

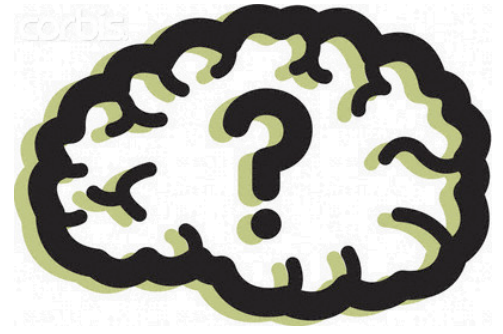
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Issue 12: The Dark Side of Psychology

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Editor's Letter



**Hannah
Paish**

This issue of PsychOut explores the dark side of psychology. We have featured articles exploring psychology studies famed for their questionable ethics in order to highlight the importance of modern ethical standards in psychology.

Also appearing in this issue are two articles on clinical work experience, which should serve as inspiration for how to gain relevant work experience for students interested in clinical psychology, and an interview giving deeper insight into the fascinating research by Dr McCall.



**Darel
Halgarth**

MEET THE TEAM



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Features

The theme for featured articles in this issue is "The Dark Side of Psychology".



Robbers Cave: A Battle to the Grave?

Lucy Stafford describes the Robbers Cave experiment, an experiment which had young boys fighting each other.

To ramp up your feelings of seasonal festivities, Psychout will be providing you with dark psychological experiments and all their details! With ethics cast aside and experimenters thirsty for ground-breaking evidence, some of the most controversial studies have been conducted. One such experiment came from Sherif in 1954: The Robbers Cave Experiment.

Sherif was a budding social psychologist with a hypothesis to prove: the realistic conflict theory. The realistic conflict theory assumes that conflict will break out when two rival groups are competing for a limited resource. For instance, oil is a limited resource that must be shared between groups, but competition for this creates hostility. To test this notion, Sheriff recognised that conflict would have to be purposefully produced between two distinct groups, and he would have to be the one to do so.

Sherif planned his experiment around a summer camp for young boys. To the boys' knowledge, they were in for a pleasant week away at summer camp. Freedom, fun and friends would be thoroughly enjoyed, and this impression was maintained upon boarding the bus that one summer morning. Arriving at the camp, the two groups were not notified of each other's existence. This allowed them time to bond with each other, leading to the establishment of group norms and a strong feeling of attachment to their group. They were told to pick a name, and this was even printed on to a flag and t-shirts, further increasing their sense of belonging to the group. In true 12-year-old boy style, the names they chose were the Eagles and the Rattlers. Now a sharp distinction between the two groups had been established it was time to inject a little conflict.

The Eagles and the Rattlers are suddenly told of each other's



One of the flags being held by boys who took part in the experiment.

existence. Unease and animosity rapidly spread throughout each group, and this will only grow when they compete for prizes. Friction is created between the two groups by games such as tug of war and baseball, with the losing team not even being awarded a consolation prize. Likewise, situations were also devised where one team would gain at the expense of the other. In the run up to the competition, each group set out a game plan to ensure victory would be secured. Rattlers dominated the baseball pitch, hanging their flag in the pitch to ward off any invaders. Just for good measure, threatening remarks are also made to safeguard their training ground.

In the run up to the competition, things turned ugly. The Eagles burned the Rattlers flag, and in retaliation the Rattlers ransacked the Eagles cabin. The tension got so much that the experimenters had to physically separate them!

After all, how was Sheriff going to explain a black eye to concerned parents? Sheriff came to his senses and realised that the conflict could not go on. Scenarios were created in which both groups had to work together to achieve a common goal that would benefit everyone. This reduced conflict and even formed some intergroup friendships. So realistic conflict theory can be considered legitimate- at least among 12-year-old boys!

Entrance to Robbers Cave camp.





I Wonder What Happens When I Make You Slaughter This Mouse?

Beccy Wright examines an experiment of facial expression which had participants abusing mice.

In early life, we totter around the world, exploring and learning like mini psychologists. In our very own little experiments, we collect data and store it away within the wobbly shelves of our tiny, undeveloped brains. You're in your highchair when suddenly that your dinner is reduced to sticky splotches all over the floor. Alas, the mucky consequences of our teensy tests typically fall into the hands of our parents. Yet, they forgive us; for you are merely a young child, who is simply learning the ways of life.

Early Psychology was quite the same. Only, the experimental consequences went a little further than a couple of sticky splotches. Researchers would ask, I wonder what happens when I imprison and humiliate you, and I wonder what happens when I make you torturously electrocute someone. These incidences are less easily forgiven. But it is these horrendous experiments that allowed Psychology to develop some compassion and with it a set of ethical regulations.

I've heard of various immoral studies before, but when I read about this one, I was almost brought to tears! Yes, you might live and learn, but if you decapitate 21 harmless little mice – that are innocently going about their little mouse lives – there's no mercy for



Examples of facial expressions from the experiment.

you, no matter how young you are.

In 1924, Carney Landis (aka. the mass mouse murderer) devised a brutal study of human facial expression. He claimed that he could resolve inconsistencies in

previous research by inducing real emotional disturbances. Firstly, Landis graffitied the participants' faces, defining their contours with charcoal. This supposedly allowed an accurate measure of facial expression. A camera, on the wall opposite the participants, waited readily to capture every wince and flinch of discomfort on their faces.

The participants then endured over three hours of progressively torturous conditions. The first tasks provided a moment of serenity, as they listened to the music of classical violins and read the righteous words of the holy bible. But then began their private tour through the darkest alleyways of Psychology; tricked into inhaling the pungent odor of liquid ammonia, hearing a firecracker exploded beneath their chair, and being made to expose the most shameful and unpleasant secrets of their pasts. Understandably, the subsequent "laughing" condition was removed, since the jokes did not provide the laughter that Landis had desired.

Unfortunately, the experiment continued. Teeming with graphic images of pornography and morbid skin diseases, followed by complex multiplications, accompanied by the excruciating sound of scraping metal and enduring electric shocks. The participants were then ordered to place their hands inside a bucket of live frogs, and when doing so, they received a strong electric shock.

Of course, a tour through the deepest, darkest alleyway can't go without a bit of ruthless knife crime.

For the squeamish readers, or those who love (or even slightly respect) small fluffy animals, you might want to look away now. Picture this: You are given a sweet little mouse. As the warm fluffy ball shuffles around in the palms of your hands, you feel the tickles of its delicate whiskers. You raise its fuzzy face up to yours, its little eyes staring back at you as it lets out a harmless squeak. You are then given a butcher's knife and ordered to slice off its head. If you are 15/21 participants, you reluctantly do so. If not, then it is taken from your hands and brutally beheaded in front of your very eyes.

After all that, Landis found no significant results.

The study arguably attained little more than a lot of traumatized participants and a lot of unhappy mice running around searching for their heads. Fortunately, Psychology has now learned to keep traumatization to a minimum, just as we humans learn to avoid spilling our dinners all over the floor.

But still, whilst parents might forgive their children, the mice will never forgive Psychology.

Poor mice!





The Stanford Prison Experiment

Joumana Alshtaeqi explores the Stanford prison experiment, and why it's unethical.

"I'm burning up inside, don't you know? I can't stay in there. I don't know how to explain it. And I want out! And I want out now!"

These terrifying words are not a line from a movie, a quote from a book, or screams of a tortured prisoner, but instead the words of student "Douglas Korpi" while he was participating in the infamous "Stanford Prison Experiment". The purpose of the study was to discover the psychological impact of being a prisoner or prison guard by recreating the experience in a simulated prison environment. It also sought to determine whether the cause of various behaviours in prison were the social environment, personality traits, or external factors such as prison conditions.

The experiment was conducted by

professor Philip Zimbardo in 1971. After undergoing tests and interviews, 24 college students were carefully selected for the experiment. All of them were in healthy psychological and physical conditions, with no criminal history. They were recruited to spend 2 weeks in a mock imprison set up in Stanford University basement. The researchers structured the basement by setting up three small cells with numbers, putting steel bars on the doors, and creating a dark solitary confinement room.

Participants were randomly divided into groups of guards and prisoners. When the experiment began the prisoners were arrested from their homes and taken to the fake prison. Then they were given numbers to replace their names, uniforms to replace their normal



One of the "prisoners" being transported by two of the "guards" from the experiment.

clothes and chains to go on their feet. Zimbardo had to stop the experiment after 6 days due to an overwhelming emotional reaction from the prisoners, and the guards' massive aggression. The guards became sadistic, purposefully humiliating the prisoners in different ways: physical abuse, manipulation, food deprivation, and sleep deprivation.

Ethical Considerations:

First of all, the experiment harmed the participants by putting the prisoner group under unbelievable conditions of humiliation and indignity. These conditions arose due to two reasons.: giving the guards ultimate power and freedom of behaviour against the prisoners, and encouraging the guards to abuse their power. Zimbardo admits in his 2007 book "The Lucifer Effect" that he acted as the jail's superintendent by providing the guards with instructions about dealing in prison, such as "We can create a notion of the arbitrariness that governs their lives, which are totally controlled by us, by the system, by you, me."

The Zimbardo prison experiment also violated participant's consent, as participants were completely naive to many potentially shocking events. For example, the participants did not they were going to be arrested from their homes.

Furthermore, the experiment is unethical because the researchers decided to continue even though some participants expressed a desire to stop the experiment and

displayed significant stress.. Douglas Korpi - labelled as prisoner 8612 in the experiment - experienced anger, stress, and hysterical crying. As Zimbardo described, Korpi suffered from "acute emotional disturbance," especially when the guards entered him into solitary confinement room. Unfortunately, Zimbardo claimed Korpi was a liar, and tried to convince him to stay. This had a terrible impact on the prisoner, increasing his psychological stress. Approximately 36 hours into the experiment he was finally released.

It is worth mentioning that one of the factors that led to the release of the participants was professor Christina Maslach, fellow psychologist and spouse of Zimbardo. She noticed the horrible differences in the participants' behaviour before and during the experiment, commenting "I was sick to my stomach. When it's happening to you, it doesn't feel heroic; it feels really scary. It feels like you are a deviant". Which means that this study might have continued without her intervention.

We can see that the Zimbardo experiment clearly violates several ethical principles and codes of conduct. The Zimbardo experiment was able to occur because regulations ensuring studies followed ethical principles did not exist in the same way they do today. In fact the Zimbardo study played an important role in developing ethical regulations of psychological studies, which is why it is still discussed today.



Interview with Dr McCall

Grace Sanders interviews Dr Cade McCall about his research

Born and raised in Kalamazoo, Michigan, York University's Cade McCall began his interest in Psychology after a scholarship to a psychology themed summer school caught his attention. The use of experiments ignited his interest into what motivates people to behave in the way they do. After completing his undergraduate degree at Macalester College, Cade moved on to his Masters, and then Ph.D. at the University of California. During his Ph.D., McCall trained in Social Psychology but is eager to make use of and integrate all aspects of Psychology into his research. McCall was then drawn to teach at York because of its supportive nature around research.

I asked Cade about his favourite piece of research he had conducted, as well as where his current research was leading him:

'My favourite paper was based on Room 101, a virtual world my students and I made to study threat and arousal. We called it Room 101 and it was filled with things participants might find frightening (spiders, explosions, perilous heights). We used it to study the relationship between physiological arousal and subjective feelings of arousal. In my current work I'm continuing to look at fear and threat in all their many forms. I'm interested in how certain people

can think clearly and act strategically while under threat ... studying human interactions with autonomous systems. Digital autonomy is rapidly affecting all aspects of contemporary life. Psychology needs to play a role in shaping this change.' When asking him if he had a final goal for his research (such as defining a concrete model for how humans deal with threat), McCall replied that his research would be ongoing, as the nature of his research both answers and finds questions, describing it as a binge-able 'Netflix series'.

'How do you view Psychological theories and Psychology's representation as a discipline in the media?'

'I used to live in Germany where it's a joke to begin a sentence with, "American Scientists have discovered...." The idea behind it is that the media often portrays recent, even outlandish, findings as though they're a discovery of a hard and fast fact. In reality, findings in Psychology are clues that give us a glimpse into the nature of the mind.'

He also urges: 'people should think of the mind and brain as flexible ... the mind adapts almost instantaneously. Psychology has something to say about everything,

including the most pressing issues of our day. But we don't always get out there and say it. We don't force psychological theory and evidence to the centre stage. That's our greatest weakness.'

As this edition of PsychOut focuses on Psychology's dark side, I enquired about Cade's view of ethically questionable studies, such as the ones conducted by Milgram, and does he think that they would still be as infamous as they are today without them being so ethically questionable?

'Milgram's findings were and are still shocking, regardless of the ethically questionable nature of the research. They reveal some very uncomfortable truths about human behaviour. But they were far too cruel to inflict on participants.' As Cade also deals with the darker sides of human behaviour, such as threat and panic he added: 'I put people in potentially frightening situations, but ethical guidelines require me to provide clear warnings beforehand and to make sure that uncomfortable participants can end the study whenever they want. To some extent that limits the generalizability of my studies, but it's worth it to me and to the ethics committee to protect participants from panic attacks or whatever other kind of distress they might experience.'

Following on from this I asked: Teaching Psychology in society, what is the strangest and darkest behavioural phenomenon you have come across, this can be a model or a study or a case study. (e.g. riot

behaviour, the by-stander effect)". He had this to say:

'Considering the current political climate in this country and in my home country, the confirmation bias comes to mind. It might sound mundane but it's deadlier than a charging rhino. We're in a period of history during which we, as individuals, can know more about the world than ever before. But we often end up rehearsing our own belief systems and only seeking or encoding information that supports them. That enables all kinds of societal divisions and stagnation. That's dark.'

Cade McCall teaches the second year SPA model of 'Psychology in Society' and third year SPA module of 'Social Interaction'.

Some examples of Cade's research are "Mapping Social Interactions: The Science of Proxemics" and, "Introducing the Wunderkammer as a tool for emotion research: Unconstrained gaze and movement patterns in three emotionally evocative virtual worlds," both of which can be found through York PURE.

Dr Cade McCall



PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION



Shadowing a Clinical Psychologist

Monika Obara shares her experience shadowing a clinical psychologist.

During September 2019, I got the amazing opportunity to shadow Dr Emma Drummond at South Tees Hospital.

I began my work experience at 9:30am with an MDT meeting. Dr Drummond spends half of her time in the Chronic Pain ward at the hospital helping patients address and come to terms with the psychological implications of chronic pain. During this meeting, she interacted in synchrony with other members of the MDT team such as nurses and neurosurgeons. The team worked together deciding whether certain patients were eligible for a spinal cord stimulator for pain. Dr Drummond is key in the processes ensuring the patient is mentally stable pre experimental trial or if they are in need of further support with pain management. After the meeting, Dr Drummond moves on to future research planning in the Spinal Cord Injuries (SCI) ward with a fellow member of the hospital's SCI's team on the psychological impact of bed rest of SCI patients. This was inspiring to see as the team is constantly wanting to improve the quality of life for all the patients on the ward and their families too.

On the second day of my work experience, Dr Drummond began the day with a Governors meeting consisting of all the health psychologists across all the wards in the South Tees Hospital. This meeting was based on coping with grief after losing a patient. Remembering that it's okay to grieve whilst helping the family and other members taking care of the patient with their grief too. These sorts of meetings are very important for maintaining the mental wellbeing of staff across different wards; aiding each member in their job and creating cohesion throughout the hospital. The day then continued to a meeting with an inward patient with a SCI. Again, Dr Drummond's role entailed offering the patient psychological assessment whilst working with the other members of the SCI unit to plan future goals for the patient.

To end the day, Dr Drummond goes to visit the new inpatients at the SCI ward in order to fill out post-accident psychological screening forms. These consist of categorizing the patient on their need of psychological help depending on their cognition, background history, memory of their accident and

understanding of their accident. These assessments are highly important, especially straight after the patient's accident, as they indicate whether they need urgent care regarding their mental state or cognition from Dr Drummond or other members.

The last day showed Dr Drummond working in the Chronic Pain ward where she met 1-to-1 with a patient suffering with severe migraine pain. Dr Drummond began by understanding how the patient had been dealing with their pain and whether they had been improving through using this method. The patient stated they had been using meditation and mindfulness for

their chronic pain and Dr Drummond recommended the Pain Management Programme, as it consists of learning these techniques in greater detail. It was amazing seeing how much she had impacted this patient's quality of life as their pain has turned from insufferable to manageable.

From this experience, I was very inspired by Dr Drummond's work and how much influence she has on each patient and each ward. It has definitely fuelled my desire to pursue a career in Clinical Psychology and help patients the same way Dr Drummond does daily.

Gold Athena SWAN

The University of York psychology department has been awarded a gold Athena SWAN award for its work towards gender equality. Not only has work been done within the department, but through 'beacon' activities such as acting as a buddy to other departments just starting to apply for Athena SWAN awards, York is having a broader impact on female representation in STEM



fields. Psychology students have helped with this initiative over the years. For example, students from under-represented groups have volunteered to act as Student Ambassadors. Congratulations to everyone for their contributions towards Athena SWAN!

In January there will be a student survey to find out more about the lived experiences of students in the department that aims to help improve equality and diversity in the department. Please consider completing the survey to help the department continue creating a welcoming environment for students of all paths.



Clinical Experience in Bulgaria

Lily Boundy writes about the clinical experience she gained in Bulgaria.

During the summer of 2019 I participated in a four-week long placement in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria. This was in association with IFC volunteering, an organisation which provides psychology students with the opportunity to gain valuable experience in the field of psychology in one of the oldest countries in Europe. The placement involved working within various psychological settings such as centres for vulnerable children or elderly people, cardiac clinics, and prison environments. It is definitely a valuable experience for students who wish to pursue a career in clinical or forensic psychology as I found it an amazing opportunity to learn more about mental health and physical disabilities.

Each day was different on this placement, as the program coordinators wanted to provide us with a range of experiences to learn from. For example, every Monday we would have a clinical training day which we spent with a clinical psychologist and had the opportunity to ask questions and learn about the services and treatments provided in Bulgaria. We got to look at case studies and participate in activities typically given to patients to gain an insight into how different mental health disorders are treated in that country.

During the week, we spent usually 2-3 days volunteering in different settings. In particular, we spent a lot of time in children and family centres for vulnerable children.

IFC placement group



These centres were created after UNICEF Bulgaria implemented an action plan for the deinstitutionalisation of children in 2010 which meant massive care facilities - such as orphanages with 200+ children and very few staff - were forced to close to provide crucial improvements to the lives and care of such vulnerable children (UNICEF, 2014). We spent a lot of time with these children, and it was clear to see how much it meant to them that we cared and wanted to visit them as they do not get many visitors. It was an incredibly enriching experience, especially working with children with physical disabilities, and I learnt a lot within these settings.

I also had the opportunity to go into a prison setting to learn about the services provided there and how the prisoners and staff feel about such services. We also went to a crisis centre for victims of trafficking, and I found it incredibly interesting to hear about the case studies of some of the people within the centre. Additionally, we spent a few days volunteering in a care home for the elderly. This was definitely my favourite experience, as hearing their stories and seeing them so happy to be where they are was very inspiring. Furthermore, once a week we spent the day in lectures and seminars at the University of Veliko Tarnovo learning a lot about clinical psychology and different mental health issues.

For the majority of the placement I stayed in the University accommodation. We had many opportunities to have fun,

spending the first weekend at the pool, sightseeing, climbing the Tsaravets fortress and learning about the history of Veliko Tarnovo. The second weekend we spent at a spa in the mountains and learnt about the history of Tryavna. The final weekend we had the opportunity to travel to another part of the country, so my friends and I went to Sozopol on the coast and spent the weekend at the beach. My favourite activity had to be watching the Sound and Light show at Tsaravets from a private roof top, which was performed just for us and was one of the most surreal experiences I have had.



Tsaravets sound and light show

My experience in Bulgaria was definitely one I will never forget; I learnt a lot about psychological services and mental health, and I made a lot of friends and memories. It was a very unique experience and has definitely helped me in my future aspirations to pursue a career in clinical psychology.

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