

ΨSYCHOUT

ISSUE 18



FEATURE THEME

Relationships

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MEET THE TEAM

Editors

Katie Stevens, Maddie Brenton

Feature Writers

Lottie Eley, Estelle Moores, Trinity Kingston, Angel Harper, Alice Wardle, Sarah Heptinstall, Amy Britten, Oscar Parker, Hannah Gofton, Tia Withers

Interview Exclusive Writer

Cliodhna Hall

Staff Supervisor

Alex Reid

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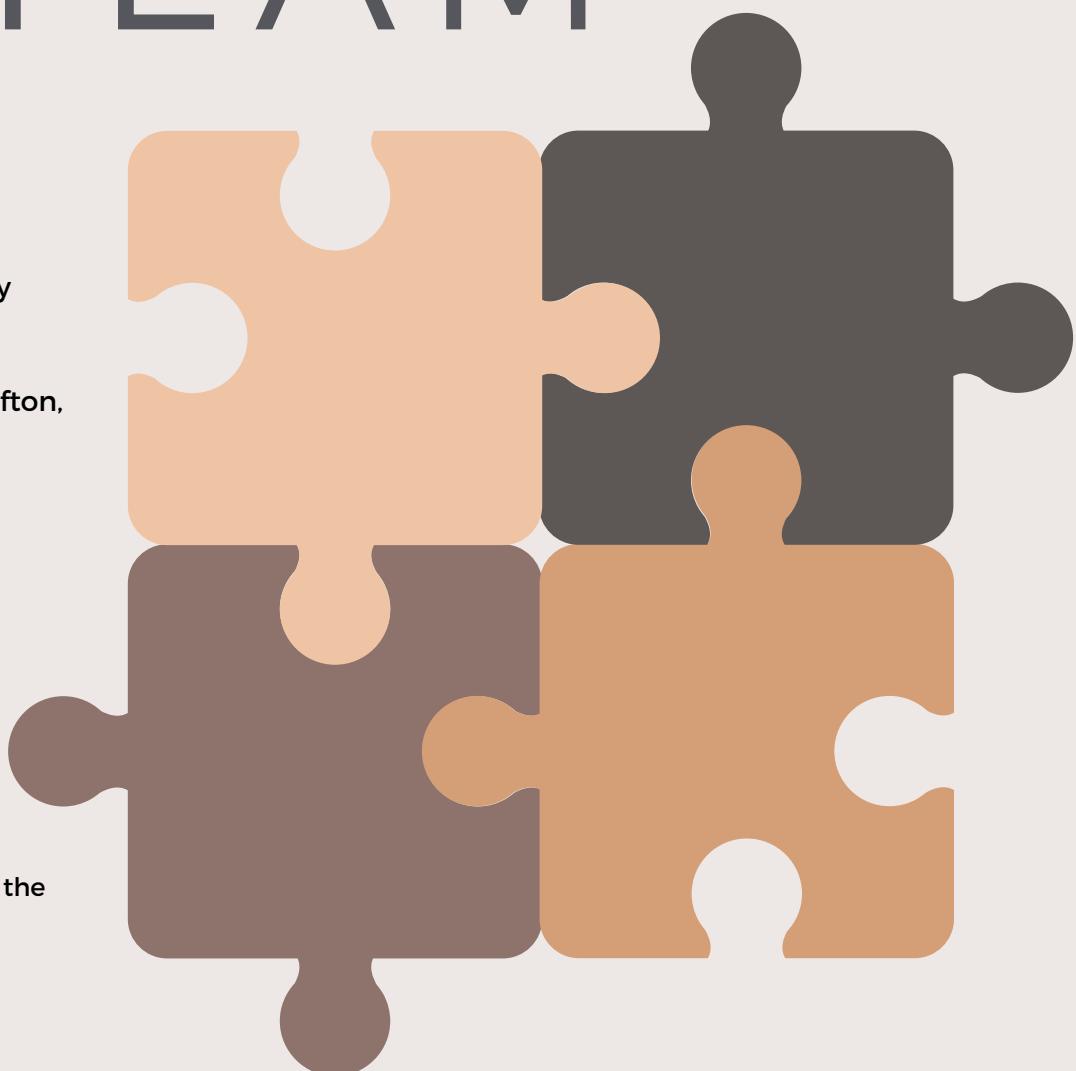
Write for PSYCHOUT

Keep your eye on your emails for calls for writers!

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CONTENT WARNING

This issue contains discussions of unhealthy and abusive relationships, childhood trauma and trauma recovery

EDITOR'S NOTE



What is a relationship? Many may immediately make the connection to those of a romantic nature when they hear the word, but our lives as social creatures arguably revolve around all types of connection to others. When we decided on the theme for this issue to be relationships, we were aware of the wide scope of ideas that it encompassed. We were not prepared, however, for the sheer number and creativity of applications that we received. Ranging from romantic, platonic and academic relationships to our relationships with ourselves and our past, the quality of ideas submitted was outstanding.

As such, this issue reflects the range of ideas that students in the department have submitted. In the upcoming pages you will read articles exploring the topics detailed above as well as many more; a beautifully written poem, an interview with a researcher about her work on parenthood, and a bonus article on work experience that some of our readers may be interested in.

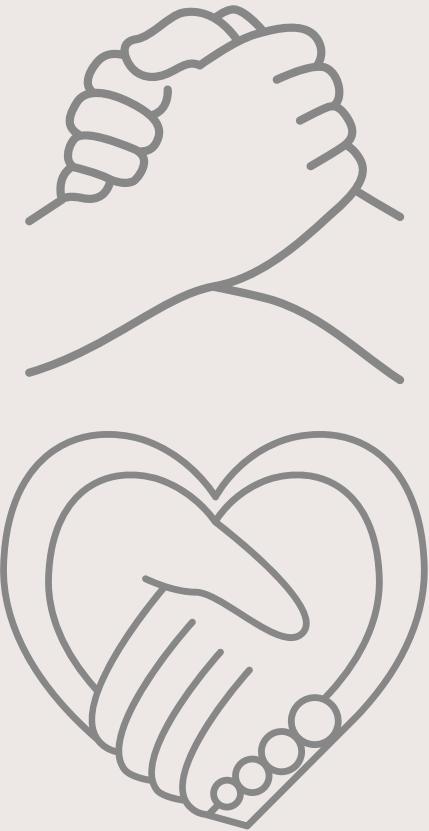
We would therefore like to thank everyone who applied to contribute to this issue, and especially those writers who have gone on to have their work published in PsychOut. Additional thanks are extended to Dr Charlotte Faircloth for giving an interview for this issue.

We hope all our readers are doing well and enjoy the issue!

MADDIE BRENTON
AND KATIE STEVENS

Editors

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Relationships are founded on love- but is love losing its meaning?

BY LOTTIE ELEY

With divorce rates steadily increasing, racism, homophobia and sexism feeling more present in our day to day lives; it is not difficult to wonder if society has lost touch with love. From a young age we learn how crucial and miraculous love is and yet we seem to be flooded by its failure. For these reasons, I began to think about what love truly meant, and how it comes to form the foundations for all our meaningful relationships.

We live in a love driven culture, from literature, music, and film; the pursuit for love surrounds us and yet still we are left with no answer to what love really is. On my own journey to understand love, I read Bell Hooks' renowned book 'All About Love' which soon became the inspiration for this piece. Within her introduction, she quotes Harold Kushner: "Kushner writes: 'I am afraid that we may be raising a generation of young people who will grow up afraid to love, afraid to give themselves completely to another person, because they will have seen how much it hurts to take the risk of loving and have it not work out [...]

They will be so fearful of the pain of disappointment that they will forgo the possibilities of love and joy" (Hooks, 2000, p.10). As a young person, I strongly related to Kushner's words as the closer I came to understanding love, the more I recognised its challenges. Love became something easier to fear than to feel.

To begin to overcome our apprehension of love we must start by defining it. With each careless use of the word our perception becomes clouded, but we recoil from a distinct definition as this clarity make us confront the possible reality that we lack love. By avoiding the customary conceptions of love's enigmatic ways and presenting a functional definition, we create a space where love can thrive. The overwhelming urge is to view love as a noun; however, it serves us better to use it as a verb. To expand this further, Hooks quotes psychiatrist M. Scott Peck: "he continues: 'Love is as love does. Love is an act of will-namely both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice. We do not have to love. We choose to love'" (Hooks, 2000, p.17).

By evading this passive version of love that assumes one simply "falls" into it and switching its narrative to an active voice, we see love as a choice. When we view love in such a highly esteemed manner, is it not within reason to accept that when we express it, we do so on purpose. Hooks writes: "We are often taught we have no control over our "feelings." Yet most of us accept that we choose our actions, that intention and will inform what we do [...] If we were constantly remembering that love is as love does, we would not use the word in a manner that devalues and degrades its meaning. When we are loving we openly and honestly express care, affection, responsibility, respect, commitment, and trust" (Hooks, 2000, p.21)



It is easier to “fall” into love as we avoid accountability for our actions. When we choose to love we will ultimately choose to feel loss, undoubtedly facing fear and pain. But we are also greeted by joy, admiration, and hope. When we choose to love, we choose to live.



Making this decision to become loving, to finally understand the harrowing depths of love soon became the easy part. It turned out the groundwork for a loving practice was self-love, and without this our endeavours to love could fail. Too often self-love is regarded in a selfish or narcissistic manner, yet we still seek this unconditional love from others. How can we ask for love that we are incapable of giving ourselves? Understandably this is something easier to say than to act on and I am still learning the self-love algorithm myself. For this I will refer again to Bell Hooks: “One of the best guides to how to be self-loving is to give ourselves the love we are often dreaming about receiving from others” (Hooks, 2000, p.45). Love is easier to fear than to feel, equally it can be easier to pick yourself apart than to admire yourself. To begin to love oneself, we have to be courageous. This is not to live without fear as our anxieties may not always go away but rather be brave in the face of hate, this is where our courage lies. Love is not something intuitively known, we must learn to become loving and for this we must start by loving ourselves.

From young ages we seek love, and in a society where such love is fleeting it becomes simpler for us to turn to mass media for our ideals. These depictions of love we see repeated in media become the hyperreality; the over exposure to distorted realities that begin to constitute a reality of their own. With this, progressively younger generations become vulnerable to these false depictions of love. They compose a fantasy of love that is easy, love that is drowned in consumerism and simply waiting to find us when the time is right. This is not true love, it takes time, effort and understanding, love has ups and downs and requires growth. Love needs to be learnt. We have to face this false media and begin to replace it with images of real loving human interactions for us to help future generations on their journey to discovering love.

Love is an art. It requires practice, dedication, and faith. We must be committed to love's journey. The path will not be without its complications, at times it will be arduous and daunting, but these are the components needed for essential change and growth. Ultimately, the relationships with ourselves and others may vastly improve if we all spent a little more time learning how to love. Love is the key to a brighter future, to quote Bell Hooks: “Love empowers us to live fully and die well” (Hooks, 2000, p.106).



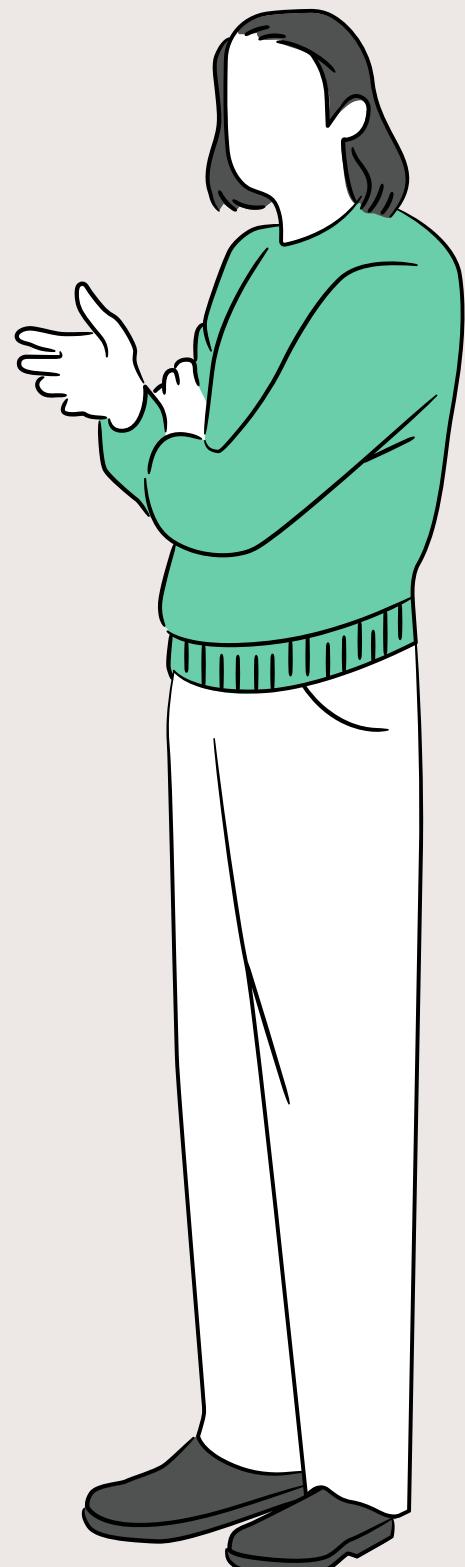
NO WORDS FOR FEELINGS

By Estelle Moores

Navigating relationships with Alexithymia

Translating from Greek as 'no words for feelings', alexithymia is the name used to describe a difficulty with identifying and describing both physical and emotional sensations (Muller, 2000). Since making its first appearance in psychological literature in the 1970's (Sifneos, 1972), the study of alexithymia has expanded at a steady rate. Despite this, the term is not one frequently found in popular culture or utilized in day-to-day conversations, unlike comparable constructs like narcissism or extraversion. This is not to say however, that alexithymia is rare; in fact, it has been suggested that around 10% of the population possess the trait to a high degree (Ricciardi et al, 2015).

As well as being relatively common, alexithymia can have a significant impact on multiple social factors when it is present. Humphreys, Wood and Parker (2009) found that students with higher levels of alexithymia had lower levels of relationship satisfaction as well as sexual satisfaction within relationships. These findings are not surprising considering the fact that alexithymia is characterised by difficulty in identifying - and therefore communicating - physical and emotional sensations. However, the effect does not stop here; alexithymia has been found to be associated with greater levels of loneliness (Fyre-Cox & Hesse, 2013) and depression (Honkalampi et al, 2000) as well as lower levels of perceived social support (Foran & O'Leary, 2013). From examining the overall findings of the literature so far, it would be fair to say that alexithymia seems to have an isolating effect on those who experience it, as if the deficit in communicative ability stunts the extent to which they can connect with those around them.



The effect of this deficit is not just limited to social relationships; alexithymia can similarly stunt the relationship between client and therapist, worsening the outcomes of both traditional psychotherapy and supportive therapy (Ogrodniczuk et al, 2011; Quilty et al, 2017) meaning that not only does having high levels of alexithymia have a negative impact on relationships and well-being, but it can also make it harder to remedy the ill-effects that can come with this. When identified and taken into consideration however, the degree to which an individual is alexithymic can be greatly reduced; Akram and Arshad (2022) found that a 6 week course of ART (alexithymia reduction therapy), a treatment which involves improving emotional vocabulary and recognition, reduced the level of alexithymia and in doing so, the level of both anxiety and depressive symptoms. More specifically, ACT (acceptance and commitment therapy), a third-wave therapy used for a range of psychological disorders, has been found to reduce alexithymia and increase intimacy for couples struggling with interpersonal issues (Motlag et al, 2017). This type of therapy, which aims to expand psychological flexibility and emotional openness, has also been found to be clinically effective when delivered online (Lappalainen et al, 2021), suggesting that it could be delivered widely and with relative ease.

Additionally, Nunes Da Silva (2021) highlighted the importance of addressing alexithymia in case conceptualisation in order to build therapeutic alliance and therefore improve psychotherapy outcomes. So, if alexithymia is indeed relatively common, and addressing it can improve both general mental well-being as well as social and clinical relationships, why is it taken into account so infrequently.

It may be due to the fact that, compared to constructs such as narcissism or extraversion, alexithymia is a relatively recent concept, or – ironically – it may be due members of the medical profession as well as the general public not being aware that there is a term for a difficulty with describing feelings. Either way, there is a case to be made for raising an awareness of alexithymia in both social and clinical environments in order to improve wellbeing and relationships as in both settings.



The Student Teacher Relationship Explored

BY TRINITY KINGSTON

Reflecting on school years, specific teachers often surface from the haze of memory - some for the better, many for the worse. Nevertheless, they all help to reiterate the idea that teachers are capable of changing students' lives. But what is it within this relationship that is volatile enough to construct widely different interpretations of the same teacher in the minds of their students? Whilst experience is subjective, new research reveals that the nature of the student-teacher relationship is more formulaic than it appears and, with some psychological intervention, a code that can be cracked.

A Student Perspective

Whilst the student lifestyle faces many challenges (from the post-Salvos 9am lecture, to more serious discussions of inclusion, wellbeing, and finance), it appears that the quality of student-teacher relationships also acts as a key stressor to poor mental health in students. In a survey that asked how universities could better student wellbeing, most recommendations focused on teaching practises. With students emphasising that the approachability, empathy and communication skills of a teacher having the most impact on their wellbeing (Baik et al., 2019). It becomes clear that the best skill a teacher can have is to be a bit more human.

A Teacher's Take

The importance of a good teacher is widely understood- from state education to the Buddhist Dharma, and it is not a job for the ill-willed with teaching ranked as one of the highest stress-related occupations (Spilt et al., 2011). The mental strain from being underfunded, understaffed, and under-attack from the screaming pubescence is acknowledged but sparsely supported within society (Frahm & Courant Staff Writer, 2001). Only now has research begun to dip into how this stress manifests itself onto the person beyond the whiteboard and the part that students play.

Whilst not the most obvious peer relationship, teachers spend the majority of the working day in the company of their pupils and these relationships are shown to be an important factor in teacher wellbeing. Teachers, like the rest of us, are burdened with the very human need to belong, and there have been reports that close relationships with students are the main source of motivation and enjoyment within the job (Hargreaves, 2000).



Tailor Your Teaching

So far, a good quality student-teacher relationship appears key for the wellbeing of both parties involved, so why in reality is this often not the case? Like a problem with any other relationship, you just might not be a good fit!

Teaching styles have been found to largely fall into two categories: the caregivers that fancy themselves a parent surrogate and the classroom a setting for building relationships, and instructors that view their role as an informer to the next generation. Brophy (1988) found the caregiver to attend more to disruptive students, whilst instructors were more responsive to chronic underachievers



So, if you ever feel like you're being treated differently in class by a teacher, you're probably right.

Like a parent, teachers are known to construct internal representations of their relationships with students that reflect their views, feelings, and attitudes toward teaching as a whole. Therefore, a bad experience with past students may alter the teaching trajectory for students to come. For readers who've had older (often badly behaved) siblings in school, you may have experienced this when their vengeful teachers tarnish you with the same brush.

Additionally, aspects of identity, such as gender and ethnicity, have been found to elicit differential responses in teaching. Women in STEM have often faced barriers in school from the implicit prejudice of teachers, with stereotypes such that the academic achievements of girls are due to overworking and not talent (Ertl et al., 2017) continuing to plague perceptions of the true ability of female students. Whilst armed with good intention, teachers that specialise support towards female students may be perceived by the girls to be compensating for their lack of ability and can ironically lower their confidence in the subject (Pomerantz & Eaton, 2001). A similar phenomena is observed in Fajardo's (1985) study that found teachers to overcompensate when marking essays written by black students and, whilst this caused an initial boost in confidence, it had the potential to later lead to incongruency between the students' perceived and actual ability. Therefore, a teacher's preconceptions of certain groups of students can cause distrust and dilute the quality of the student-teacher relationship.

As we enter a more digital age, the need to preserve a human touch in teaching is more important than ever for the success of student-teacher relationships. And, beyond our academic roles, we all have a fundamental need to feel attached, connected, and seen to the individuals around us.



The Dark Triad and relationships

BY ANGEL HARPER



If anything encompasses the traditional villain, it is the Dark Triad personality traits. Associated with manipulative charm and vanity beyond belief, one may wish to avoid such garish personalities when swiping through Tinder. And yet, there is a certain attractiveness to the Dark Triad which perhaps derives from morbid curiosity or some primal evolutionary instinct. The Triad consists of three personalities: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. Those with narcissism are characterised by a sense of entitlement and a grandiose sense of self-worth (Raskin & Terry, 1988). A Machiavellianism personality typically includes traits such as insincerity and manipulation (McHoskey, 2001) and psychopathy encompasses a lack of empathy, antisocial, and manipulative behaviour (Hare, 2003). Whilst being distinct individual disorders, these traits have a lot of similarities. People with these traits are known for being extraverted and they often make a good first impression, but they may use these skills to be exploitative (Lee & Ashton, 2005). Their superficial charm and manipulative prowess may be what captures our attention initially, but keeping this façade is tiring so long-term relationships could result in heartbreak. Research suggests that Dark Triad traits increase perceived attractiveness, but they are also correlated with higher levels of abuse in relationships.

Some believe that Dark Triad traits hold evolutionary benefits. Those who fall under the Dark Triad specification are often charming, likeable, and whilst long-term relationships may not always work out, short-term relationships are theorised to be an effective mating strategy. These personalities seem to excel in short-term attraction, with participants rating those who score high for Dark Triad traits as more attractive than those who score lower (Carter et al., 2014).

Dark personalities often employ 'mate poaching' – a form of infidelity wherein they begin a relationship with someone who is already dating someone else. Consequently, their relationships are usually short-lived as they often leave their current partners for another (Jonason et al., 2010). Evolutionary researchers believe this preference for short term relationships can be a positive and adaptive mating strategy.

This is because they can produce many offspring in a short period of time, without the emotional or economic commitment. However, this largely benefits the male sex who do not face the responsibility of childbirth and rearing. If this is the case, then why are Dark Triad personalities so attractive to women? Some claim that from an evolutionary perspective, women may look for men who are risk takers as it can be an indicator of good genes (Bassett & Moss, 2004). But can human attraction and romantic preferences be boiled down to evolutionary instinct? Perhaps relationships are more complex than a purely evolutionary explanation.



For those who become romantically involved with Dark Triad personalities, research has suggested a heightened likelihood of facing physical or psychological abuse. Unfortunately, many men and women have fallen victim to domestic abuse at the hands of narcissistic, psychopathic, or Machiavellian individuals. Psychopathy and Machiavellianism are correlated with psychological abuse, and in particular, those who have dated psychopathic individuals are more likely to experience intimidation and the use of dominance (Carton & Egan 2017). Such controlling behaviours can make it even more difficult for a victim to leave an abusive relationship due to fear of their partner. Furthermore, couples with a partner with many Dark Triad traits are likely to have more frequent arguments which were also more intense and hostile (Horan et al., 2015).

They are also more likely to criticise their partners and become defensive. Victims of domestic abuse who had previously been in a relationship with psychopathic individuals reported many physical, psychological, and interpersonal problems in their relationship. There was also increased risk of depression and PTSD (Forth et al., 2021). These studies suggest that Dark Triad traits increase the likelihood that their partners could face more disagreements or even abuse. Perhaps specific traits and manipulation tactics ought to be more widely talked about; this would help victims identify signs of abuse early on in a relationship. It is always important to note that these studies are purely correlational. Scoring high for Dark Triad traits does not provide certainty that these people will be abusive or bad partners. There may also be other factors at play. For example, the Dark Triad has been correlated with specific personality traits from the Big Five; all three personalities are negatively correlated with agreeableness (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Individual personality traits, environmental influences, and previous history of trauma may also play a role.

The Dark Triad are a series of interesting and potentially intimidating personality traits. They seem to incorporate every stereotypical red flag in the dating pool. Evolutionary psychologists view these traits as potentially beneficial at times, especially when looking for short term partners. Although this may benefit them more than their partners. Unfortunately, they are also correlated with physical and psychological abuse; their manipulative personalities can make victims feel like they cannot leave or as though the abuse is not real. Whilst this does not guarantee relationships will fail or be abusive, it could offer insight into how to best help victims.

AN INTERVIEW WITH

**Dr Charlotte
Faircloth**

Cliodhna Hall explores the UCL sociologist's
reflections on her career in research and
ideas on parenthood



It would be great if you could introduce yourself to the Psychout readers. Can you tell us a little bit about your academic background?

Absolutely. I completed my undergraduate degree in Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, where I continued to do my master's degree and a PhD in Social Anthropology. This is where I developed an interest in motherhood and parenthood, which became the foundation to the research I have done ever since and moved my career prospects towards social sciences and sociology. I then went on to the University of Kent as a Post Doc student and then to the University of Roehampton in London as a lecturer before becoming an associate professor in Social Science at UCL, which is where I am now. I run an undergraduate program called a BSc in Social Sciences, which focuses on the teaching of qualitative methods, gender and anthropological ways of looking at reproduction and parenting, alongside guest lectures.

What was it that first captured this interest into the study of parenthood and motherhood from anthropology?

When I was completing my third-year dissertation, I read a book by an anthropologist Emily Martin called 'The woman in the body', which is a cultural analysis of reproduction. It showed me how so many assumptions about reproduction are deeply gendered and are cultural artefacts as much as natural facts. It got me thinking and lead me to go and talk to new mothers for my dissertation about birth. What was quite interesting to me was the more I was trying to talk about birth the more they were trying to talk about how difficult breastfeeding was, and this lead me to that area of research.

Some of your work mentions the 'attachment parenting' philosophy, would you be able to explain to the readers what this is?

My work broadly has been interested in parenting as a concept and how that has changed over the last 20 to 30 years. I think a lot of people, particularly historians and social scientists, have noticed that it has got a lot more of a big deal I suppose and it's expanded to there being a lot of expertise out there about it. I'm really interested in what that has done to peoples' experiences and how it feels to raise children in that changed environment where it's so much more of a big deal and we feel completely conscious that everything we do with our kids when they are small will have lifelong implications. And the reason I got into that I suppose was because during my PhD research I encountered these women who, in some ways, did embody that cultural shift quite well.

SO as much as whether people have warm relationships or such is important, what goes on outside of those individual intimate relationships to structure that experience is what I believe policymakers and academics should pay more attention to; structural problems such as more housing, education prospects, and class being more of a determinant of how children develop.

Because they are what's called an 'attachment parent', they have a specific philosophy around their approach, which is quite evidence-based. It draws on this evolutionary paradigm in using quite a lot of archaeological or biological evidence to say "well look humans are primates and if we'd respected our evolutionary heritage then we would all go to sleep with our babies, we would breastfeed until they outgrow the need and that might be one or two years old or it might be five or six years old". So there were a lot of these practices that they did where they saw themselves as counter-cultural; they were pushing back against this very modernised scientific and routinized approach to raising children where everything is very scheduled and saw themselves paying homage to that evolutionary heritage. I encountered them during my fieldwork in London and in Paris and was just really interested in their stories and why were they doing this, how they thought about themselves in relation to wider society, and like I say how they could be seen as an embodiment of a more cultural trend of a more intense parenting style.

You mentioned the idea of 'breastfeeding guilt' on Newsnight in 2012. Do you think more awareness is needed in the relation to the stigma that what parents do at the start affects their children for life?

I think this is where a critical academic look at some of the social policy use and particularly psychological evidence is really important. Because you cannot say that what happens to children in their infancy has no impact in their later life but I do think we need to be more critical about what that then translates to in terms of social policy. So as much as whether people have warm relationships or such is important, what goes on outside of those individual intimate relationships to structure that experience is what I believe policymakers and academics should pay more attention to; structural problems such as more housing, education prospects, and class being more of a determinant of how children develop.

So it frustrates me when people say that if more women breastfed then less children would be obese or have a better IQ for example. I think it is an easy target for social policy makers to say it is the individual mothers and individual families who need to do more because there's a lot of guilt that women internalise around these sayings and I think that's really unfair because actually a broader and a social perspective is what's needed and we need to think as a society what we can do to make having children more sustainable.



So would you agree that more research needs to be done involving the environmental factors surrounding infancy and adolescence?

I think it is very easy to think about the environment, for example pollutants in breast milk or should women be doing this for their baby, doing that? But we actually maybe need to have a bigger conversation about the environments in which women and their babies live and things like pollution in cities and what can we do more structurally to encourage companies or commenters to think about the bigger picture rather than making individuals responsible.

What has been your most interesting piece of research to conduct?

The one I really enjoyed doing was with couples about their experience of becoming parents and some of the interviews for that were on a very long time they were very deep and kind of reflective and I was meeting the same couples often like four or five times over the period of the first year, so even before the baby was born, until the baby was about 15 months old.

I really developed quite a strong relationship with the people and sort of followed their stories and some of the narratives of these relationships were really hard and so I really enjoyed doing that research because I felt that it developed a very close relationship with people. My research is all different, for example the one about Covid that we did more recently I felt less close with people, partly because we couldn't meet so we collected data through this mobile phone app called 'Indemo' which is a mobile ethnography app and that was amazing getting the videos, pictures and notes from people and being able to follow up stuff not in the moment so you could go away and think about it and that obviously felt quite interesting.

What lead to the idea for the founding of the Centre for Parenting Culture Studies at the University of Kent?

My colleague Ellie Lee was a sort of mentor for me and was the driving force behind our co-founding of the centre. The pieces kind of emerged because of projects we were both doing about infant feeding. So I was doing one on the attachment parents who were breastfeeding until kids were five or six and she was doing a project about women's experiences of formula milk experience. Weirdly the findings were very very similar in that we were working with women at two ends of the spectrum if you like, but both sets were reporting this feeling of stigma, how moralised things and how politicised they felt. There was a lot of density work going on so women who used formula milk in this culture where "breast is best" felt very guilty and they had to account for why they were doing that and reasons were things like "my nipples were bleeding, I was exhausted"; they felt really bad that they weren't doing the best for their child. Women that I was working with had this sort of moral high ground in that they were doing the best, they were doing something quite unusual, statistically at least, and the people would accuse them of having some kind of odd psychological motivations for it and so the idea for the centre kind of emerged out of conversations we had about our research projects. Then Ellie had organised it and through that I then applied to become a postdoc there and managed to win a fellowship.

So we set it up and it is great, it is very much a virtual centre but we still run it like it's an in-person team and have fellows and speakers over and it's been really informative. We wrote a book called 'Parenting Culture Studies' that came out in 2014 and we are doing a second edition of that for 2024, so ten years on, which will look at some of the changes that have happened.

Do you believe that there needs to be a lot more research conducted into parenthood to spread awareness about certain stigmas and encourage more people to study it?

I think it remains a really pressing area for improvement I suppose. I don't know if this makes me sound really old-fashioned but I think there has been a lot of airtime within kind of contemporary feminist debates around issues like gender identity which is so crucial and important. However, one of the sad things is that what has kind of fallen away slightly is some of the more practical issues that second-wave feminists were dealing with that still remain really pressing. There is a really good exception to that: a campaign group called 'Pregnant and Screwed' and they look at issues about maternity discrimination, particularly in childcare, and this for me is still such a pressing area because a lot of the women I speak to are raised on this diet of equality and ideas that we meet our partners at university doing similar kind of careers and then they go on to have children and that's where it really bites. Suddenly this equality myth is revealed and it's exactly that: it is very hard work to afford childcare to enable both of you to continue to work full time and there's a lot of guilt that comes with that because of this culture around parenting that is more directed at women so it still remains this sticking point in terms of gender equality and labour market participation issues and what it means to have a work-life balance and this sort of people in life.

I also think relationships between parents and non-parents is quite an interesting one. I think the way we think about having children these days is very much a personalised lifestyle choice and this sort of culture around parenting doesn't really help and that previously, these rose-tinted spectacles about how having children as a public good was more prevalent whereas it has kind of disappeared now and it's like if you can't afford to have children you shouldn't have them.

It's more antagonistic and it just feels as though there is not much social support for social reproduction, which is really difficult, and then it pushes the problems onto individual couples and that is where it gets very narky. Some of the research involving some of the societies where there is better social support for childcare means it gives freedom to each member of families who aren't necessarily working or can afford childcare and that is also a really important conversation to be having.

Are there any particular groups within society that you are interested in studying in the future?

I'm still really interested in parenting but what I'd quite like to do is look at it more generationally so perhaps follow the same women over fifty years. There is actually a study in our department that was done by Ann Oakley, she was quite big in the second-wave feminist movement, coming up to fifty years ago she interviewed women about their experiences about becoming a mother and it went on to be quite impactful in terms of pointing out and paternalistic views. Birth policy at the time was maternity policy and she's still in touch with those women and has revisited them a few times but I was thinking that it would be amazing to visit them fifty years on and perhaps talk to them and their children and then maybe also repeat the study with a new cohort of mothers to represent some of the changes that have gone on to some of the women who tend to be a bit older. I would also like to look at same-sex couples, but mostly looking at generational change in a periodical way.

What has made sociology the most rewarding pathway for yourself?

I think it is really important to have a personal interest, a passion. For what you do it's very hard to stay motivated if you're not really that interested in your subject area and particularly whilst you're doing your PhD, which is quite challenging at the best of times. So I can't really say why I'm interested I mean it's obviously a personal interest because I am a mother but I wasn't when I started but it just remains something that I think is interesting and I think it's interesting to people outside of academia and I think a lot of people relate to it and I think it just has such huge implications to so many other things.



I've seen that a lot of your work has been published and you've received multiple fellowships. Is there any advice you'd give to students that are considering a career in academia or are wanting to publish their work?

I think it's always a balance; you don't want to start publishing stuff before you're ready but I would say you know, for example, if you're specifically talking to undergraduates or masters students or PhD students, if you've got a really good dissertation that has been through the examination process and you're really proud of it and it's been solidly peer-reviewed then maybe they could try and write a short article about it for a popular press or something like that or a conversation or you might want to consider turning it into an academic article. It would obviously depend on the kind of topic and the format and all the rest of it that I think just maybe that kind of practice is what helps. And there are ways of making connections with publishers and other kinds of people in the field who are interested in the same area. So you can publish a little something like a little reflective piece on issues facing scholars of migration or perspectives from a student who's just done something inspirational. You know it gets your name out there and that in itself will be generative with future opportunities or receiving something like "Would you like to collaborate on editing this special issue?", or "Would you like to contribute to a chapter to this book?". I think it's definitely a balance, you don't want these commitments to take you away from other things if you have to be doing them but if you have the capacity to take those up and be a bit proactive about it then that's sort of the advice I would give to students really. People are often delighted when they're like "Oh great someone wants to contribute something to the British Sociological Association Newsletter!", or things like that.

Are there any books you have found particularly inspiring that you would recommend to the readers?

I think it very much depends on your own interest but I remember there was a great book by an anthropologist called 'Watching the English'. It was kind of a cultural analysis of British people basically or English people, like how they laugh, why they talk about the weather, all this kind of stuff and it's just quite a good way of recognising what a critical social science kind of perspective is. It makes you think about not taking these sort of common sense everyday things for granted, so a lot of these things are so familiar and you recognise yourself doing them, and she makes you consider this in a very accessible, funny way.

Another person who writes really well from a more classical physiological perspective is Susan Golombok. She's just had a new book out based on her amazing career of about 40 years of research into family called 'We are Family'. Again it's written very accessibly and manages to pitch it within media reports and historical events of the time and it tells this story of her career and how it has contributed to changing and understanding of, let's say, lesbian mother families or gay father families, surrogacy etcetera etcetera. That then draws on to different sociological and historical disciplines if you're interested in expanding your disciplinary focus onto sociology.



Analysing the mind to resolve the effects of childhood trauma

By Alice Wardle

The mind can be split into three constituent parts: Parent, Child, and Adult (note the use of upper case letters to discriminate the ego state from the regular use of the words). Unsurprisingly, the Child ego state is acquired during childhood, and it corresponds to a vulnerable state of being in which we are unable to look after ourselves. The Parent ego state is also acquired during childhood, and it is learned from the behaviour of our own parents. Finally, the Adult is the ego state that mediates between the Parent and Child, and it is considered to be the logical component of the mind. These concepts are summarised together in the theory of Transaction Analysis (TA), which was developed by Dr Eric Berne in the 1950s after he became disenfranchised with the more well-known theory of Psychoanalysis (the therapeutic practice that was developed by Freud).



The ego state that we are in can be determined by analysing multiple back-and-forth transactions within a social interaction. These transactions are often predictable. For example, a cashier might have a similar exchange with the majority of customers, including asking how the customer's day was and if they'd like a receipt. Following the same pattern, there are recognisable pathological parent-child interactions that have identifiable effects to our ego states. Dr Susan Forward discusses the different types of toxic parents at length in her book 'Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life', and we explore a couple of examples here.

One such pathological type of parent is the 'controlling parent', whose grasp of their child's life extends into adulthood. Using manipulation techniques to cause guilt and dependence, the parent copes with their 'empty nest syndrome' (the distress caused to a parent when their child leaves home) by shaming their child into never leaving. Even if their child does leave home, the parent might offer unsolicited advice on their child's career, finances, marriage, and other life choices. This, ultimately, leads to their son/daughter feeling suffocated and miserable, living in their parent's shadow and being unable to live an independent life.

Some of the transactions (analysed using TA) that might be heard, include "I think you should do this, because I know best" (though maybe less explicitly), "If you don't do what I say, I'll withdraw money/love", and "Why do you do everything wrong?". The latter makes the child feel incompetent and that they need their parent in order to survive. This could result in imbalanced ego states during adulthood. The Parent ego state within our minds might be particularly cruel and defeating. But the more likely result is an overactive Child that does not believe in their own competence and maturity. This is understandable, because if someone speaks to you with their Parent, your natural inclination would be to respond with your Child, not because it is the right thing to do, but because you understand the roles of controlling parent and incompetent child. It is only when we recognise pathological transactions that they can be mitigated.

A parent who fails to take due care and attention of their son/daughter creates a neglected child. This might result in the child having imbalanced ego states in later life, such as a non-existent inner Parent. Conversely to what you might think, they might have an underactive or suppressed inner Child, as they weren't given the privilege of being looked after when they were young. Attending therapy could help them to listen to their inner Child more attentively, and thus, listen to their own needs. Of course, social factors are not the only issue at hand here, and someone's biology will play a role in their disposition to attending to their Child, Parent, or Adult.

So, the question is how can you resolve this?

Transactional Analysis involves strengthening your Adult - the logical component of your mind. It's important to recognise the toxic component(s) within your Child-Adult-Parent system and work to adapt your thinking patterns: nurture your Child, listen to your Parent, and respond with your Adult.



As well as identifying imbalanced ego states, Dr Susan Forward states the importance of overcoming negative childhood experiences through challenging ubiquitously held standards: You are not to blame for what happened to you as a child, but you are responsible for improving yourself as an adult for the benefit of yourself and others around you. In her book 'The Body Never Lies: The Lingering Effects of Hurtful Parenting', Alice Miller claims that the stress that results from unbalanced ego states or suppressing the inner Child or Parent can cause stress-related health problems in later life. Analysing your ego states can uncover a controlling Parent in your mind or a neglected Child. After accepting the bad hand of cards that you've been given, you can develop your inner Adult to think and behave more logically in a way that benefits everyone.

THE BROKEN CUP

A Poem by Sarah Heptinstall

If cups were memories made of things
Like safeness, faith, and hopes and dreams,
Consent, self-worth, autonomy,
Trust in a world that's just and free.

If china cups were made of these,
And of the bonds we build and grieve,
If cups are memories, glued with these,
Then trauma is a broken cup.

It can't be swept and thrown away,
It was built from things that need to stay,
It cannot be fixed, with so many bits,
Some parts are lost, and the rest just won't fit.

Perhaps it can stay there in its many shards.
Maybe working around them won't be too hard.
But they're sharp and they hurt when they pierce the skin.
Building a wall might stop the shards getting in.

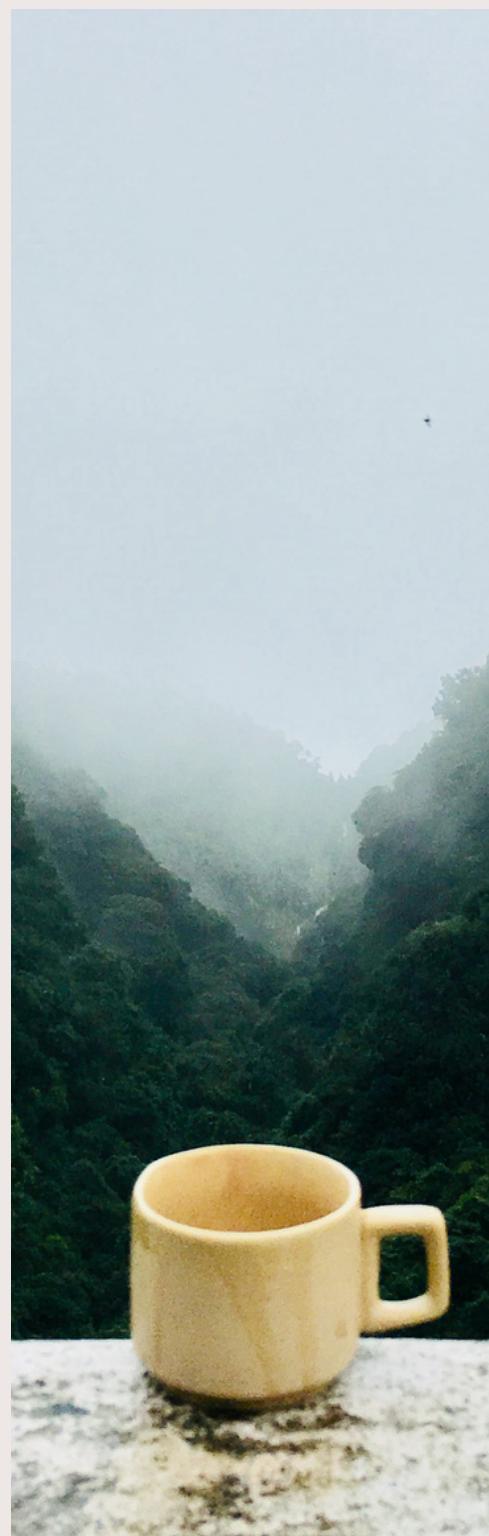
Traditional therapy could make sense of the bits,
It might even help figure how some parts fit.
The pieces, now tidier, may pierce less,
It looks better but it's still quite a bit of a mess.

EMDR says: I'll give you some clay,
I want you to listen to what the shards say.
What shape was the cup, from what you recall?
Are the pieces still there, behind the wall?

The cup can't be fixed or ignored or destroyed,
No matter how hurt, defeated, or annoyed,
But you can imagine the pieces and form them anew,
Into a cup that can be less painful for you.

You can paint on the pattern, from what you recall.
It's ok if it's different, than before the fall.
The shards can't be built into something they're not,
But you can represent them, on a whole piece of pot.

When it's turned and it's fired, and it's painted and formed,
You can clear the old pieces, now they have been mourned.
You can walk to the cupboard, put the cup away,
To be taken out at your will, if you want to, some day.



LAY BELIEFS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

BY AMY BRITTEN



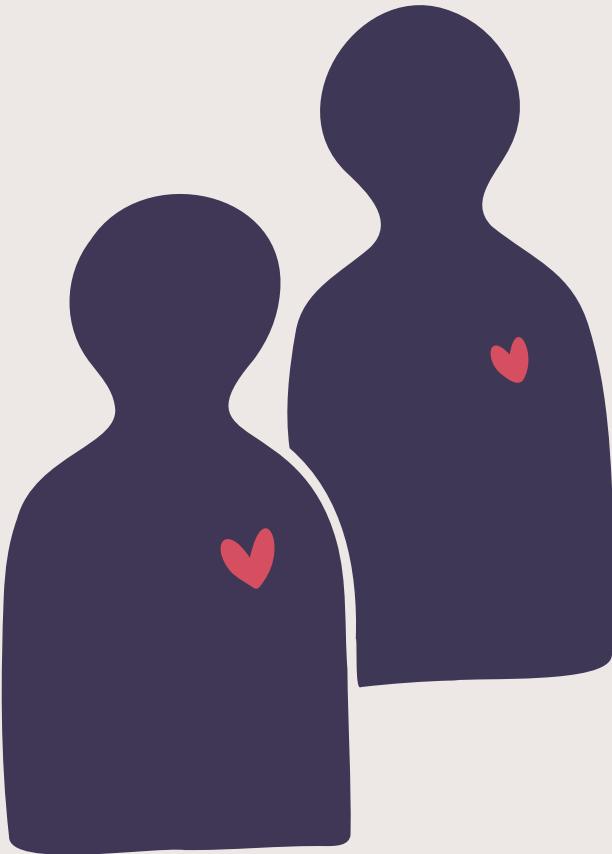
Lay beliefs are informal views that an individual holds that may not align with scientific knowledge. These beliefs form from a combination of our upbringing, education, and life experiences. In terms of romance-related lay beliefs, an example may be the expectation for a partner to intuitively know the others' wants and needs without depending on communication. Studies have found that expectations influence satisfaction in relationships, suggesting romantic relationships rely on lay beliefs being met.

Eidelson & Epstein (1982) identified the four most common romance-related lay beliefs; disagreement is unhealthy, mindreading is essential for a loving relationship, partners cannot change, and there must be a perfect sexual relationship. A recent study (Zagefka & Bahul, 2020) investigated the effect of lay beliefs on relationship satisfaction, specifically aversion to disagreement, mindreading is expected, and a belief in destiny. Participants from both Britain and Hungary completed self-report measures evaluating their relationship satisfaction, their relationship beliefs, and relationship evaluation. It was found that there was a consensus cross-culturally that aversion to disagreement predicted relationship satisfaction while mindreading expectations and belief in destiny did not. This demonstrates that specific lay beliefs may determine relationship dissatisfaction even across countries.

This brings into question where exactly these lay beliefs come from. It is a general agreement that upbringing plays a significant role in our beliefs and behaviour. For example, Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) highlights that children replicate adult behaviour, which can later be seen in terms of romantic relationships. Schemas have also been shown to be related to attachment styles, specifically insecure attachment (Simons et al, 2012), and have been reflected into adulthood (Bowlby, 1979). Taken together, it can therefore be assumed that lay beliefs are driven by family origin.

Zagefka et al (2021) looked at the mediating role of lay beliefs between family dysfunction and relationship satisfaction. It was found that positive lay beliefs were negatively correlated with family dysfunction, which was then reflected in a negative correlation with romantic dysfunction. The authors interpreted these findings as demonstrating that family dysfunction may lead to specific lay beliefs that in turn may lead to relationship dissatisfaction.

However, holding these lay beliefs or having family difficulties does not mean that you are destined to have dysfunctional relationships. Lay beliefs have been suggested to be malleable (Canevello & Crocker, 2011), and therefore should be taken into account in couple interventions. Counsellors may need to encourage individuals to reconsider their perceptions on relationships. It has been found that relationship education intervention has a significantly positive effect on changing maladaptive relationship beliefs in facilitated group discussion (Holt et al, 2016). Therefore, it may be that focusing on lay beliefs may be a simpler way of improving relationships than trying to change someone's traits, such as neuroticism.



It is important to note that lay beliefs are not the fundamental reason for relationship dissatisfaction. Relationships are complex and differ from each other, so it is far more likely that lay beliefs, along with other factors, all contribute. Situational factors, such as time, money, and location can certainly play a role in relationship satisfaction, as well as mental health, couple comparison, and attachment styles. Future research could focus more on the interaction between these variables, specifically how lay beliefs may depend on situational circumstances. It would also be interesting to test how deeply these lay beliefs are held.



Overall, the emerging evidence suggests that relationship satisfaction may be influenced by lay beliefs, which may be as a result of family disruption. With more research, intervention methods may be useful in helping relationships last longer and be more fulfilling.

SHOULD LOVE ALWAYS BE UNCONDITIONAL?

By Oscar Parker

Unconditional love is a term we often use for the individuals we feel closest to, where we support and care for them without any conditions for them to deserve it. We also set it as a standard in parenting, that parents should always be unconditional with their children. This follows on too for romantic relationships, arguing that we should all follow the fantasised tale of famous romantic novels, loving everyone for who they are. However, is this truly the best form of love for everyone?

The effects of conditional love as a parenting strategy have been closely examined along with the impact that it can have on a household. One study discovered that parental conditional regard as a parenting practice can create serious negative outcomes for the child(Øverup et al., 2017). The result is children that feel less worthy of love due to a lack of a positive family environment, highlighting the importance of ensuring the household remains a healthy space that supports one another unconditionally. Some have argued against this idea, claiming that when unconditional love became a practice in the 60s, parents lost influence over their children (Taylor, 2009).

This seems too restrictive and unrealistic of reality. Parents don't lose control of their children just because they can't dictate their personalities. Conditional love has been demonstrated time and time again to create self-devaluation and feelings of shame following failure (Assor & Tal, 2012). Using unconditional love as a parental strategy doesn't mean that parents can't influence and teach them how to become good people. The evidence vehemently supports the concept of unconditional love in parenting, to allow for children to become happy and independent individuals.

Plenty of evidence indicates that conditional positive regard is all around negative when used in parenting and romantic love appears to be the same. When seeking a partner, we naturally have preferences regarding personality and appearance. This is all based on our own attractions, but evidence indicates that conditional positive regard is associated with poor relationship quality (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2016). Across three studies, all found that conditional positive regard is linked to having a poor relationship with a romantic partner. This was argued to be because conditional positive regard takes away an individual's autonomy, making them feel coerced. Individuals evolve over time, and while we can grow apart from people, individuals can still change together. Accepting unconditional positive regard into romantic relationships and accepting that individuals deserve autonomy will lead to longer lasting relationships and make them more meaningful for both parties.



It is important to note that there are specific cultural differences. Generally, it has been found that Romantic love is a more important basis for marriage in individualist societies compared to collectivist and that psychological intimacy is also more important (Dion & Dion, 1993).

However, the evidence supporting these ideas are fairly old and may not represent a modern-day collectivist society. But even assuming that this is still relevant today, we cannot say that all modern collectivist societies are made up of maladaptive individuals with low self-esteem who rely solely on achievements to prove their worth just because our concept of unconditional love isn't relevant. So, the traditional views supporting unconditional love appears to be culturally normative to individualist societies. However, it is unfair to say that unconditional love should be regarded as the best for all individuals. It may be the case that in Western society where unconditional love seems more apparent in the mainstream, the dissemination and promotion of it may be the whole reason why the negative effects occur when individuals feel that they are loved conditionally.

In conclusion, it seems apparent that in many situations unconditional love is the most beneficial, at least for Western society. The reported benefits that exist following this as both a romantic and parenting practice indicate that being unconditional in love-giving allows for the best development of individuals. It sustains a good relationship between parties by allowing each autonomy. So overall, love should be unconditional.





Psychology in Action: YSIS placements

MADDIE BRENTON

York Students in Schools (YSIS) is a programme run in partnership between the University of York and local primary and secondary schools in the area. It involves the University of York students across a wide range of departments getting involved in various volunteer positions within these schools. There is a requirement to volunteer half a day of your time per week for a term.

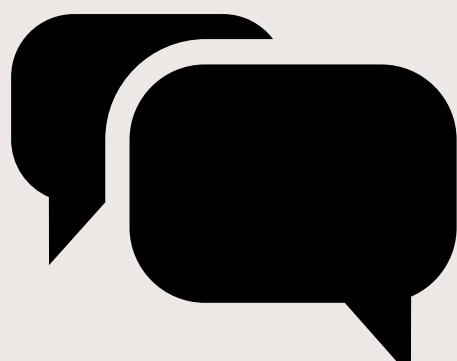
I took my first steps to being involved in YSIS in the Summer term of my first year, where I filled in a quick application form for the role of Speech and Language Assistant at a local primary school. After being accepted, I then attended a general training session where all of the YSIS volunteers were present for a preliminary talk on working with children. After this, all volunteers for Speech and Language roles then had a zoom session where a qualified Speech and Language Therapist spoke to us about the intervention we would be delivering (in my case the Wellcomm intervention) and general tips for the role. This training experience in itself was a useful endeavour, as it was worthwhile to be able to hear about the daily role of a Speech and Language therapist and ask her questions.



Over the summer, I applied for and received my DBS check. Then I got into contact with my teacher who was my link to the school and arranged a first meeting for the start of the Autumn term in Year 2. This first meeting was simply to meet the teacher supervising me, find out the specifics of my role and ask any questions. It was really useful for asking questions not just about the role but teaching in general- depending on time constraints, many teachers are happy to speak about their career paths and any advice they would give so take advantage of this time!

I then commenced my role in a reception classroom, working independently leading small groups. In my experience, the children had already been assessed on their speech and language abilities and so my role was to work on implementing the intervention for those who would benefit from it. In other placements, you may also have the opportunity to help carry out these assessments. Although it sounds daunting to deliver this intervention independently (in a busy classroom environment this is often entirely self-led as teachers are very busy people!), teachers are aware of your background. You will only be asked to deliver interventions that require no teacher training, and this was very straightforward with the Wellcomm as I was given the activity that needed to be carried out with each group, I had a chance to read it through before school, and then followed the instructions. Support is available not only through the teaching team at school but also YSIS itself, which is always available to email.

Over my time volunteering with YSIS, the skill I have developed the strongest is leadership. I think it is difficult at this age to get a volunteering role where you are trusted enough to work completely alone and manage your own group in a real-life work environment. These roles within YSIS that involve delivering workshops are a great way to do this in an environment where you have lots of outlets for support. It has also clearly helped me to get hands-on experience with working with young children, which complements the Psychology degree well. Even if you decide you do not want to work with children, YSIS volunteering helps material learnt in the Language and Development module to come alive outside of just learning about the theory.



I was lucky enough to then be offered the chance to continue at my school in the Spring term, which I am currently doing. As with most roles, becoming a trusted volunteer often opens up new opportunities outside of the original specifications: for me, this has involved carrying out more one-to-one phonics work outside of the main intervention. Additionally, being in the YSIS community is a benefit in itself, with other teaching opportunities being dispersed on the mailing list and a route to speaking to the team about your career path.

Outside of my role, I know that my school hosts another volunteer for Speech and Language, and so I read her notes from the day before when working with the children- what I imagine delivering interventions is usually like in the real world! They also host a volunteer who works with children who do not speak English as a first language. Alongside this, YSIS also offers positions as general teaching assistants in both primary and secondary, where you can specialise in a specific subject area for secondary. Another opportunity they offer at the moment is working with young children to develop an enthusiasm for maths.



All experience (whether you know what you want to do or not) is useful, and my personal experience helped me narrow down that I definitely would like to work with children in the future. If you already have experience working in schools, more experience definitely doesn't hurt, as a lot of roles will ask for evidence of working with a range of ages. Finally, it is invaluable for those interested specifically in Speech and Language in the future or similar healthcare roles. Master's programmes usually ask for evidence of having worked within the specific role to get accepted onto the course to show you understand the field that you are going into. With speech and language and similar roles, this specific experience is hard to come by, and so I would definitely recommend YSIS if you are looking for unique and relevant work experience for your CV.

Applications to volunteer with YSIS are open the term before the one that you will volunteer in, as is the case with the majority of volunteering programmes in the University. As such, applications to volunteer next term are now closed, but keep checking if you would like to apply next term for the Autumn term of next year! Applications usually close around the middle of the term. I highly recommend this experience, as it is especially complimentary to a Psychology degree and an experience you will never forget!

Find out more about YSIS here:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/work-volunteering-careers/skills/volunteer/ysis/>

Do men and women love differently in romantic relationships? BY HANNAH GOFTON

An evolutionary perspective

Relationships as a research field have been intensely investigated, ranging from romantic relationships to family relationships. Some argue that in terms of romantic partners, everyone has a soulmate. Whereas others take a more evolutionary perspective, in which people seek out partners for resources or to increase their chances of offspring. A romantic relationship is defined as a shared, ongoing interaction between two people. This type of relationship can be characterised by an expression of romantic emotions and intimacy which indicates affection and romantic love (Bode & Kushnick, 2021). A feeling of love in romantic relationships have been further explained from a neurological basis, in which romantic emotions use higher-level cortical functioning compared to other types of love (Cacioppo et al., 2012). Furthermore, men and women tend to express different neurological patterns when expressing love. Thus, raising the question, do men and women love differently?

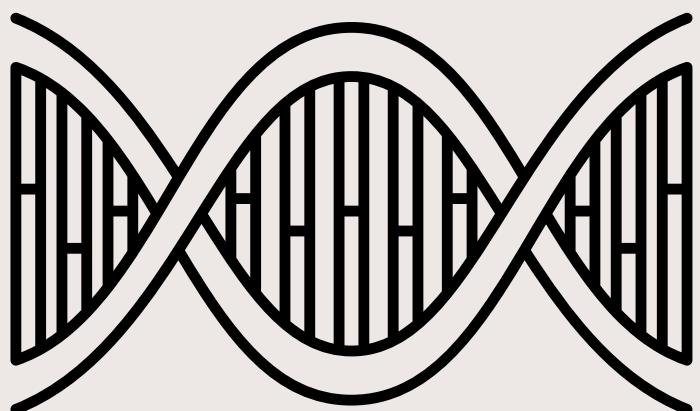
According to the evolutionary model, the motivations between men and women in relation to seeking romantic partners are very different. Men find partners more desirable if they are physically attractive which would enable their children to have the best possible genes. This fits with the evolutionary model as men's motivation in relation to romantic relationships, is to produce as many and most desirable offspring as possible in order to pass on their genes (Clark & Hatfield, 1989). Furthermore, this corresponds with Darwin's theory of 'survival of the fittest'. This theory hypothesizes that those with the best survival mechanisms, that are tailored towards reproducing and are best suited to their environment, will pass on their genes to the next generation. An evolutionary perspective would argue that males use this type of survival mechanism to increase the likelihood of reproduction of offspring with the best possible genes in the gene pool.



Alternatively, physical attraction is desired by females also when they are seeking partners. For example, if a male has muscles, women see this as attractive because their physique is beneficial for protecting their offspring. Although, women's main motivation for seeking a mate is usually in relation to the resources the male has to offer (Bus, 1989). One example of a resource women find desirable is money, which therefore will support their offspring and her in the future. Some women seek partners with a stable job and luxurious lifestyle, which implies wealth. Thus, if they were to mate with such an individual, their children will have the best possible lifestyle which is financially supported. Although, the male in this situation is still receiving benefits as the women these types of males seek, are stereotypically very physically attractive. Therefore, the man in this relationship is producing offspring with the best possible genes. In sum, this therefore forms a foundation as to why women and men may 'love' differently as they have different motivations when seeking a partner which are maintained within the relationship.

Others have argued that the evolutionary approach is too out-dated and deterministic which is not tailored towards society today. Although, this may be true, there is objective, neurological evidence that further supports the evolutionary model of romantic relationships. In relation to gender, men appear to seek relationships for more sexual gain, whereas females invest in a relationship to obtain resources for their future offspring. Men appear to recruit different cognitive processes than women in relation to romance, as men activate more neural activity when viewing romantic stimuli (Yin et al., 2018). Therefore, men appear to be able to reach the same romantic evaluation as women, however it may take them longer as they need to recruit more brain areas to reach the same conclusions as women. In reference to the evolutionary model, this makes sense as men instinctively view women for more sexual desires to produce offspring, rather than viewing women in romantic settings for a long-term relationship. Thus, further explaining why men's brains essentially 'work harder' in relation to romance, as they don't seek long-term investments in women. Hence, men and women seek sex for different purposes in relationships; men endorse sex for self-pleasure, whereas women will engage in sex for more intimate purposes to further encourage an attachment to their partner (Mark et al., 2014). This provides further weight to the evolutionary model as women engage in relationships for more intimate and resourceful purposes, whereas men are trying to increase their chances of offspring.

Although in contrast to the evolutionary model, men appear to be more satisfied with sexual activity when in a committed relationship. One explanation for this, is that with technology now, a lot of individuals are body conscious so engaging in sexual interactions with a stranger isn't sometimes desirable. Thus, if a male is in a committed relationship, then sex may be more satisfying due to comfort with that individual and pleasure being more achievable due to the length of time of them knowing one another. Therefore, as mentioned previously, the evolutionary model isn't sometimes appropriate to society today as it appears to be deterministic and doesn't explain why men would invest in long-term relationships.



Furthermore, the evolutionary model doesn't account for homosexual relationships, thus it can be considered as an outdated theory.

In sum, the evolutionary model of romantic relationships is still partially instilled in society today as men and women do seem to still seek partners for different purposes. Whether that be for physical attraction or for the resources that that individual has to offer. Although, an updated theory would be more appropriate to be labelled to societal norms now, as the evolutionary model only accounts for heterosexual relationships, and disregards many other factors.

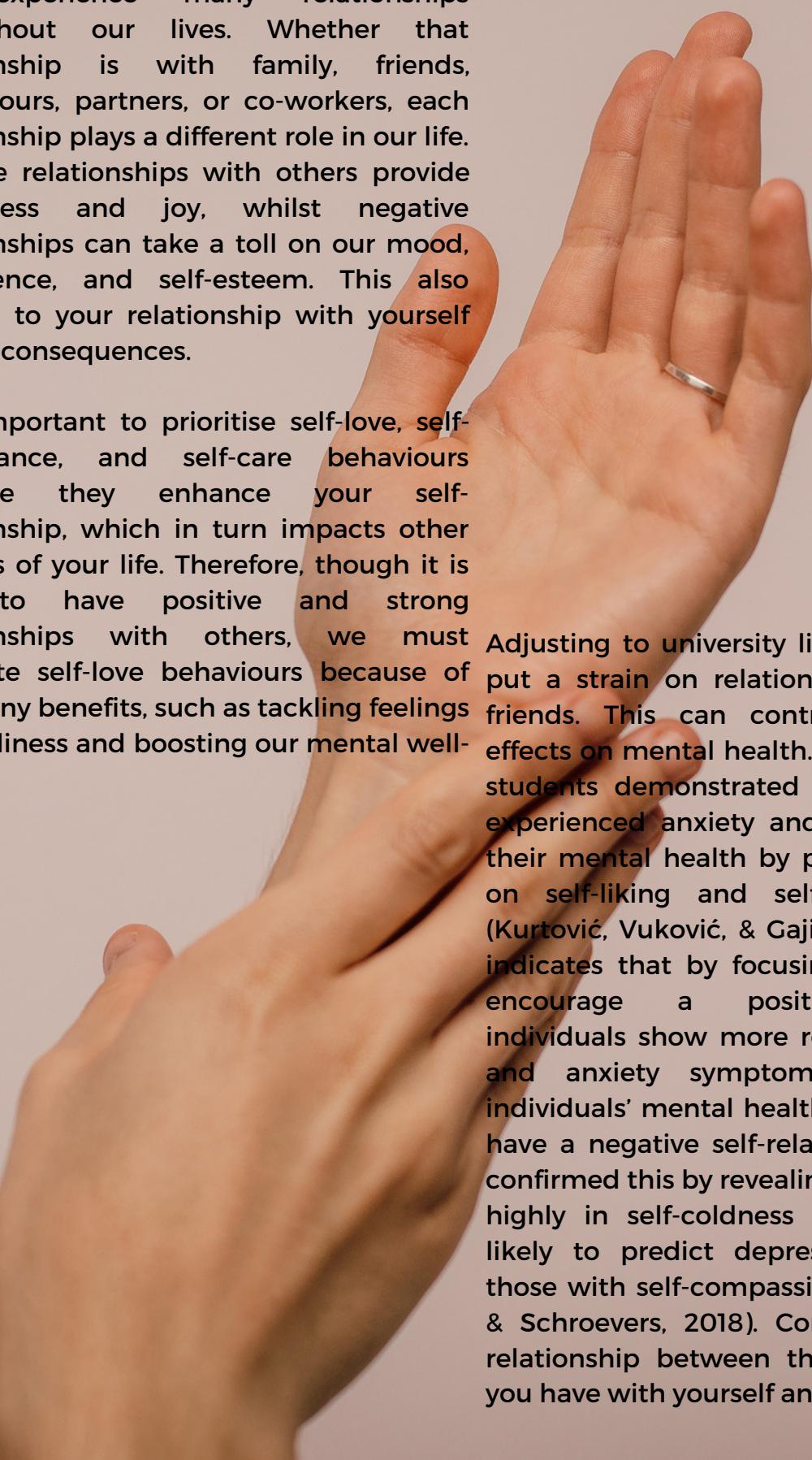


Do you have a healthy relationship with yourself?

BY TIA WITHERS

We experience many relationships throughout our lives. Whether that relationship is with family, friends, neighbours, partners, or co-workers, each relationship plays a different role in our life. Positive relationships with others provide happiness and joy, whilst negative relationships can take a toll on our mood, confidence, and self-esteem. This also applies to your relationship with yourself and its consequences.

It is important to prioritise self-love, self-acceptance, and self-care behaviours because they enhance your self-relationship, which in turn impacts other aspects of your life. Therefore, though it is vital to have positive and strong relationships with others, we must promote self-love behaviours because of the many benefits, such as tackling feelings of loneliness and boosting our mental well-being.



Adjusting to university life can be difficult and put a strain on relationships with family and friends. This can contribute to detrimental effects on mental health. Research on university students demonstrated that participants who experienced anxiety and depression improved their mental health by practising and focusing on self-liking and self-confidence attitudes (Kurtović, Vuković, & Gajić., 2018). Therefore, this indicates that by focusing on behaviours that encourage a positive self-relationship, individuals show more resilience to depression and anxiety symptoms. This means that individuals' mental health is more at risk if they have a negative self-relationship. Research has confirmed this by revealing that those who score highly in self-coldness are significantly more likely to predict depressive symptoms, than those with self-compassion (Lopez, Sanderman, & Schroevers, 2018). Consequently, there is a relationship between the type of relationship you have with yourself and your mental health.

Not only does a healthy relationship with yourself predict an improvement in mental health, but it is also important in predicting your relationship with other people. People with high self-esteem view themselves more positively than those with low self-esteem and research has indicated that self-esteem is important in predicting our relationship with others. For example, research has found that self-esteem predicted the individual's own relationship satisfaction and their partner's satisfaction (Erol & Orth, 2016). So, individuals who have higher self-esteem and thus a healthy relationship with themselves are more likely to have a healthy and secure romantic relationship. This means that having a healthy self-relationship is vital in protecting yourself against jealousy and insecurity in romantic relationships.



A final benefit of a healthy self-relationship is that it can improve problem-solving skills. For example, researchers have concluded that there is a significant relationship between self-concept and problem-solving in adolescents (Noviandari & Mursidi, 2019). This indicates that a more positive perception of oneself enhances their self-relationship, which can lead to greater problem-solving. This is because individuals in a positive relationship with themselves are better at understanding their strengths and capabilities when handling obstacles and challenges.

Clearly, there are a lot of benefits to having a healthy relationship with yourself. Therefore, it is important to understand how we can improve and maintain this positive self-relationship. For example, mindful practices, such as yoga and journaling, are great ways to connect with ourselves and reflect on our thoughts and feelings. Secondly, it is important to take time alone and do something that you love or try something new. Finally, listen to yourself and don't feel pressured to do something that won't positively affect you.

ΨYCHOUT

ISSUE 18