SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER: CONVERSATIONS IN PSYCHOLOGY

ARDEN UNIVERSITY

Comments from the Editors

Welcome to issue seven of the newsletter! We are now a year on from our very first issue in August of 2019 – oh how time flies. It has been wonderful looking back on the contributions of both staff and students over this period – please feel free to take a visit down memory lane and enjoy previous issues of the newsletter and the many interesting articles that we have had the pleasure of publishing at: https://arden.ac.uk/studying-with-us/about-arden/our-team/academic-schools.

In addition to this, we are celebrating our one-year anniversary as a fully-fledged school within Psychology! This would not be possible without both the hard work and dedication of our ever-growing team here at Arden, but also the energy, enthusiasm and drive of our students! It has been an honour and a privilege to have witnessed so many of you pursuing your goals and making this an exciting and vibrant place to be, especially during the tumultuous 2020 that we have all experienced, thus far!

Within this issue we will begin by welcoming new members to our team before dispensing with the pleasantries and diving into the fascinating articles from our students! Charmaine Rick-Lawrence is posing for a close-up in our staff profile before we round off the issue with dates for your diary – a selection of very interesting webinars that will be worth a watch.

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ARDEN PSYCHOLOGY

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If you would like to contribute to the next issue, please contact the editorial team at either: Holly Stokes (hstokes@arden.ac.uk) or joint editor, Kieron Rooney (krooney@arden.ac.uk),

We welcome any feedback and content suggestions also.

Holly Stokes and Kieron Rooney, Editors.

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWS

WELCOMES

A big welcome to our new starters! We have two new associate lecturers, Samantha Littlemore and Florbela Teixeira; one new lecturer, Rachel Marchant; and a new Psychology Experimental Officer, Emily Blakemore.

Samantha Littlemore (pictured above) and Rachel Marchant (pictured below)

Florbela Teixeira (pictured above) and Emily Blakemore (pictured right)

CONGRATULATIONS

Kieron Rooney (pictured left) and Nicola Bentham (pictured below)

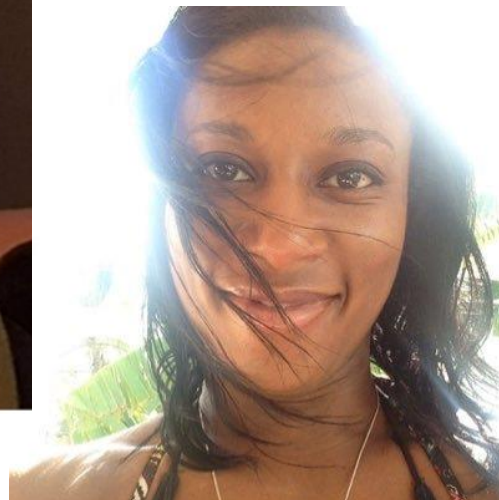A big congratulations to Kieron Rooney on his promotion from Psychology Experimental Officer to Lecturer in Psychology!

Also a big congratulations to one of our lecturers, Nicola Bentham, for securing her place on a PhD programme. Nicola's working title for her PhD is 'Re-examining organizational change and the role of the ideal worker – a critical approach to inclusivity in the UK not-for-profit sector.'

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY NEWS

Our 1 Year Anniversary as the School of Psychology

The 1st of September saw our 1 year anniversary of the School of Psychology. The School previously sat within the School of Law and Social Sciences, but due to its growth and success it was developed into a school in its own right. We have seen tremendous growth in both student numbers as well as recruitment of lecturers. It has been an exciting time for us all and I am very proud of both our students and our lecturers. As with any new venture we have had challenges, but working together with our students we have made a number of positive changes including:

- Development of the Psychology School Newsletter where student and lecturers contribute
- Recruitment of lecturers based on our growth in student numbers and to enhance subject specific discipline expertise
- Re-ordering of our MSc modules to ensure a scaffolded approach to learning
- Development of a lunchtime and 'day in the life' of seminar series
- Reduction in number of assessments for MSc Psychology course
- Recruitment of student research assistants
- Implementation of Gorilla survey/experimental tool
- Careers webinars
- Recruitment of academic skills tutors
- Successful Psychology periodic review

This is not an exhaustive list, but I wanted to give you an overview of some of the achievements over the last 12 months. We also have an exciting 12 months ahead with many more areas of development including re-writing of module materials. I will provide an update via the newsletter as we introduce new developments and am happy to hear any suggestions you have. Please email me direct at gsteptoewarren@arden.ac.uk.

Gorilla: The Online Experiment Builder

As an online university, we should be providing our students with experience conducting research like any other student at a traditional face-to-face university. When the school of psychology was created, one of the first items in the budget was investing in the programme Gorilla which allows you to seamlessly create online behavioural tasks and questionnaires. To date, students and staff have used 3436 credits which would cost £2577 if you were to pay for them yourself. Providing access to Gorilla was also timely as the pandemic removed any realistic opportunity of collecting data face-to-face.

As we renew Gorilla for another year, hopefully the projects will go from strength to strength as students use the programme throughout their course. Providing our students with access to professional online tools creates more of a level playing field with students from traditional universities. This is what Arden University is all about: removing barriers and helping you become competitive psychology graduates.

James Bartlett, Lecturer in Psychology

Developing A New Support System

Rachel Davies, BSc (Hons) Psychology Student

2020 has been an ongoing mystery of battles and hurdles that was unforeseen by everybody. From the country clapping each Thursday to front line workers keeping the country afloat, this will be one for the history books in years to come. The mental strain of the highly important jobs of our key workers can be difficult at times, alongside the important support provided – but what happens when this is taken away by a pandemic? Who do these integral pillars of communities place their burdens on when they are constrained to a pressurised job and building responsibilities within their home life? It has been found in research studies that 70%-89% of humanitarian aid workers have experienced mental health issues related to their jobs (Surya et al., 2017), but the high-risk situations experienced by them are now commonplace in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. This is where online support systems have started to fill the substantial gap in what our key workers require.

Following the aforementioned research, UCHCR recommended investment into forms of confidential websites and virtual consultations, due to the fact that only one-quarter of the staff who had suffered life-threatening critical incidents had any form of long-term follow up support.

For years, support from external parties has been frowned upon, being viewed as intrusive and a weak option, but we are now entering a new era where seeking support is seen as both brave and an important step to take. Along with this, the ways of getting this support are also changing and evolving with the times. It is now widely recognised that not everybody has the time or ability to go out for therapy or simply support sessions, be it due to time constraints, not wanting to talk about their struggles with a stranger, or not being able to travel to a specific location. Due to these things, platforms and individual businesses are now beginning to increase in popularity, as well as their flexibility in offering support sessions, allowing virtual sessions to be held, via various means such as phone calls, emails and even Instagram messages allowing sessions to be organised. Again, these modern platforms can avoid these qualms, for example, 'mind.org.uk' offer free resources and a depth of advice.

It truly is a shame that the mental health industry is not putting forward the countless possibilities and resources available to each and every individual that could benefit them massively. Within the mental health sector, a large portion of people would benefit from being able to receive support from the comfort of their own home, as and when they need it. This is supported by research from Lange et al. (2003), which states how online therapy offers many advantages over face-to-face therapy. These advantages include protocol-driven treatment, effective measures and psychoeducation. By offering the opportunity to either remain anonymous or the situation of not being in the same room with someone offering the help, may aid people to feel much more able to open up and discuss what is on their mind, and receiving the valuable insight they much need. It is instances such as these that are provoking the changes within this sector, as not every individual is the same, and everyone can benefit from different things. Furthermore, resources such as 'headspace' and 'calm' (both available in most app stores) have shown a massive success in providing support as and when it is needed.

This overlaps with the tough times each and every person is experiencing through covid-19, not knowing what is going to happen from one day to the next, and if we really are moving forwards, or if one day the luxuries of walking into a shop could be taken away once again. This is why it is vital to ensure each and every individual has at least one form of support in place during such an uncertain time. The effects of covid-19 have been felt by everybody worldwide, with the effects ranging widely. Due to people not having access to the physical resources they would largely make use of, people are feeling more alone than ever, even with the ability of the internet keeping people more interconnected than ever before. On the back of this, when was the last time you checked in on your family, but more importantly – yourself? Have a moment to step back and take time for yourself, because nobody can keep constantly going forever without taking some time out for themselves. Here are some ideas of little acts of self-care for yourself:

- Go out for a walk (socially distanced of course!)
- Take a quick nap
- Listen to your body – if you want that pizza, go and eat it!
- Practice affirmations
- Make yourself a hot drink and relax while you drink it
- Try meditation

From key workers to children, it is likely that a large majority of people are in need of some support right now. Because of this, I hope that you take a moment to look at some resources below, and please do share them to anyone you feel could use some support right now. Reaching our asking for support is not a weakness, but in fact a sign of great strength that you know you could use some support, but you still carry on every day.

Please contact the editor for a full reference list at hstokes@arden.ac.uk or krooney@arden.ac.uk

# Group Dynamics in a World of Bubbles

Zoe Bauckham, BSc (Hons) Psychology Student

Pre-COVID we were surrounded by divisions across the globe, reactions to perceived norms and belief systems that echoed Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity theory and its extension the self-categorization theory with people categorising themselves by the groups to which they belonged which clarified their intra-group boundaries and created categories for which they could be assigned to. A behaviour that seemed set, unchangeable and for those who relentlessly fought for inclusion –indissoluble. But then COVID-19 swept the globe, injuring the human race and suddenly, for many, those divisions became tenuous and were pushed into submission as the fight to survive became paramount. A common enemy had highlighted that we are not so different after all and that the divisions we create are fragile and can be easily forgotten if we choose. But how do we maintain this togetherness we have started, especially in the face of the artificial divisions we are being forced into creating as we form bubbles to maintain health?

As our lives morph yet again from an existence of shielding to a world of bubbles we can look to the changes we have made already and call upon theories on group dynamics which propose to encourage and support inclusion through both individualism and groups to continue the positive we have started. According to Brewer and Caporael (2006) human beings are governed by two antagonistic needs: the need to belong and the need for self-identification and recognition of differentiation.

They proposed that their optimal distinctiveness theory satisfied both of those needs through the promotion of social interdependence and co-operation across a range of social groupings and that a major factor is the optimal size of the groups. Research findings, from the field studies as well as laboratory experiments, also suggested that this positivity and inclusion of oneself in multiple groups deterred bias behaviour or negativity towards out-groups because whilst the in-groups revelled in their compared differences they were reluctant to directly cause harm to the out-groups (Brewer & Caporael, 2006). Now, many of us will not have the to opportunity to dictate the size of a learning or social bubble in order to optimise these feelings of in-group satisfaction and group alignment, but we can start by offering positive role models, strong leadership and clear, constructive and engaging group norms which may encourage children and adolescents, within each of their new social bubbles, school learning bubbles and extracurricular clubs to embrace new interests, recognise undiscovered talents and practise new identity positions.

To support these opportunities the implementation of Belbin's team role theory (2018) with a focus being on the theory's fundamental social behaviours as learning tools rather than its perception of personality traits, can be used so that children and adolescents can learn to play diverse roles within the groups and develop skills in leadership, problem solving, task organisation as well as the interpersonal skills of empathy, self-confidence and dependability (Manning, Parker & Pogson, 2006). The nine team roles of Belbin (2018) can be used to focus on the individual's skills and can be determined by the task at hand rather than associated with a set label for which the individual metaphorically carries with them.

Belbin's nine team roles
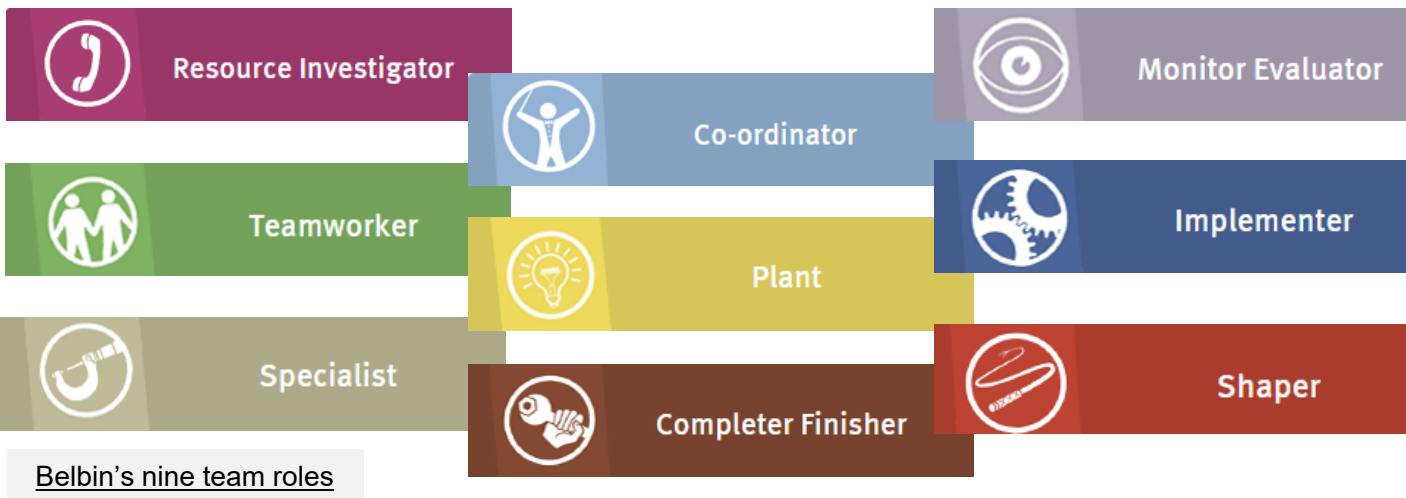
Children and adolescents can be encouraged to explore a different role for a different task or to recognise the skill the skill they have which would also be beneficial to the group when applied to a different situation. These learnt social behaviours can also be implemented as individuals explore social interdependence and co-operation across their range of grouping bubbles, gaining awareness of the attributes they ascribe to other groups and reflecting on the implications these have on inter-group relations. In particular, the implementation of resourceful social behaviours within small groups will have the potential to alter the power balance between the group dictator and individual members, allowing for positive self-identification whilst immersing oneself into the groups for security and support.

The future is unknown, but how we navigate it is our own and teaching our children and adolescents that we have the option to choose our path as a collective could be the start of change many have been fighting for.

GETTING TO KNOW THE PSYCHOLOGY TEAM:
CHARMAINE RICKI-LAWRENCE

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

Hi, I am a Psychology Lecturer here at AU. I am humble, helpful and assertive in equal measures. I treasure being a mum of three and aspire to be as impactful as my own. I also enjoy Psychology loads ☺. I love a bit of yoga/meditation and lots of reading (in fits and starts). Pre- twins, I've also dipped my toe into massage therapy, jewellery making, pottery and lots more. Post covid-19, I would like to explore my creative side again!

Can you tell the readers about your main research interests?

My research interests are centred around pedagogy and mental health and well-being. More specifically, I am interested in the impact of technology based and blended learning on children with learning differences (special educational needs).

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

A one year teaching exchange to the USA - it was a programme that was jointly organised by the British Council and Fulbright. Myself and my (then) 6 year old daughter up'd roots for a year. I worked in an American, Midwestern High School and my exchange partner worked in the College in Birmingham (UK) where I worked. We also exchanged homes!

Whilst it was daunting in many ways, it was by far the most rewarding personal and academic experience of both of our lives. I observed a number of differences in the educational systems e.g. teaching to the test (it was disheartening to witness pupils throw their papers in the bin once they knew what their grade was ☹) and the importance of community i.e. Marching bands, homecoming and more! The exchange took place in 2001 and so we were there on September 11th - it was surreal for my students and I to watch the second plane go into the twin towers on the TV in our classroom; and to witness the impact that it had on life immediately after the sad events that day. On a positive note, although we started school in August we finished well before the UK schools and so my friend, daughter and I made best use of the extended summer holidays by going on a road trip around many states. Happy memories indeed.

What is your favourite thing about being part of AU?

Being here at the beginning, knowing that I have opportunities to shape the future of the school of Psychology and AU as a whole.

The Importance of Mental Health for a Professional Dancer

Veronica Louw, BSc (Hons) Psychology Student

The effortless beauty that radiates from a dancer on the stage to an audience member is really something quite extraordinary. It can feel as though the dancer on stage, in hard shiny shoes and skin -tight pink ballet tights creates illusions that may almost classify dancers as: not human. As dance is a visual artform, where we as artists, use our bodies as our instruments, to create shapes and illusions that aim to tap into emotions, portray a story and get audience members to "feel something".

The ultra-competitive, unforgiving environment of having chosen dance as a profession definitely comes with very intense levels of not only physical but mental and psychological pressures too. What an audience member may experience from the faćade created on stage during a performance, is very often only the tip of the iceberg of what goes into the overall performance. However, us dancers are not "just bodies", but are human beings too, with feelings, personalities and emotions, that are not often enough; shared, voiced and heard.
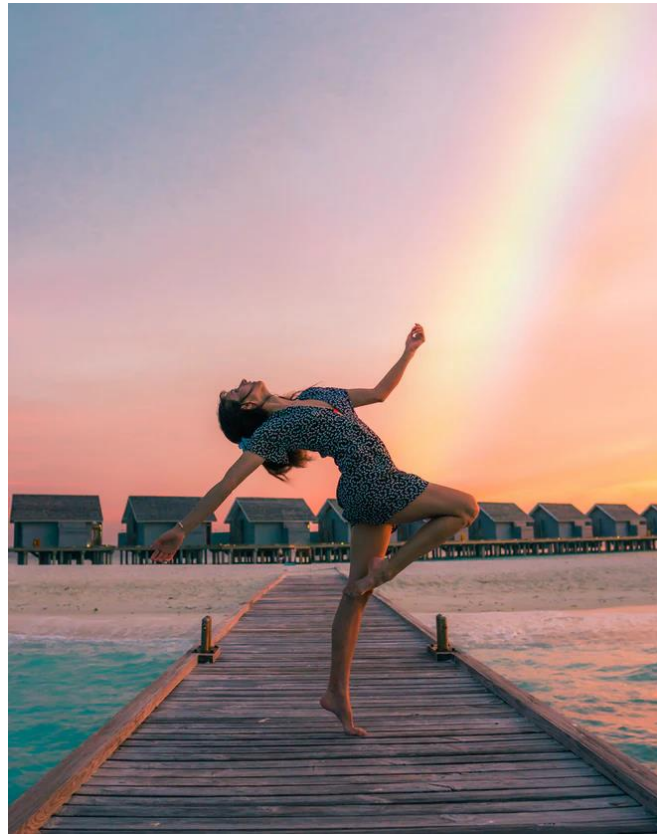
Dancers present exceptional levels of emotion on stage during a performance, through extreme amounts of physicality and is important for us to be able to deal with and express these emotions off of stage as well. Very often, the final performance can be viewed as the only thing that matters and thus when we are off stage, we often have to turn within ourselves when it comes to working through such emotions.

The career path of a professional dancer often attracts perfectionist personalities, which can create a very toxic mental space as we are forever putting pressure on ourselves and often over analyse and critique every little thing we do. We often spend hours in a studio, in front of full -length mirrors further criticizing all the details of our bodies, movement and performance. Not only are we demanding and applying pressure to ourselves by never wanting to settle and continuously do more and do better, our coaches and teachers expect this from us as well.

A nationwide study that was conducted in Australia showed that 1 in 4 of the people in the entertainment industry have attempted suicide or considered it and showed that overall, have higher cases of mental health issues than the general population (Martin, 2016). These alarming results of this study help highlight the importance of supporting the mental health of dancers and allowing them to voice and share their feelings and emotions they may be experiencing as a result of the pressure they feel from themselves and from their coaches or teachers on daily basis. A presentation that was given at The Royal College of Psychiatrists' in sport and exercise by Nicolette and Lekka (2018) explored a review of the evidence for the need of good mental health as a professional dancer. As a professional dancer, I found myself relating to a large sum of what was provided in the presentation.

The presentation spoke of dance being both "athletic and artistic". As dancers, we need to have muscular strength, speed and agility, stamina and endurance as well as psychological readiness. We often start very young and it takes years of practice and consistency to reach a professional level. With this we have very tight schedules that often consist of long hours of back to back rehearsals and training. Lekka mentions that dancers often feel under respected for our craft, being physically aesthetic as well, which can be said to ignite mental instability. Some of the common mental health issues found amongst dancers include; stress, anxiety, depression, disordered eating and substance misuse. On top of this we also often experience constant exhaustion which as highlighted in Lekka's presentation, can cause injury which only adds to further mental challenges. Often, this becomes a very toxic cycle between too much pressure, extreme fatigue and injury, which take its' toll on our psychological and mental states.

Lekka also addressed what was titled the "Quest for perfectionism". Lekka claimed this "quest" consumed a lot of time, energy and resources which again, creates toxic thoughts and psychological environments if we as dancers do not monitor them. The further pressures of having to maintain a certain aesthetic; long, lean, athletic look and "performing perfectly" all the time was also claimed to result in "compulsive, workaholic tendencies and result in eating disorders and further health problems. Thus again, being imperative for us to feel okay to speak up if we feel we need help and develop healthy ways to try and instill balance and work through our emotions.

The presentation made mention of some really pertinent examples which dancers and all people could find beneficial. These included; goal setting, positive self -talk, relaxation techniques, time management and working on removing irrational beliefs and thoughts about stressful situations. These management techniques do take time but are of great importance to have a full and long career. With all the strenuousness that comes with this career field, there really is nothing that beats the feeling of getting on stage and dancing the best that we can and even though it is our mission to continue to grow and expand our artistry, it is so important to prioritize ourselves as human beings and be kind to ourselves in the little ways that we can, for the sake of our mental health.

Please contact the editor for a full reference list at hstokes@arden.ac.uk or krooney@arden.ac.uk

What Gives Meaning to Your Life?

Emmeline Koopman, BSc (Hons) Psychology Student

"My life doesn't have meaning! I don't know what my purpose is! I'm searching for it, but I can't find it!". I listened to my friend compassionately. I felt her distress, but I did not find the words to relieve her. Walking home, I wondered about what gives meaning to life and why it could be so tedious to find it.

What is Meaning in Life?

Meaning in life is having a sense that life is comprehensible, purposeful and significant (George & Park, 2016). Meaning in life has become a subject of increased interest in the field of positive psychology because of its positive correlation with health and well-being (Heintzelman & King, 2014). Empirical research points out that meaning in life is personal, and thus can emerge from different sources depending on the individual (Schnell, 2011). For example, it can originate from family or interpersonal relationships (Grouden & Jose, 2014). Meaning in life is usually assessed by interviews or self-report surveys under the premise that it is

best understood from the individual's point of view (Park et al., 2010). One example is the "Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)", a 10-item measure of the presence of, and the search of meaning in life (Steger et al., 2006).

What are the Benefits of Having a Meaning in Life?

Having a meaningful life has been correlated with a lot of positive effects such as better life satisfaction, more positive emotions, greater level of optimism, and higher self-esteem (Steger & Kashdan, 2007). In a survey study involving a sample of 401 newly recruited young men for their national service in the navy, researchers found that there was a statistically significant correlation between meaning in life and mental, spiritual, social and physical dimensions of general health (Psarra & Kleftaras, 2012). In addition, meaning in life is positively related with a higher resiliency and adaptation to life challenges. For example, the results of a study involving 522 persons suffering from various types of disabilities found that meaning in life plays an important role in facilitating individuals' adaptation to their physical disabilities, as well as decreasing the risk of depression (Psarra & Kleftaras, 2013). Finally, correlation between meaning in life and increase positive health outcomes and longevity was also found in a community-dwelling elderly person (Boyle, Barnes, Buchman, & Bennett, 2009). In contrast, the absence of meaning in life is often associated with psychological distress and psychopathology (Hedayati & Khazaei, 2014).

How to Discover Meaning in your Life? The Search.

According to Baumeister & Vohs (2002), we are not born with a sense of meaning in life. It is thought that it is our role to find, discover and/or create it throughout our life. However, this process can be difficult, and can be a source of frustration and discomfort when you do not have a first sense of meaning upon which to build additional meaning (Park et al., 2010). Yet, these challenging feelings seem to disappear once you develop this first glance of meaning, and the search for further meaning becomes connected to more fulfilment in your life (Park et al., 2010).

How to develop a first sense of meaning? Different counselling approaches exist to help you find areas in your life that already possess meaning (e.g.: family, work or love). For instance, meaning-centred counselling encourages clients to think differently about life's challenges and considers discomfort as a clue to judge whether endeavour is meaningful (King, Hicks, Krull, & Del Gaiso, 2006). Another approach is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) where clients are supported to accept psychological pain as normal and important, and to avoid increasing this pain unnecessarily by trying to decrease the attention of it (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999). Besides counselling, engaging in meaningful activities in the outside world, like volunteering for a charity, has also been found to be a supportive way to develop meaning in life (Kleftaras & Psarra, 2012). So, why not try it?

Searching for Meaning: A Path Worth Taking

Meaning in life is more and more seen in positive psychology as a protective factor of mental and physical health. Having a meaning in life is not innate. It is developed, found and created throughout our lives. The search for meaning can be difficult endeavour when an initial meaning is lacking in our life. However, with support and patience, this process can be undertaken and reached, leading to a more fulfilment life and well-being.

Please contact the editor for a full reference list at hstokes@arden.ac.uk or krooney@arden.ac.uk

Multiple Sclerosis: The Psychological Impact of a Lifelong Illness

Louise Foster, MSc Psychology Student

Multiple Sclerosis is a lifelong condition which involves damage to the nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord caused by the immune system attacking them rather than fighting off infections. The immune system mistakes the Myelin (a substance which protects the nerve fibres) for an infection and begins to break it down, either slightly or completely. This leads to a variety of physical symptoms such as; eye problems, fatigue, and limb pain and can vary from person to person (Ghasemi et al., 2017).

There are over 130,000 people in the UK who have been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, with women being three times more likely to be affected (Harbo et al., 2013). Although there is a range of physical symptoms which can lead to a diagnosis, emotional effects often go undiagnosed. According to the MS Society, the changes in emotion and behaviour in MS patients is not fully understood but a variety of factors such as individual personality differences and nerve damage to brain cells can be contributors. In a study carried out by Zeynab (2012) he found that neuroticism, depression, anxiety, and stress are more prevalent in MS patients than they are in non-MS sufferers. In a similar, earlier study by Braceland and Giffin (1950), they examined seventy-five patients and assessed the clinical records of two-hundred more and found that 12% showed unusual irritability, 18% showed lability of mood, 10% were euphoric, 20% were depressed, and the remaining 40% reacted with low moods concerning the future of their the MS.

I spoke to Joy, who was diagnosed with Secondary Progressive MS in 1997 and asked about her psychological wellbeing during her illness and if she had noticed any changes in her mood or memory.

What was your initial reaction to being diagnosed? What was your emotional state?

I wasn't overly shocked because I'd known I'd had it since I was 13 but they were unsure of what it was. I cried when I was told because it was still a shock. When the doctor asked why I was crying I told him because hearing it out loud made it real. It was upsetting to have it confirmed. The doctor told me I could have a long life with it.

The first thing that went through my mind was 'is it hereditary?' because I worried about my children developing it. The doctor told me the only way it could be hereditary is if it is passed from father to daughter.

How do you feel your psychological state has changed throughout the MS?

It has been up and down because my husband was working abroad, and I didn't have anyone to talk to. My youngest was only ten and I didn't want to talk to my older sons because I didn't want to upset them. I used to cry for days on end. Everything goes through your mind about what could happen in the future. The last twenty years I've had to rely on a wheelchair. There was one time when my husband asked me 'can we have one MS free day?' I was shocked and upset because I would like to, and I can't. My worst fear is going blind and I feel like I'm going downhill. I don't like to go out for meals because of the fear of choking. One of the worst things is when people stare which makes me feel uncomfortable. My short-term memory seems to be getting worse. I can remember things from when I was three years old but forget what happened last week.

For more information, please visit:
- www.mssociety.org.uk
- www.mstrust.org.uk
- www.nationalmssociety.org
- www.msif.org

A key psychological factor of MS is memory loss, which is part of a group known as 'cognitive symptoms'. According to the MS Trust, 'the symptoms are relatively mild, and can fluctuate from day to day, or from morning to evening.' Rahn et al. (2012) found that 65% of MS patients experience cognitive impairment. Many researchers found that most patients had difficulty remembering past lessons and experiences.

As well as memory difficulties, compromised attention is another cognitive symptom. This links to memory as it may be difficult for the patient to remember the required information needed to complete a task. Other symptoms can include; verbal fluency, planning, and prioritizing. However, other certain functions such as reading comprehension and long-term memory are not likely to change (Macias Islas, 2019). Early recognition of these symptoms is important as they can lead to a decline in the quality of the patient's life.

The first signs can be subtle and are mainly first noticed by the patient or a close family member. There are treatments available, however, the symptoms are not routinely evaluated or ideally treated, and it is an area of Multiple Sclerosis that needs urgent attention. One area of treatment that is available is 'Cognitive Rehabilitation' which involves restorative activities including memory and learning exercises. These exercises can be; repeat and verify, build associations which involve memory aids, and combined modes of learning such as 'see it, say it, hear it, write it, do it' (Kalb et al., 2018).

Studies based on the cognitive changes due to MS are very few, but the National MS Society are funding some to investigate cognitive changes that occur and their history, as well as looking into more successful ways of diagnosing and treating cognitive issues in MS. In the future, it is hoped that MS patients will have better access to therapies, treatments, and rehabilitation that will modify the impact of the cognitive changes due to MS and hopefully give people are better quality of life.

Please contact the editor for a full reference list at hstokes@arden.ac.uk or krooney@arden.ac.uk

Why Food Insecurity is More Than Going Hungry and Why it Matters

Emily Frezza, MSc Psychology Student

If you recall the last time you were hungry, there's a high chance you acknowledged the loud and inconvenient stomach-growling and the slightly nauseous or light-headed sensation, before planning how and when you could meet your needs. It is likely that you were able to meet that need relatively swiftly and even if you encountered a delay, you were likely certain that you would be able to eat imminently. Unfortunately, this isn't the case for the 19% of UK children who experience moderate or severe food insecurity (Unicef, 2017), most of whom have at least one working parent (Cooper & Whyte, 2017, as cited in O' Connell et al., 2019). Food insecurity refers to the uncertainty around being able to access sufficient and nutritionally balanced food (Perez-Escamilla & Pinheiro de Toledo Vianna, 2012). It is the doubt that one will have food in the fridge or cupboard, or enough money to buy a loaf of bread, or even the means to pay for the gas or electricity that would guarantee a nutritious and filling meal. A further, growing concern is that the number of UK children in poverty is on the rise, going from 3.6 million in 2010-2012 to 4.1 million in 2016-2017 (Department for Work and Pensions, 2018).

For many of the children in the UK for whom food insecurity is a way of life, some will be eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), meaning that during term-time, they have access to a healthy school dinner. Some schools also offer free breakfast provision, supported by charities such as Magic Breakfast, to remove hunger as a barrier to learning. Thankfully, the FSM offering has continued in various forms as schools have been shut throughout Covid-19, although again, only to those who meet the criteria that merit them eligible. An additional revolutionary gain this year, primarily brought about by the powerful campaigns such as that of footballer, Marcus Rashford, is that families entitled to FSM will continue to receive support throughout the summer (GOV.UK, 2020).

However, while this is a short-term win for some of Britain's hungry children, the issue of food insecurity is far-reaching and goes beyond physiology. Not only have links have been made between food insecurity and children failing to reach developmental milestones but such children are also more likely to fall short of age-related academic targets (Pinard et al., 2015). The very existence of Pupil Premium funds that are assigned to schools to narrow the gap between FSM children (among other groups), and their peers is recognition that food insecurity impacts attainment (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018). However, perhaps it is the psychological impact of food insecurity that is the greatest cause for concern. Fram et al. (2011) found that even though parents may attempt to shield their children from the reality of limited food provision, children are still aware when food is scarce, noticing if the same, cheap foods are offered and asking parents if and how they would eat. Furthermore, some children report feeling sad and worried when food

was lacking, and embarrassed when parents are forced to call upon charity in order to obtain food. Conversely, other children would feel an absence of worry in the midst of food shortage, confident that their parents would be able to provide as they have done in the past. Most significantly though, Fram et al. (2011) found in their study that most children seemed to regularly take responsibility in attempting to solve the issue of food scarcity, taking on the mental load for themselves. This paints a picture of childhood that differs greatly from the care-free image we would hope for a child.

Heflin and Kukla-Acevedo (2019) further identified the psychological impact of food insecurity, demonstrating that children who experienced it between the ages of 5 and 10 were most likely to be involved in criminal activity as young adults. Furthermore, when food insecurity was experienced at this stage in development, the chances of individuals having more sexual partners in later life were higher. This could be explained by the way in which cognitive processes, such as that of decision making, can be impaired in times of resource shortage, whereby the individual pools all energies into solving that problem upon which survival depends. If children experiencing food insecurity are also taking responsibility for ensuring provisions are available within their family, there is sadly a chance that the deficits in decision-making will implicate them too. Clearly these findings cannot be applied to every person who has experienced food insecurity, but a link has been identified nonetheless (Heflin & Kukla-Acevedo, 2019). Further attention should be applied to establish the extent and nature of the impact of food insecurity.

The issue of food insecurity and its negative psychological impact is complex. What is evident, however, is that the FSM vouchers available to many of the children experiencing food insecurity in the UK will be much appreciated this summer. Furthermore, it's clear that any form of food support will be doing more than just filling tummies. This is not a quick-fix problem that can be easily solved but as long as attempts are made to continue to eliminate food insecurity, there is hope for the children who currently endure it.

Please contact the editor for a full reference list at hstokes@arden.ac.uk or krooney@arden.ac.uk

Abstract Reasoning: Concrete Terms for Logical Problems

Stefan Fouche, BSc (Hons) Psychology Student

Decision making. A human process not often discussed but used by everyone, every second of every day. Understanding how this process work can help improve how we solve logical problems. Decisions are made when beliefs and values are combined to draw a conclusion and take a course of action (Council, 1983). It is this abstract concept that allows individual adaptation to surroundings which influence our actions and behaviour. For us to understand the decision-making process better, we need to dig deeper into the cognitive and behavioural side of things.

There are many theories which explore human decision making, such as the model of economic man and woman (Steele, 2004) and the subjective expected utility theory (Lynch & Cohen, 1978). Lynch believed that the goal of human behaviour would be to increase pleasure and to reduce pain (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2012). As with the various other psychological processes, decision-making can be better understood by using different models of interpretation. Although different in design, most models share some common basic steps attached to them such as the interpretation of all relevant options, the identification of the consequences of each option, the likelihood of realisation and the integration of all the identified

considerations (Council,1983). In using these four basic steps of analysis, one can illustrate the most beneficial outcome to a problem which could be the determining factor in the final action or inaction. Have you ever wondered how some people can solve riddles in record time? To get the answer, we have to

take a closer look at the task selection theory by Peter Wason who believed that by Linking concrete terms to abstract problems, one could make the decision-making process easier (Wason, 1971), as cited in (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2012). In his task selection theory, Wason describes how personalising a particular problem by associating the terms with something familiar allows for a thematic approach to processing the logic and draw a conclusion (Wason, 1971), as cited in (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2012). This can be seen in the study of conditional reasoning, which forms the basis of the task selection theory. Within the scope of conditional reasoning, logical reasoning and decision-making are based on a process of elimination and general statements which includes deductively valid inferences and deductive fallacies (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2012).

An example of this would be as follow: All dinosaurs are animals. All animals are in zoos. Therefore by eliminating all non-logical outcomes, a conclusion is made that all dinosaurs are in zoos. Although this approach is easy to explain, it also holds some dangerous elements which include the lack of information that could and sometimes should lead to a different outcome. This observation proves the theory that the human decision-making process is systematic and can be manipulated to alter the outcome. There are many reasons why problem-solving can become a difficult task, but one in particular is the overloading of information (Council, 1983). Too much information can cause a flawed understanding and lead to the failing of a simple task. The more information there is to process and manipulate, the more possible outcomes we add to a problem and the harder it becomes to solve it. To make this analytical approach to problem-solving even harder, humans have to know when to stop analysing information and turn the data into actions (Council, 1983). Another challenge in making decisions lies in the lack of knowledge which can break down confidence and delay the decision-making process.

Collective evidence suggests that human decision-making processes are systematic and can be manipulated to change the outcome. To increase our understanding of the decision-making process, we have to dig deeper into cognitive psychology and how using various model structures can be beneficial to our daily lives. Although the field of problem-solving is incredibly broad, one common conclusion can be drawn from combining all of the information. This is that the process of logical reasoning can be better understood when a thematic approach is attached to it, and it includes concrete terms. By bettering our understanding of cognition and how we as humans make decisions every day, we can play an active role in the learning process and improve our reasoning skills. This allows us to increase productivity, time management, and help us occasionally solve those seemingly impossible riddles with our friends with ease.

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DISSERTATION SPOTLIGHT

Analysing Socialisation Patterns Exhibited by South Asian Immigrant Mothers Living in the UK
Deepika Vijayaraj, BSc Psychology Graduate

My final year dissertation, "Analysing Socialisation Patterns Exhibited by South Asian Immigrant Mothers living in the UK" was a qualitative study aimed to identify socialisation patterns in South Asian groups of women. In particular, it aimed to explore how their socialisation patterns seemingly lead to an increased risk of developing a mental illness.

The Rationale

Groups of people who differ from the dominant population of a particular country by race, national or cultural tradition are called ethnically minority groups. South Asian groups of people are one such group of people in the UK. Ethnic minority groups are found to be at bigger risk of postnatal depression and other common mental illness (Onozawa et al., 2003) in comparison to the dominant English population. Studies in the recent years have shed light on the experiences of ethnic minority groups of women and have also identified several barriers that prevent South Asian women from gaining access to appropriate health care to support them (Ineichen, 2012; Masood et al., 2015). In addition, it has also been identified that health professionals often find it hard to manage mental health among South Asian patients, especially women (Tabassum et al., 2000; Massod et al., 2015). There has not been enough information that has been gained from the South Asian community, especially from immigrant mothers in relation to their socialisation practices. Therefore, the primary notion behind this research topic was to gain insights into the socialisation patterns of South Asian immigrant mothers within the communities that they live in, explore the experiences of South Asian immigrant women with people from various ethnicities and, finally, understand the reasons behind them adopting such lifestyles.

The Method

Three participants, who were all mothers, were purposively recruited based on their nationality, period of residence in the UK and age of their children. The recruited participants were individually interviewed for approximately 60 minutes in the participant's home. The study adopted a semi-structured interview formulated by the researcher to ensure that participants were guided to respond to the research aims while having flexibility to bring up the unexpected. Ten interview questions were put together to try and obtain as much as information possible from the participants in relation to their socialisation patterns, experiences with other race people and reasons behind choosing such a lifestyle.

The Results

The data collected from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis and six major themes emerged: The 'individual personality' theme demonstrated that besides the participants feeling shy, they considered themselves to be friendly, and open towards interacting with other people. The 'lack of English

proficiency' theme showed that there can be strains, hesitations and concerns when encountering situations when the participants have to use English to talk to others. The 'racial preference' theme clearly made it evident that the participants were happy to be involved with anyone from anywhere as long as they were kind. The 'reduced social interaction' theme demonstrated that the demands of the participant's lifestyles resulted in decreased social interaction, making them feel alone and very depressed. The 'positive relationships' theme, has highlighted the participants concern about having people of negative attitudes around them, might further influence them and their families. The last theme, 'physical and financial constraints' add evidence that lack of

Individual Personality

Lack of English Proficiency

Physical and Financial Constraints

Themes

Racial Preference

Positive Relationships

Reduced Social Interaction
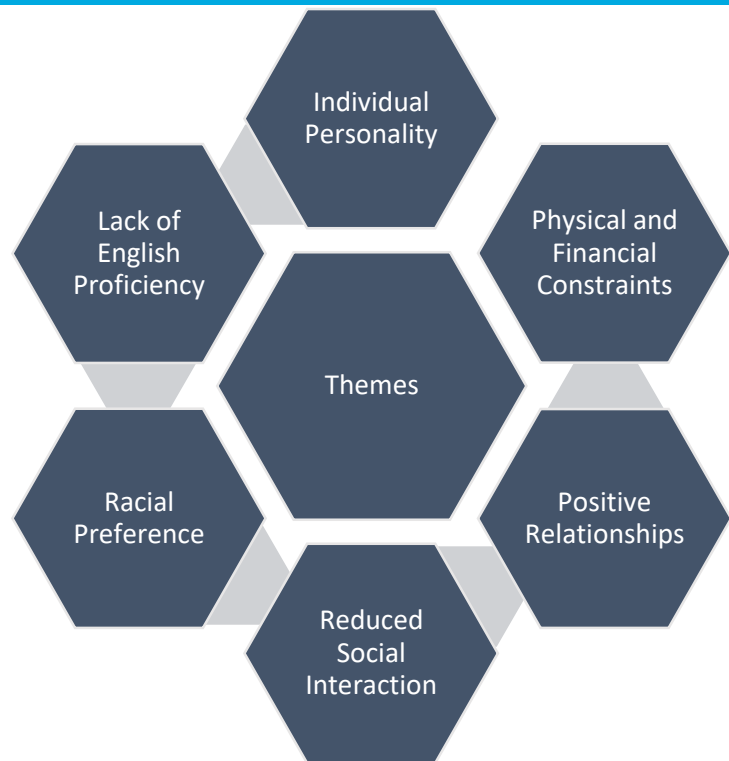
social support and financial constraints are popular variables that lead to mental health issues in women. It became evident that some of the themes identified in the study interrelate with each other - the women's individual personalities might add up to their difficulties they experience when speaking in English and, it is also possible that the, financial and physical constraints and lack of English fluency experienced by the participants may also interrelate with the reduced social interaction.

The themes identified have facilitated to answer two of the main aims of the study, that is to investigate the socialisation patterns of South Asian immigrant women and reasons behind their lifestyles. However, the analysis of the data has not produced any theme of significant value to answer one of the main aims of the study, that is, experiences with people of another race. Further research may be required to explore the relationship/experiences between South Asian women and individuals from other racial backgrounds.

Implications

The study identified several gaps in the literature that require future research to wholly understand the mentality and behaviour of South Asian groups. The study definitely boasts itself to be the first to report on the possible factors that can affect socialisation of the immigrant South Asian women population. The key strength of the study is that it has deviated from the usual concepts under research and has focussed on a completely new area exploring some unidentified new predictors that might lead to mental health concerns in South Asian women. It is believed that this study will benefit mental health professionals to deal with the South Asian population from an informed perspective and will also facilitate the native British population to be more enlightened about the South Asian population. Moreover, it will also promote tolerance and improve social relationships within British communities where South Asian minorities are found. It is considered that this study will serve as a foundation for several other future studies in this area of study.

A BIG THANK YOU…

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all newsletter contributors from the past year of issues. Creating and producing the newsletter for the last 12 months has been fulfilling and rewarding on my part as editor, and I do hope it has been enjoyable and fulfilling on your part as contributors and readers.

Holly Stokes

August 2019
- Rewards in Behaviour Management: Are We Doing it Wrong? By Susan Witte
- The French Burkini Debate: Can the Choice of Clothes Define Social Identity? By Sharmistha Chaudhuri
- Does Pre Operative Psychological Distress have a Negative Effect on Surgery Success? By Carley Michelle Ryan

October 2019
- The Psychology of Female Success in the Workplace: Reviewing The Skills by Hannah Gilson
- The Joker What's the Big Joke? By Leon Versfeld
- Twin Research: A Critical Account by Dr Mvikeli Ncube
- Domestic Abuse: A UK Public Health Concern by Natalie Quinn Walker

December 2019
- Getting Back to Nature: The Psychological Benefits of the Colour Green by Thomas Cowan
- Prenatal and Postnatal Influences on Child Well Being by Siobhan Cleary
- Corporal Punishment: Should We Build Strong Children or Repair Broken Men and Women? By Shivon Sudesh
- Caught in Between: A Perspective on Parenting for New Americans by Sarah Miller
- An Adapted Version of CBT for Individuals with Autism:
- The Coping Cat Technique by Arwa Kabir

February 2020
- What if I'm my Own Worst Critic? By Dr Gerhard Niemann
- The Psychology of Learning: Creating Desirable Difficulties by Cagla Titiz Köse
- School: A Change is Due? By Maksim Peshev
- Can a Child with RAD Function in Mainstream Education? By Alicia Hughes
- Flexibility and Adaptability of Primary School Classrooms by Hannah Sharrad
- Psychopathology and the Flawed Research Methodology by Annie Foxall

April 2020
- Autism: Harmful to Self and Society or Misunderstood? By Kensington Gagiyovwe
- The Growing Importance of Sports Psychology by Marie Sherman
- Supporting Self Regulation Development in Primary Education by Azra Klempic
- Good Citizen Vs. Good Digital Citizen by Kristyn Hall
- New Technologies, Image Distribution and Cyber Abuse by Dr Matthew Hall

June 2020
- Public Health Issue: Chemsex by Natalie Quinn Walker
- The Question That is Always Asked, But Rarely Answered: The Primary Cause for Sexually Predatory Behaviour by Alicia Hughes
- Bad Seeds? The Tragedy of the Unnurtured Child by Sarah Newlyn
- Psychological Intervention as a Part Of Palliative focused Care in Motor Neurone Disease/Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis by Ariel Mai Maria Helgudottir
- Flexibility and Adaptability of Primary Classrooms: Interventions and Strategies to Support Learners with Insecure Attachment by Hannah Sharrad

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Arden Webinars!

Identifying a 'Promising' Topic for a Psychology Dissertation: A Process Mapping Approach: Monday 7th September, 1200-1300 BST
Identifying a (promising) topic for a dissertation is widely considered to be one of the most important, challenging, and stressful parts of the research process. Students often find it difficult to navigate this early yet pivotal stage due to heightened pressures, a lack of structural guidance, increased independence, and more pressing time constraints. In this presentation, a self-guiding navigation tool (process map) is offered (Holliman & Jones, 2018; Holliman, Rosenkranz, & Jones, 2020) that may support students' topic selection in a way that does not circumvent the independent nature of the activity and process.

A Day in the Life of a Psychology Experimental Officer: Wednesday 9th September, 1200-1230 BST
Join Psychology Lecturer Kieron Rooney as he gives an insight into the role of Psychology Experimental Officer (in its many iterations!) and what the role can offer you. He will be covering topics such as what is the role and how does it differ from other roles within a University, along with the best part of the job and development opportunities.

Carl Lygo: The Art of Never Giving Up: Monday 14th September, 1230-1330 BST
Join our Vice Chancellor & Chief Executive Office, Carl Lygo as he shares his personal story of an ordinary boy from a South Yorkshire mining Town, educated at a local comprehensive School, brought up by a single parent Mum who struggled with dyslexia but who became a FTSE Executive Director, Chief Executive, founded a University, became Vice Chancellor of 2 Universities, Chaired the University of Europe, co-founded a charity and became a Professor. Anything is achievable if you put your mind to it!

Helen Scott: What Education has Taught Me: Tuesday 15th September, 1230-1330 BST
 For most of her life, Helen, our Pro Vice-Chancellor, has been involved in education in some form or another-from playgroup, through school and university to working as a teacher, then in different roles in universities. At every stage of life she has been shaped by an experience connected either directly or indirectly to an educational context or event. In common with most people, her experiences have been mixed - some amazing and positive, others shocking and horizon-shifting. In this lecture, Helen will explore what different educational experiences have taught her about resilience, injustice, privilege, kindness, creativity, human nature and making sense of whatever comes your way, to name a few.

James Bartlett: Sheer Persistence - Balancing a PhD with Other Commitments: Wednesday 16th September, 1230-1330 BST
PhDs are notoriously difficult to complete, not due to struggling with the topic area, but because of the sheer persistence it takes to stay motivated on one project for so long. Psychology Lecturer James Bartlett struggled at times during his PhD because he was combining his studies with different part-time jobs and changing from full-time to part-time study. Although it has worked out in the end, there were many periods where he thought about throwing in the towel. This talk covers his journey as a PhD student and the hurdles he had to face along the way.

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

Contributing to the next edition of the newsletter

We would like to thank all contributors to this issue of the School of Psychology newsletter. If you would like to contribute to a following issue, please contact either Holly Stokes at hstokes@arden.ac.uk or Kieron Rooney at krooney@arden.ac.uk for more information. Please also contact us if you would like a reference list for any of the articles in this issue. We look forward to hearing from you!

Next issue: October 2020.