidential Elections, and discussed how the opinions of like-minded others helped to validate her belief that Hillary Clinton was the best candidate:

*Some of the people I followed during the American election kept saying ‘we stand with her [Hillary Clinton]’. Whilst I already had in my mind that Hillary was the right person, I think the people who I followed made me feel like yeah, if other people think that, people who know a lot more about it than me... It was really reassuring – they boosted my confidence in what I was thinking was right.*

Amy believed that the opinions of more knowledgeable others were important in determining whether her beliefs and preferences were indeed ‘right’. Given that social networking sites have provided individuals with unprecedented access to the opinions of ‘similar experts’, it is possible that young people are increasingly comparing their opinions to like-minded, but slightly advantaged others as a means of assessing and evaluating what they hold to be true. Sophie, a ‘self-confessed Marvel nerd’, also explained that she regularly reflects upon the opinions of similar others on social networking sites and discussed how such comparisons play a significant role in her exploration of comic books and films:

*...because not everyone at school is a massive fan of Marvel and everything, it is nice to find people who think the same thing. It makes me think: I am not weird for liking this, it's fine. It might be nerdy, but it is fine. Like, I look at what others say and post, and I am like yes – this is fun, I agree, this is me! What they say relates with me if that makes sense, and you almost feel like a little community...like, you are not the odd one out anymore.*

Here, Sophie suggests that opinion comparisons with similar others on Instagram not only provide her with validation regarding her preferences, but also help to engender a sense of affiliation, belonging, and social acceptance. With this in mind, it is plausible that comparisons with like-minded others on social networking sites are particularly valuable for those who may otherwise explore specific facets of their identity in isolation. This may, for example, include shy or introverted individuals, persons with disabilities, and those who fear social stigmatisation in offline contexts, such as those questioning their sexuality.

### ***Distancing oneself from dissenting others***

Interestingly, participants appeared unwilling to engage with dissimilar others on social networking sites, and at times reported to actively distance themselves from individuals with opposing viewpoints. During her interview, Amy (who had hoped to study medicine at university) noticed that some individuals that she 'followed' on Instagram had quite negative views regarding higher education. She felt as if her aspirations were being challenged, initially resulting in feelings of doubt, discomfort, and reflection. In an attempt to protect herself, she 'unfollowed' the dissenting voices:

*...but that then makes me feel like, Ok they are questioning me, so maybe I should look at it further. But I know what I want to do...so I block them out, as I do not want them to influence me. But then their comments do make me doubt a little, even though I thought I was 100%.*

Later in the interview, Amy considered the possible implications of distancing herself from content which challenged her current opinions. She once again reflected back on the 2016 US Presidential Election, and believed that the lack of exposure to alternative opinions helped to enhance her confidence in her political commitments:

*...there was no one that I saw online who did [support Trump], and that was probably one of the reasons why I felt so confident. Nobody said that they agreed with him, and it made me think that he must have been bad because no one I saw supported him.*

Here, Amy highlights the validating power of social consensus, and believed that because everyone that she 'followed' agreed with her political musings, they must have been correct and the alternative must have been 'bad'. Such findings are consistent with the teachings of Festinger's (1950, p.272) original social comparison theory, which held that 'an opinion, a belief, an attitude is 'correct,' 'valid,' and 'proper' to the extent that it is anchored in a group of people with similar beliefs, opinions, and attitudes'. Experimental research has also considered the powerful implications of network homophily, and has found that those embedded within homogenous social networks do indeed experience enhanced attitudinal strength, decreased ambivalence, and increased certainty (Visser & Mirabile, 2004; Anderson, 2008).

While Sophie did not 'unfollow' those that she disagreed with on social networking sites, she acknowledged that she engages with content posted by like-minded others differently than she does with content shared by those dissimilar to herself. When discussing a Tweet that Kanye West posted earlier that day, Sophie explained that:

*I just put it in my head that that it is all rubbish, and I do not want him to influence my thinking. If I read through it at all – which I probably won't – I will just think it is him,*

*he is not worth it and it is all nonsense, and his opinion is stupid. This is because of things that he said in the past... I would not let it change my opinion at all.*

It appears that prior to engaging with opinions shared on social networking sites, Sophie first considers the source of said content, and the extent to which the authors' past opinions have reflected or differed from her own. In cases where she is confronted by content shared by an individual who has a history of conflicting beliefs/preferences, she disengages, and appears unwilling to allow such viewpoints to influence her thinking.

### **Discussion**

This study considered two female adolescents' perspectives regarding the extent to which they employ social networking site social comparisons of opinion as a means of exploring their identity. Participants reported that opinion comparisons were conducted with similar others as a means of increasing attitudinal and self-certainty, and engendering a sense of social acceptance and belonging. Interestingly, participants also claimed to not engage with and even actively distance themselves from content which challenged their current viewpoints. Festinger (1954, p.128) wrote that 'a discrepant opinion threatens one's own opinion since it implies the possibility that one's own opinion

may not be correct'. Such incongruity can cause discomfort, hostility, and derogation. It has been suggested that this may lead individuals to selectively compare themselves to, and allow themselves to be influenced by, information that supports their own opinions, whilst ignoring or dismissing conflicting viewpoints (Anderson, 2008). This appears to have been the case with the present preliminary study, and although this approach may be useful for learning more about one's current commitments and stabilising one's sense of self, such behaviour can limit individuals' social worlds and prevent exposure to alternative viewpoints.

Further research with larger samples is now required to discern whether this is an ongoing trend amongst adolescent social networking site users, or rather just those who are not looking to reconsider their current identity commitments. Future studies should also consider sampling male participants, given the literature which has identified sex differences in social comparison behaviour and its outcomes in online contexts (e.g. Fox & Vendemia, 2016; Ho et al., 2016).

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# Researchers undertaking overseas data collection

Shereen Sharaan

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*Towards the end of the second year of my PhD, I embarked on a 12-month journey in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to collect the data essential for PhD programme completion. With just one month left to go before my data collection is complete, this hints and tips piece addresses several points that fellow postgraduates may find helpful to consider when collecting data internationally. Specifically, this article will focus on the regulatory, cultural, logistical, and lone-working aspects of overseas data collection.*

**M**Y PROJECT INVESTIGATED four key areas; (1) the impact of bilingualism on the executive function (EF) of children with autism and typically developing (TD) peers, (2) the relationship between EF performance and autism symptoms, (3) any language related factors in bilinguals (e.g., language proficiency, age of language acquisition) that could impact EF performance, and (4) the impact of bilingualism on the expressive and receptive language skills of autistic and TD groups.

I chose to conduct this research in the UAE, as the country presents multilinguals in a large variety of cultural and linguistic variations, unlike the UK and US for instance. This is an ideal geographical setting for bilingualism research as the majority of the population is bilingual, and therefore, used to switching between their languages on a frequent basis and in different contexts.

## **Regulatory authorities: Do your homework**

Depending on the nature and genre of your research (e.g. medical field, non-medical) and the organisations you intend to target and approach for research recruitment (e.g. schools, research centres, hospitals), you may require the approval of one or more regulatory authorities in that country (e.g. ministries, education councils and health

authorities). In some countries (e.g. the UAE and Egypt), it can be challenging to determine who to approach for approval, and in fact, whether you even need regulatory approval in the first place (that is, beyond the approval required of the participating organisation).

If you have researched the main regulatory authorities in the country that you are planning to collect data in (e.g. browsed their websites, tried to contact via email or phone) and you are still unable to find a lead, an effective next step would be to get in touch with one or two bodies you are considering to approach for recruitment and inquire if they themselves require approval to take part in external research. Organisations that have experience collaborating with local and international researchers will be expecting this inquiry from an external researcher and should be able to put you on the right path moving forward. This could potentially reveal some useful insights about which regulatory bodies to approach, procedures to undertake, and personnel to follow up within case of delays with ethical approval.

I had to navigate a few challenges myself at the regulatory level when I first embarked upon data collection. However, given that I had previously accumulated some work experience relevant to my research topic in the UAE, I was already somewhat familiar

with the regulatory education authority in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (the capital of UAE). Furthermore, a few months prior to data collection, I invested in a two-week trip to the UAE to prepare for my one-year data collection journey. This included a scoping exercise with leading autism centres in Abu Dhabi to determine my estimated child participant pool size (based on specific research inclusion criteria like age and diagnosis). It also included a visit to the Abu Dhabi Education Council (regulatory authority) to meet with a member of the team that manages ethics applications. Previously, I had faced technical issues on their website when trying to log in to view the ethics application form, and received no response to this inquiry by email or phone. However, during this face to face visit, all my questions were answered and I walked away with a contact name and number to follow up with concerning my future ethics application. This was most helpful when approval of my ethics application was delayed for more than a month, as I could directly chase it up.

Overall, if possible, I highly recommend scheduling a short preparation trip to the country you are planning to collect data in. Face to face meetings with regulatory authorities and participant gatekeepers will give you peace of mind and ensure everything is in place for when you next formally visit for data collection.

### **Navigating differences: language, culture, and social norms**

It is always recommended that you have some knowledge of the language, culture, and social norms before visiting any country for the first time, let alone if you are visiting for research purposes. This is because the success of the data collection phase of the research will largely depend on the support of various community bodies (from institutions to individuals). Therefore, it is critical to identify beforehand whether the country generally adopts a high-context culture (implicit communication that relies heavily on context with value placed on interpersonal relationships) or a low-context culture

(explicit verbal communication, and less close-knit). This knowledge should have a direct impact on your communication style and approach within that country.

In addition, understanding the context in which your participants live their lives might be pivotal when it comes to interpreting what they have shared with you and in turn, your translation of this information into findings and recommendations. Joining community groups on social media and reading up on blogs written by locals and tourists could certainly offer useful insights. In practice, researchers should make every effort to use local language, expressions, and be mindful of social norms. Ask lots of questions and express interest. The effort does not go unnoticed and you are more likely to make meaningful connections.

### **Logistics: The importance of planning ahead**

When scheduling research internationally, it is important to be mindful of noting major holidays and events (e.g. Ramadan, Eid, Chinese New Year, Independence Day) which vary from country to country. Often, celebrations or commitments can extend beyond the days indicated on a calendar! On a separate note, arranging methods of transport (e.g. public transport, car rental) ahead of time and clarifying what resources are available at the research site (e.g. Wi-Fi, printer) are essential to ensure the data collection process runs smoothly.

### **Lone working: How to do it safely**

‘Lone working’ involves carrying out work duties remotely and without direct supervision to control, guide or help in uncertain situations. It can take place during working hours or out of hours, and can be based in various places for periods of time or within a fixed place. The following are some helpful tips to consider in order to ensure your lone working is conducted safely:

### ***Know the building procedures***

- Familiarity with exits and alarms. External doors should be locked to avoid any unwelcome or unwanted visitors while working alone.
- Access to a telephone and first aid kit.
- Secure contacts of someone else present within the same building to be contacted in an emergency.
- Follow sign-in and sign-out procedures.

### ***Identify your emergency contact***

- Identify a person based in the country where you are working with whom you can share details of your location, work plan, estimated time of leaving and returning, etc. Allow this person access to a contact at your work (someone to follow up with).
- Let this person know if you deviate from your work plan and in the event you do not report as expected (i.e. within a certain timeframe), they need to follow up on the situation and then proceed with contacting your emergency contact person if needed.

### ***Ensure your personal safety***

- Have access to a working phone at all times, with sufficient credit.
- Make sure there are no risks with accessing or working from a particular location (any known hazards? Any relevant history? High crime rates?).
- Avoid working in deserted areas or working at late hours of the night.
- Secure appropriate health insurance coverage where you are remotely based (your university might offer that free of charge!).
- When working remotely, ensure you are in regular contact with your overseas supervision team (I was expected to share weekly updates and schedule monthly supervision meetings).
- Think about your tone of voice and choice of words when working solo and remotely, and be aware of your own triggers.
- Be aware of social, cultural, and religious

differences when working remotely.

- Discuss with those in-charge what strategies or techniques to apply when working with vulnerable or potentially difficult groups.
- Detailed record-keeping when doing home and school visits (i.e., what was discussed, any concerns no matter how trivial, etc.)
- If you have any medical conditions as a lone-working researcher, it is essential to make them known to others when working remotely (medical bracelet, etc.).
- Trust your instincts, work out an alternative arrangement, if you are uncomfortable with any visit.
- Try to schedule appointments in advance and offer multiple choices.
- If sensitive information is revealed to you (from a vulnerable participant, for example) be sure to report it to the in charge authority.

### **Summary**

There are several considerations to keep in mind for a successful research visit, particularly when one wishes to undertake research globally. It begins with a proactive attitude to research the environment weeks and possibly months before travelling for data collection. These considerations include (but are not limited to) researching regulatory bodies for research approval, researching cultural practices, planning ahead logistically, and defining lone working procedures. I had the advantage of having lived and worked in the country I planned to collect data in, so I was largely familiar with language, business culture, and regulatory contexts. Yet, I discovered there was still much more for me to learn before I could launch my research journey successfully, and it dawned on me that this kind of knowledge can sometimes only be attained when you are physically at the data collection site/country in person (like in my case at the regulatory level). Therefore, I would highly recommend thorough preparations in advance should you plan to collect data internationally, but

with the understanding that research, much like life in general, sometimes doesn't run as planned. Yet, be assured that any unexpected challenges only end up enriching your entire experience and journey, contributing to much needed personal and professional growth.

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# Managing mental and physical health conditions at academic conferences

Tamsyn Hawken

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*Conferences are fantastic opportunities that many will be lucky enough to experience during the course of their postgraduate studies. Whilst they can be exciting, for most people, they are also tiring. This is particularly the case for those who manage a mental and/or physical health condition. The hints and tips in this article are relevant to anyone wishing to improve or manage their experiences at academic conferences, but are especially useful for those who need to manage their time and energy alongside a health condition.*

I HAVE BEEN INCREDIBLY FORTUNATE during my PhD to attend numerous conferences, both national and international. Conferences can be exciting, motivating, eye-opening and generally provide a huge number of opportunities to explore cutting edge research and meet new people. However, as someone who has managed mental health conditions and an invisible chronic health condition, conferences can also be anxiety provoking, unsettling and exhausting. Many able-bodied individuals will also express the tiring and at times unsettling nature of conferences. There are a number of ways I have learnt to manage conferences and I wanted to share them to help others who may be daunted by the prospect of an academic conference, whether you have a health condition or not.

Essentially, the skills I have developed and the actions I have taken fall neatly into three categories: (I) Before, (II) During and (III) after.

## **Before**

Once you have decided you are attending the conference, there are some decisions you can make before you arrive which can ease the burden on your mind and body during the conference itself. I find it useful to sit down and work out what my triggers might be, and what I already do to manage

my everyday life. That way I can see if it would be possible to implement similar strategies during the conference.

## ***Travel and timing***

If you are going to be travelling to an international conference, or your travel involves a number of different elements and will be tiring, it is worth considering whether you might be able to arrive a day early to your destination. Most departments and funding bodies are understanding if you mention you need this time to recover from travelling and settle in (and thus make the most of the conference – and their funding!). Arriving a little earlier than necessary means you hopefully will not feel rushed, you have some time to get your bearings and can perhaps catch up on rest after travelling. This is something that is important and useful for anyone attending a conference in a different time zone or a new place.

## ***Accommodation***

Sometimes the only accommodation option can seem like the conference hotel, but there are other possibilities that may suit your needs better. For me, having a space completely away from the conference at the end of the day, to rest and recharge, is imperative. This means that rather than book the recommended hotel (which is not usually

suited to a PhD's budget anyway) I opt for an AirBnB or similar set up. This means I have a place to go and relax, cook for myself if needed and get some headspace. For some, being physically distant from the conference venue may be stressful, especially if the location is not particularly accessible. In this case you might opt for the conference hotel. Either way, putting some thought into where you want to stay, and why, can really make a difference when it comes to the conference itself, we all have personal preferences that are not necessarily the result of a health condition and it is important to honour these.

### ***Email and work***

I used to leave for a conference with the best intentions to stay up to date with email and to get some work done whilst I was there. I have now realised that the better option is to put an out of office message on my email and to not expect any work from myself. Before heading off to your conference, you may wish to make a decision similar to this. Decide whether you are going to have an out of office message stating you will not be responding to emails until your return, or perhaps that replies may be delayed during this time. You may also decide to take some work with you to do, but with realistic expectations. I have learnt that conferences are work in themselves, just slightly different to your typical PhD routine, so sometimes the less pressure the better, for anyone attending a conference, but especially if you are managing low energy levels in connection to your health condition.

### ***Accessibility and individual needs***

It can be hard to advocate for ourselves, but it is important to do so. Do not be afraid to state your needs and request that they best be met. If you have accessibility needs, you may wish to contact conference organisers in advance to determine whether they have taken your requirements into account. In addition, you may have other individual needs (e.g. dietary restrictions)

which should be acknowledged and catered for by the conference. Often, there is an option to state any additional needs when registering for a conference. In the absence of this set-up, details of conference organisers can generally be found online, or you could contact the organisation hosting the conference directly. You may also require additional assistance or a caregiver to attend the conference and thereby ensure you gain the most from the experience. In this case you should confirm with the organisers that this person can be registered without issue and check if any further considerations need to be addressed.

### ***During***

Once you have got some strategies in place ahead of the conference, chances are, you will be feeling a bit more confident about attending. However, there are still a number of things you can do at the conference to help manage your time and energy, and ultimately improve your overall experience.

### ***Scheduling***

Conferences are usually jam packed with a variety of exciting content and events to go to. It can be all too easy to forget our minds and bodies amidst this and go full steam ahead, attending everything we possibly can and then wondering why we feel so awful at the end of the day. A busy conference can very quickly become overwhelming, for anyone, let alone those managing anxiety and other health issues. Scheduling appropriately is useful for anyone attending a conference.

Upon arrival at the conference it can be useful to find an up-to-date schedule and have a look through it. A system of marking events as 'absolutely cannot miss' and 'maybe' can be really helpful. I have done this in the past and throughout the conference checked in with myself – if I was feeling tired, anxious or in pain, the maybe category became the no category and I did something else like rest, take a walk and get some fresh air or catch up with someone at the

conference. There can be guilt with this, the conference cost money and I should make the most of it. Critically though, I have come to realise I need to feel good to make the most of the conference, and missing a few talks meant that I could fully engage with and enjoy those that were ‘must sees’. This has proven to be the case not only for myself, as someone managing a health condition, but also other academics who simply want to make the most out of a conference in a balanced and sustainable way.

### ***Socialising and networking***

On top of the intellectual stimulation, conferences often also dedicate time to socialising and networking. These times are extremely valuable and there can be pressure to take advantage of them, but this should not be to the detriment of our health. Anxiety about meeting new people or exhaustion from the day’s activities, are valid reasons to bow out of networking or socialising. Something I found useful was to look through the delegate list and make a note of those I definitely wanted to approach or connect with, and aimed to do so over the course of the conference. It is important to pace ourselves at conferences, especially when we have a physical or mental health condition. If going out for dinner leaves you completely floored the next day, how valuable was that networking in the long run?

### ***Diet, alcohol and caffeine***

Conferences are busy and fast paced, it can be hard to keep up and very tempting to have some coffee to keep you going and a glass of wine to wind down. Whilst there is of course nothing wrong with this, if you know that diet, alcohol and caffeine can make life difficult for you in terms of managing a health condition, you may want to consider minimising your intake or avoiding it altogether. I usually leave it until the last night to have a glass of wine. This works really well because I do not feel hungover and can deal with any health related issues post-conference. I have noticed that food options at conferences

have gradually become healthier and more varied in recent years. However, this is not always a guarantee. If food and diet is an important part of you being and feeling well (health condition or not), you may want to consider taking some packed lunches with you or packing some of your favourite snacks to keep yourself going.

### **After**

It can be all too easy to get to the end of the conference and drop the self-care, but the way you approach the first few days following a busy conference can make a huge difference, especially when you return to work.

### ***A ‘decompression’ day***

As with arriving early, if you are able to, you may wish to leave a little bit of time between the conferencing ending and your travel home. This can give you time to ‘switch gear’ and check in with yourself about how you are feeling. If you are not able to do this at the location of the conference, consider planning a day for this once you are home. Even if you have managed to look after yourself well during the conference, launching back into your normal working day is probably going to be challenging post-conference. Being patient and taking time to rest can mean that you are more productive and feeling better in yourself when it comes to getting back to work.

### ***Playing catch up***

Depending on whether you ignored email and took any work with you, you may need to ‘play catch up’ for a day or two upon your return. I find setting an ‘admin’ day to do things like catch up on emails and submit expenses is a nice way to get back into things. Not putting pressure on yourself to be back to full productivity after a demanding conference is important. You may need to play catch up personally with laundry, chores or just resting and getting your body back to equilibrium, depending on how much the conference impacted you. Personal catch up is just as important, if not more so, than work catch up.

### ***Follow up emails***

Something I have found useful at the last two conferences I have attended, is to make a note of people's names, research area and any questions I wanted to ask them or feedback I wanted to give. Sometimes at the end of a talk I am exhausted and just need to get some headspace, or sometimes approaching a speaker is daunting. In these cases having a note to follow up via email upon my return to work can be really useful. I am still networking and making connections, but doing so in a way that works for me and is respectful of my health and wellbeing needs.

### ***A 'back in the office' message***

Something I have made use of recently when I have been 'out of the office' is a 'back in the office' message. Similar to an out of office reply, it simply states that I have been out of the office for a period of time and am currently catching up on emails, therefore there may be a slight delay in my reply if one is required. This puts my mind at rest and stops me from worrying that I might be taking too long to reply to emails, or that a colleague might think I am ignoring them. I usually leave this message on until I am up-to-date with emails and normal service can resume. Catching up on emails is something we all have to deal with, and thankfully most people are understanding if you keep them informed.

### **Take home message**

The key theme in all the strategies I have shared here is self-care, something that we could all use more of, whether we have a health condition or not. As cliché as that may be nowadays, it is important, and is different for everyone. Some people may need to have their own space and avoid alcohol to get through a conference, some people may need the social connection and contact to get through. What works for one person would not necessarily work for another. Which is why it is so important to check in with ourselves, and try to ignore what other people might think about us or perceive us to be. Essentially, we are the ones who spend all day with our mind and bodies and it is up to us to make doing so as easy as possible. Whether we have a health condition or not, we must not feel bad for looking after ourselves, our health and our wellbeing. With a little care, some forward thinking and clear boundaries, conferences can be easy and enjoyable to navigate. For those of us managing a health condition, taking steps such as those mentioned above can be the difference between 'surviving' at a conference and 'thriving' at a conference.

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# 21st Annual Conference of the International Society for Bipolar Disorders, Sydney, Australia

Aigli Raouna

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*In this article I share my reflections on the 21st Annual Conference of the International Society for Bipolar Disorders, which took place in Australia this year. For a PhD student with a research focus on bipolar disorders like myself, this conference provided an invaluable opportunity to engage with pioneer clinicians and researchers of this field, and interact with people with lived experiences from all around the world. This article will focus on my motivation, expectations and experiences gained attending this conference.*

**L**AST MARCH I ATTENDED – and presented a poster – at the 21st Annual Conference of the International Society for Bipolar Disorders (ISBD) on Global Advances in Bipolar Disorders and Depression, held at the International Conference Centre in Sydney (20–23 March). This means that I crossed two things out of my bucket list at once: attending a bipolar disorder international conference and visiting Australia. Although it is not always easy to isolate an event from its context, in this article I will only share my reflections on the first one.

I imagine Australia is a common entry in bucket lists, but how did a bipolar disorders international conference end up in mine? Back in 2009, in my first year as a Psychology undergraduate student, a tutor told us that if we decide to continue in this field, we will most probably follow a pathway that will not only be of academic interest to us but also of a personal one. I immediately doubted this as it seemed to be too much of a cliché. However, in hindsight, he was right, at least in my case. Around this period, a member of my family was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. When in 2016 I had to decide my MSc dissertation topic, I found myself intrigued by the idea of conducting a systematic review on the psychiatric outcomes of offspring of parents

with bipolar disorders. A year later, my study was published (summarised in the poster I presented in this conference) and since January 2018 I have been a PhD student exploring the transition to parenthood in the context of bipolar disorders. Therefore, a four-day international conference on bipolar disorders seemed like a great opportunity for me to learn, share and discuss with clinicians, patients, researchers and health professionals on the front lines of bipolar care. At least this is what the promotional material suggested!

## **The conference programme**

The scientific programme of the conference consisted of a variety of workshops, keynote lectures, parallel sessions and networking events (including a really useful early-and-mid-career researchers networking event). Attendants represented more than 50 countries around the world and the focus of the conference was divided into three main domains: clinical practice, research and lived experience or, as it appeared in the programme, ‘experts by experience’ sessions. It would be impractical to mention all the sessions I attended and found useful during the conference, but I would like to acknowledge some that stood out. The first

day I attended a workshop on 'Rhythm and Blues: An Introduction to Social Rhythm Therapy' run by Holly Swartz, Marie Crowe and Maree Inder, which, besides having a catchy name, offered an interactive way of understanding a novel therapy focusing on mood stabilisation through the establishment of a daily social rhythms routine (e.g. waking up time). This workshop provided a good grasp of how circadian rhythm disruption (such as the disruption of sleep patterns) may contribute to the onset or relapse of bipolar disorder episodes and how this can be prevented. This was a topic of particular interest to my PhD given that sleep disruption is a common experience during transition to parenthood, which needs to be taken into special consideration in the context of severe mood instability.

Next in my highlight sessions list is 'The Effect of Bipolar on Families and How to Manage These Changing Challenges Across Their Lifetimes' session by Mike Griffiths, Tanya Griffiths, Susan Berger and Margaret Hines. This session acted as a great reminder of why bipolar disorders is a plural term. Three very diverse, honest and intense narratives on the experiences of parents and partners of individuals with bipolar disorders allowed the audience to immerse into their family timeline and to experience their journey of feelings, worries, expectations, challenges, but most importantly strength and acceptance.

Lastly, during the final day of the conference, the keynote speaker Professor Alan Young delivered a presentation – with a great sense of humour I may add – on 'Myths about Mood Disorders'. His presentation revolved around facts that tackle highly debated issues, such as the use of antidepressants and their side effects, the validity of diagnostic classification systems and the heterogeneity of mood disorders. He argued that we must be able to address and refute myths and misunderstandings, and I believe that this was a great take-away message for everyone working in the field of mental health. Unfortunately, there are

still numerous myths and misunderstandings in our field, which we need to be able to recognise and challenge using findings drawn from good quality research.

Generally, going through the list of international speakers felt like reading my reference lists. It may sound like an exaggeration, but when you have spent a significant time of your academic life seeing and citing their names, reading (and feeling a bit jealous of) their research projects, and shaping your own research ideas based on their work, it feels like meeting your favourite film producers at the Cannes Festival! Learning about their latest projects, their yet-to-be-published findings, as well as their thoughts and suggestions about the future of this field was a unique opportunity. In addition, presenting my poster and discussing my PhD research with colleagues and other people interested in bipolar disorders research from all over the world was both a stimulating and an intimidating experience (as any other networking event for the non-extroverts like myself). Standing next to my poster was enough to spark very interesting conversations, become aware of ongoing projects related to my own research, exchange ideas, discuss potential collaborations, witness personal narratives of people with lived experiences and, most importantly, get validation from them for my research. These events tend to give you a somehow surprising feeling that people do not ask you questions out of courtesy, but because they are actually interested in your research and invested in providing you with valuable insights and advice.

Notwithstanding the academic benefits I earned from this experience, the main reason this conference lived up to my expectations was because of its clear and loud focus on lived experiences (including those of presenters and of audience members). In my opinion, its biggest success was that the voices, stories, insights, and experiences of people with bipolar disorders, of mental health professionals with bipolar disorders and of their partners, carers and parents, were communicated not only in the confer-

Figure 1: A slide from the keynote presentation of Prof Eduard Vieta on optimising functional outcome in bipolar disorder



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ence rooms, loud and clear through microphones in the presence of a big audience, but also in the foyer among smaller groups of people socialising and enjoying a bubbly. After all, this is why we are doing research. If we cannot discuss with our 'community' (our 'film stars') about the applicability and usefulness of our research ideas to their lives then we should probably reconsider our priorities as 'film producers'.

In sum, the aftermath of this conference was one cell phone with a full memory because of photos of inspiring slides (e.g. Figure 1), posters (and koalas!), two full notepads with my thoughts, notes and contact details of people from very diverse backgrounds, and a lot of food for thought

for my own research. I am looking forward to going to the next year's conference in Chicago.

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# The Pedagogies of Punishment project: Interview with Dr John Tillson & Dr Winston C. Thompson

Laura Oxley

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*John Tillson (Liverpool Hope University) and Winston C. Thompson (The Ohio State University) are the Principal Researchers on the Pedagogies of Punishment project (funded by the Centre for Ethics and Education). As a PhD student exploring alternative approaches to behaviour management in schools, I was invited to participate in the project along with other researchers in this field, some early in their careers and others already established academics. This interview with John and Winston took place following the initial project symposium and offers a fascinating insight into the aims and background of the project.*

**Q: Can you give me a brief overview of the aims of the Pedagogies of Punishment project?**

**A:** The Pedagogies of Punishment project aims to bring together North American and UK scholars from a variety of disciplines and perspectives in order to pool expertise on school disciplinary practices and policies. Through this, we aim to better understand and articulate the normative and empirical considerations that ought to be factored into the design and implementation of (in the first instance) US and UK school discipline, and, in time, make normative recommendations to policy makers, administrators and practitioners. In this, we have essentially begun our work by asking five interrelated questions:

1. When (if at all) are children liable for punishment?
2. What punishments (if any) are appropriate?
3. What justifications (if any) make them so?
4. To what extent are teachers reliable judges in meting out proportionate and equitable sanctions?
5. To what extent can just expectations be codified?

**Q: How did you first come up with the idea for this project and how was it initially developed?**

**A:** John had conducted some research on the ethics of formative influence in children's upbringing (that is, research on the means by which and ends towards which it is acceptable to influence, centrally, children's beliefs, attitudes and dispositions). Distinguishing formative influence from behavioural influence, he largely bracketed out questions about behavioural influence in his previous work. For the sake of completeness, he always intended to give it due attention. Both as a subject of school discipline, while a child, and as an enforcer of school discipline as a teacher, John found frequent opportunity to pause for thought about a range of questions: about whether, when, why, and how blame and punishment might be appropriate in the context of schooling, when it might not, and what might mark those distinctions.

As Winston has an abiding scholarly interest at the intersection of justice and education, John began discussing with him the ways in which the questions of punishment might draw sharp focus on some of the core concerns of that ongoing work. Winston's own attention to the ways in which

socio-political circumstances inform these disciplinary practices and policies allowed the pair to further contextualise the scope of the emerging project's central questions of punishment and why they might matter so much to so many students, citizens, and communities. From this, the basic pillars of the work (i.e. the nature of the constituent events, the potential published outcomes, possible target audiences, etc.) began to take shape as we sought initial funding.

**Q: How did you decide which researchers to invite to the project?**

**A:** We began by thinking about what we might need to know in order to properly address the core concerns of the project. It seems to us that empirical and normative sophistication of a variety of kinds is important. One needs to know something about the likely effects of different forms of discipline, about actual conditions of school discipline (i.e. about what practices and policies are most common and the purported reasons they are as widely adopted as they are), and about the wider legal frameworks which permit, require or prohibit the adoption of such practices and policies. One also needs to be mindful of the range of weighty interests (of educational, political, ethical, and moral kinds) that determine whether or not a form of discipline is, all things considered, either required, permissible, or forbidden. Finally, and this is sometimes overlooked by even the most well-intentioned projects, one also needs to know about particular intersectional experiences (inter alia, gender, race, dis/ability, etc.), as practices and policies of school punishment can place undesirable disproportionate burdens on particular marginalised groups.

These requirements of expertise and experience led us to seek participants who had experience as schoolteachers, a theoretical understanding of the circumstances and goods of education, and an understanding of social structures, the effects of punishment, legal requirements and reasoning, and policy processes, as well as expertise in normative moral and political reasoning (e.g.

about the claims of democratic legitimacy, equal regard, wellbeing and autonomy) and a theoretical and experiential understanding of intersectional experiences.

In addition to these views, we wanted to be thoughtful in bringing together people from different stages in their respective careers. We have been absolutely thrilled by the generative exchanges between disciplines, experiences, and perspectives within the project.

**Q: What do you think are the advantages of having multidisciplinary involvement in the project?**

**A:** Disciplinary boundaries are sometimes artificial, and knowledge often transcends these divisions. People working in different disciplinary silos risk repeating mistakes recognised as such elsewhere or reinventing the proverbial wheel that has been more fully developed in other spaces. For these reasons, when scholars from different disciplines come together, they can mutually improve their information bases for shared purposes of improving knowledge and understanding. We both have experience working alongside historians, sociologists, psychologists and philosophers of education in education studies departments. These experiences are a daily reminder that it makes little sense to cling to disciplinary-specific contexts when addressing complex issues in a scholarly field (i.e. education) or to regard practitioners as occupying non-overlapping magisteria, especially when they are attending to a common phenomenon, as is true in our case of school discipline.

**Q: What do you hope a psychological perspective in particular will be able to bring to the project?**

**A:** We were extremely attracted to yours and George Holden's research specialism as much as your disciplinary training; you have deeply and rigorously informed understandings of the normative and empirical debates about school disciplinary aims, practices, and policies, including sensitivity to feasibility, long term effects, and risks over large populations and time scales.

Perhaps at a minimum what we hoped is that we did not make too many psychologically disproven assumptions or reinvent any standard ‘wheels’ which were common knowledge to psychologists working in this area. To some degree, we could not say in advance what these might have been. Where we had dim, vague, or vicarious (mediated through deference to knowers) knowledge of psychology, we hoped that the project could benefit from the insights and knowledge of those who knew the details with specificity and expertise. Although, again, it is impossible to specify in advance just what that might have been. In our view, it might also have been the case that normative discussion would lead to raising empirical questions regarding which psychologists would be best suited to design and/or conduct original research – and that may yet happen!

**Q: Why do you think this area of work is important?**

**A:** In addition to some of the responses that we provided above, we believe that this project is significant because disciplinary policies and practices have real impact on the quality of students’ experiences and leverage on their life chances. As is likely very obvious to the audience of this publication, discipline practices visited upon people as children can have enormous and reverberating psychological impacts over the course of their life. Experiences of discipline in schools can influence the ways in which a person comes to know and trust authority figures, regard institutions of study and work, and even how one might construct elements of one’s own future family. It seems to us that the stakes are high enough that schools really ought to avoid ‘getting it wrong’. As such, we think that coherent schemes and weightings of normative criteria are needed to evaluate and inform decisions about school discipline policies and practices. This project promises to gain ground towards providing these, thereby helping key decision makers (including politicians, administrators and educators) to reconsider their options and

potentially redirect policies and practices towards more ethical actions and outcomes. Moreover, this project will serve as a seed for further work to better realising this goal.

**Q: What plans do you have for future work on the project?**

**A:** As enthusiastic as we have been about the initial steps of the project, we are excited to build upon this foundation of good work towards further ends. Chief among these plans include our dual desires to:

**(A) More directly engage stakeholder**

We want to bring students, teachers, administrators, parents, and policy-makers across different contexts to this work so that we might do more than produce scholarship only read by a small group of self-selected researchers. Rather, we want to be thoughtful about how we distribute work from this project to those who face questions of school discipline on a regular basis. More than this, we wish to have those persons and their perspectives take part in the creation of the normative recommendations that result from the work we continue to do. This is important to us for many reasons, not least of which include that it may allow the project to possess a better and more nuanced appreciation of the interests and preferences of stakeholders (and the trade-offs between them). This approach may also improve the project’s sensibilities regarding the feasibility of reform in policy and practice and the realistic possibilities of mutual persuasion by normative argument or bargaining compromise. As philosophers, we are aware of how often good ideas fail to gain traction in the broader world; we hope to avoid that common failing by co-constructing solutions with stakeholders.

**(B) Conduct a multi-national and multi-level analysis of whether school discipline works** This represents a real broadening of the project’s purview and, as such, is our long-term aim. For reasons

mentioned above, we are interested in gaining an appreciation of the alignment between school discipline policy intentions, implementation and outcomes in various contexts and levels of application. By focusing on the legislative, judicial, administrative and practitioner level, we hope to offer a more comprehensive picture of the interlocking issues of school discipline, in the hopes that by doing so, we might reveal underappreciated or otherwise hidden aspects of this enduring set of experiences. This broad view of school discipline might further allow us (as mentioned above in the previous question) to contrast national choices at various levels and to more fully explore the justifications given for those responses across a range of national contexts.

**Q: What role do you foresee for psychologists, and psychology as a discipline, in engaging stakeholders more directly in this work?**

**A:** With regrets, we acknowledge that policymakers tend to draw from some disciplines more than others. Our hope is that an interdisciplinary project such as ours might allow for various stakeholders to recognise our team's results and recommendations as legible to their interests and activities. Psychology has been rather successful in this regard as psychological studies (rather than, say, philosophical literature) are increasingly referenced when various potential practices regarding school children are devised – though, we surely agree with your readers who might suggest that there is still a great deal more to achieve on this front! In part, we hope to learn from terrific psychologists like yourself who have been able to engage stakeholders in first informing and then distributing the insights of quite nuanced studies. We recognise that there is no magical approach to this work, but do believe the sensibilities and perceptions of psychologists (and the discipline itself) might allow us to avoid inadvertently closing (or missing

important dimensions of) these important conversations, instead building a stable space within which we might all achieve greater thoughtfulness and empathy together.

**Q: What advice would you give to students and early career researchers who are interested in getting involved in this area of research?**

**A:** For those interested in getting involved with work in this area (more generally): We would first suggest that you read widely with no respect for disciplinary boundaries; this is a complex area of human experience requiring sensitivity to a range of concerns. Secondly, we would suggest that you reflect on your own experiences and discuss them with people who can help you critically and open-mindedly reflect on them. Many of us have experience with various aspects and dimensions of school discipline (receiving as well as potentially having issued) and these experiences ought to inform our best thinking about what we might wish for young people in schools. As you define your research questions, hypothesise possible answers, and consider which combinations of disciplinary expertise would be well placed to answer those questions, we next suggest that you look for literature in those disciplines, or contact and seek to collaborate with researchers from those disciplines. This may afford you invaluable insights as you move ahead. Finally, given all that technology makes possible in the current era, we suggest that you consider setting up online reading groups. Finding a few carefully chosen people (see above) with whom you might read articles, chapters, or books, can be a delight and quite productive for your work. Getting together (online) once a month for an hour or so of discussion can be wonderfully generative and affirming as your ideas take shape.

For those interested in getting involved with our work (more specifically): Please visit our project website ([www.pedagogiesofpunishment.com](http://www.pedagogiesofpunishment.com)) for more information. And do feel invited to contact us at [pedagogiesofpunishment@gmail.com](mailto:pedagogiesofpunishment@gmail.com); we'd be delighted

to hear from you about how we might pursue future possibilities together!

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# Dates for your Diary

## Conferences

***23 October 2019, Stirling***

Working with teams under pressure – reflective practice groups

***28 November 2019, London***

Defence and security psychology in the 21st century

***2 December 2019, Solihull***

Division of Sport & Exercise Psychology Annual Conference

## Workshops

***6 November 2019, Liverpool***

Creating compassionate NHS organisations

***14 November, London***

Introduction to advanced psychotherapy skills: Intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP)

***27 November 2019, London***

Mental health and wellbeing in education, how can we respond?

## Talks

***28 October 2019, London***

Lessons in behaviour change

***12 November 2019, Manchester***

Psychology and climate change

***18 November 2019, Manchester***

Lived experience as a voice hearer

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# PsyPAG Committee 2019/2020

Position	Currently held by	Due for re-election
<b>Core Committee Members: <a href="mailto:corecommittee@psypag.co.uk">corecommittee@psypag.co.uk</a></b>		
Chair	Maddi Pownall <a href="mailto:chair@psypag.co.uk">chair@psypag.co.uk</a>	2021
Treasurer	Benjamin Butterworth <a href="mailto:treasurer@psypag.co.uk">treasurer@psypag.co.uk</a> (For claim forms: <a href="mailto:payments@psypag.co.uk">payments@psypag.co.uk</a> )	2021
Vice Chair	Catherine Talbot <a href="mailto:vicechair@psypag.co.uk">vicechair@psypag.co.uk</a>	2020
Communications Officer	Olly Robertson <a href="mailto:commsofficer@psypag.co.uk">commsofficer@psypag.co.uk</a>	2020
Information Officer	Oliver Clark <a href="mailto:info@psypag.co.uk">info@psypag.co.uk</a>	2021
<b>Quarterly Editors: <a href="mailto:quarterly@psypag.co.uk">quarterly@psypag.co.uk</a></b>		
Bradley Kennedy <a href="mailto:b.kennedy@chester.ac.uk">b.kennedy@chester.ac.uk</a>		2021
Charlotte Scott <a href="mailto:C.Scott3@lboro.ac.uk">C.Scott3@lboro.ac.uk</a>		2020
Josephine Urquhart <a href="mailto:jau2@st-andrews.ac.uk">jau2@st-andrews.ac.uk</a>		2020
Alex Lloyd <a href="mailto:Alex.lloyd120@gmail.com">Alex.lloyd120@gmail.com</a>		2020
<b>Division Representatives</b>		
Division of Clinical Psychology	Amy Pritchard <a href="mailto:AJ.PRITCHARD.967181@swansea.ac.uk">A.J.PRITCHARD.967181@swansea.ac.uk</a>	2020
Division of Counselling Psychology	VACANT	-
Division of Educational and Child Psychology	VACANT	-
Division for Academics, Researchers and Teachers in Psychology	Veronica Diveica <a href="mailto:psuda2@bangor.ac.uk">psuda2@bangor.ac.uk</a>	2019
Division of Forensic Psychology	Ana DaSilva <a href="mailto:anadasilva203@gmail.com">anadasilva203@gmail.com</a>	2021
Division of Health Psychology	VACANT	-
Division of Neuropsychology	Michelle Newman <a href="mailto:Michelle.Newman.2@city.ac.uk">Michelle.Newman.2@city.ac.uk</a>	2020

Position	Currently held by	Due for re-election
<b>Division Representatives (Contd.)</b>		
Division of Occupational Psychology	Louise Bowen BowenL7@cardiff.ac.uk	2020
Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology	Dawn-Marie Armstrong dawnmarie.r.armstrong@gmail.com	2020
<b>Section Representatives</b>		
Cognitive Psychology Section	Joanne Eaves J.Eaves@lboro.ac.uk	2019
Consciousness and Experiential Psychology Section	Alex Wilson Alex.Wilson@northampton.ac.uk	2020
Cyberpsychology Section	Danielle Paddock d.paddock@yorks.ac.uk	2021
Defence and Security Psychology Section	Ben Morrison ben.morrison@northumbria.ac.uk	2021
Developmental Psychology Section	Ellen Ridley ellen.ridley@durham.ac.uk	2021
History and Philosophy of Psychology Section	VACANT	-
Psychology of Sexualities Section	Maya A. Al-Khouja Al-KhoujaMA@cardiff.ac.uk	2020
Male Psychology Section	VACANT	-
Mathematical, Statistical and Computing Section	Oliver Clarke oliver.clark3@stu.mmu.ac.uk	2020
Political Psychology Section	VACANT	-
Psychobiology Section	VACANT	-
Psychology of Education Section	VACANT	-
Psychology of Women and Equalities Section	Farah Elahi F.Elahi@warwick.ac.uk	2021
Psychotherapy Section	Nicola McGuire n.mcguire.1@research.gla.ac.uk	2020
Qualitative Methods Section	Candice Whitaker C.M.Whitaker@Leedsbeckett.ac.uk	2020
Social Psychology Section	Darel Cookson darel.cookson@research.staffs.ac.uk	2020

Position	Currently held by	Due for re-election
<b>Branch Representatives</b>		
Transpersonal Psychology Section	Alex Wilson Alex.Wilson@northampton.ac.uk	2020
Special Group in Coaching Psychology	Tia Moin – u1637352@uel.ac.uk	2021
Community Psychology Section	Michelle Jamieson m.jamieson.2@research.gla.ac.uk	2020
Crisis, Disaster and Trauma Section	Sara Gardener sgardn07@mail.bbk.ac.uk	2021
North East of England Branch	VACANT	–
East of England Branch	Jennifer Coe – Jennifer.Coe@uos.ac.uk	2020
East Midlands Branch	Charlotte Scott C.Scott3@lboro.ac.uk	2020
North West of England Branch	Charlotte Maxwell charlotteamaxwell@outlook.com	2021
Northern Ireland Branch	Clare Howie chowie02@qub.ac.uk	2020
Scottish Branch	Benjamin Butterworth benjamin.butterworth@gcu.ac.uk	2020
South West of England Branch	Anastasiia Kovalenko A.G.Kovalenko@exeter.ac.uk	2021
Welsh Branch	Veronica Diveica psuda2@bangor.ac.uk	2021
Wessex Branch	Brandon May brandon.may@port.ac.uk	2020
West Midlands Branch	Kristina Newman newmankl@aston.ac.uk	2020
London and Home Counties Branch	VACANT	–
<b>Board Representatives</b>		
Ethics	Catrin Jones CatrinPedder.Jones@beds.ac.uk	2021
Research Board (Chair)	Maddi Pownall – chair@psypag.co.uk	2021
<b>Other Committees</b>		
Standing Conference Committee	Anna Widemann anna.wiedemann@hotmail.com	2021
Undergraduate Liaison Officer	Tanya Schrader tanya.schrader@research.staffs.ac.uk	2021

# PSYPAG

Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group

## October 2019 call for applications to the PsyPAG Workshop Fund

The **Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group (PsyPAG)** are now accepting applications to host workshops for postgraduates. Previous workshops include: 'Building effective dissemination processes', 'Exploring culture and experience: Choosing methodologies in qualitative research' and 'Psych hike 2019'.

Applying for workshop funding is valuable experience:

- It shows employers that you are able to use your initiative, budget, negotiate and plan.
- It fills a gap in your own training needs and benefits others at the same time.
- It builds your confidence in organising and chairing events.
- It gives you the opportunity to network and meet people you may be able to work with in the future.

We encourage applicants to ask for joint funding from another source (e.g. your university, a division/section of the BPS or an employer). This is because we want our budget to support as many events as possible.

**If interested, or would like more information,  
please contact the Vice Chair at [vicechair@psypag.co.uk](mailto:vicechair@psypag.co.uk)**

**Guidance notes and application forms are downloadable at:  
[www.psypag.co.uk/workshops](http://www.psypag.co.uk/workshops)**

**Deadline for applications is 5.00pm, 31 October 2019  
Workshops should be run after 1 December 2019**

# Postgraduate Bursaries

Need help with the cost of attending a conference, workshop or other event related to your research? PsyPAG might be able to help.

All psychology postgraduates registered at a UK institution are eligible to apply for our bursary funds. We have three rounds of bursaries each year. The deadlines for each round are 10 February, 10 June and 10 October.

We offer the following:

- International Conference Bursaries\* up to £300
- Domestic Conference Bursaries up to £100
- Study Visit Bursaries\* up to £200
- Workshop/Training Bursaries up to £100
- Research Grant Bursaries\* up to £300
- Travel Bursaries up to £50

\* Successful applicants are required to write an article for the *PsyPAG Quarterly*.

**To apply and for further information, please visit [www.psypag.co.uk](http://www.psypag.co.uk) or contact the Information Officer at [info@psypag.co.uk](mailto:info@psypag.co.uk)**



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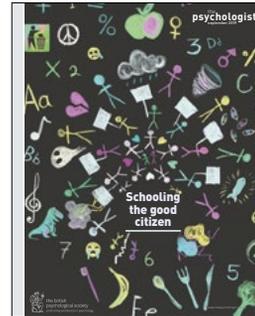
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# PSYPAG

## About PsyPAG

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**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](http://www.psypag.co.uk) and scroll down on the main page to find the link, or go to [tinyurl.com/PsyPAGjiscmail](http://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](https://twitter.com/PsyPAG)) and add us on Facebook ([tinyurl.com/PsyPAGfacebook](http://tinyurl.com/PsyPAGfacebook)).

This information is also provided at [www.psypag.co.uk](http://www.psypag.co.uk).

[www.psypag.co.uk](http://www.psypag.co.uk)

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