

## Equality Week 2015 Special Edition

Equality Week 2015 takes place between Monday 16 November and Friday 20 November. The University of Kent will celebrate equality, engage students and staff members, and encourage discussion through various activities and events. The School of Psychology will be celebrating Equality Week with a special Café Psychology talk (see details below) and also through a poster exhibition. Full details of all of the events and activities taking place, can be found on the Student Services website: <http://www.kent.ac.uk/student-services/equalityweek/index.html>.

Dr Georgina Randsley de Moura, Head of School, adds "The School of Psychology is proud to be celebrating and contributing to the University's Equality Week. Our School strives for excellence through enhancing knowledge as a vibrant and diverse research and teaching community. The School embraces academic and social diversity. Psychology at Kent represents a truly diverse and multi-national community with staff and students from a range of backgrounds and countries all over the world, including Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy,

Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the USA, and others. This allows all members of the School to learn from each other and experience a wonderfully dynamic, creative, and cosmopolitan environment. In addition, our research agenda is directly relevant to understanding of issues of equality, embracing diversity, social mobility and inclusion. We take this week as an opportunity to highlight our research contributions to the equality agenda, as well as our commitment to these issues as a School."

## Athena SWAN Bronze Award Success

This week, we celebrate the School's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity. In doing so we would like to mention the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) and the Athena SWAN charter, from which our School is now a proud recipient a Bronze Award. This is a significant achievement for the School and here we explain why these awards are important, not only for staff members but for students alike.

The Athena SWAN charter was introduced in 2005 with the purpose of supporting and advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM), employment in higher education and also research. In May 2015, the charter was expanded to recognise the work undertaken in other disciplines, as well as to address gender equality more broadly and not just the barriers that affect academic women.

Our Head of School Dr Georgina Randsley de Moura fully supported the School's efforts to address these issues and to apply for the School's first Athena SWAN award (Bronze). A Self-Assessment Team (SAT) was set up in 2014 headed by Professor Karen Douglas and Dr Heather Ferguson, made up of academics, students and administrative support staff (10 women and 3 men). The main purpose of the SAT was to assess the School's academic and working environment, the gender

distribution of staff and students, workload and work-life balance, and to identify any issues needing to be addressed. During Professor Douglas's academic study leave and Dr Ferguson's maternity leave, myself and my colleague Erika Nurmsoo headed the School's SAT and were responsible for collecting and compiling data that would build the School's current picture, as well as writing the submission for a 2015 Athena SWAN Bronze Award.

This was a challenging task for the two of us and the other SAT members. However it helped the School identify and highlight several areas of existing good practice (e.g., the active engagement of our students in our research environment, higher number of postgraduate taught female students than the national average), as well as areas that we needed to actively work to improve (e.g., clearer promotions procedures for staff members, research related activities scheduled earlier in the day, support for staff members returning from maternity leave). During this process of identification and discussion, several positive steps were undertaken. First, the School's Research Seminars have now moved to a different day in the week, and at an earlier slot (3pm), thus enabling those with caring responsibilities to attend the talks. Furthermore, the School has amended its internal procedures for all academic staff applying for promotion to the benefit of all potential applicants, with greater support and constructive feedback available provided by a panel of senior colleagues. The School's promotion successes this year also help balance the representation of women at senior levels within the School, with 6 women promoted (Drs Brown, Cameron & Pina to Senior Lecturer, Drs Ferguson and Wood to Reader and Professor Uskul to Chair). These positive steps, the identification of further areas of improvement, and the School's pledge to actively strive to achieve and maintain an inclusive and equal

environment were formally recognised by the ECU in awarding us our Bronze award. This commitment from all members of the School of Psychology, academics, professional support staff and students, will ensure that all of us enjoy working and studying in an environment that fosters equality, diversity and inclusivity, and where everyone can achieve their potential.

If you would like to learn more about the School's involvement in the Athena SWAN initiative, please contact Dr Erika Nurmsoo ([e.nurmsoo@kent.ac.uk](mailto:e.nurmsoo@kent.ac.uk)) or Professor Karen Douglas ([k.douglas@kent.ac.uk](mailto:k.douglas@kent.ac.uk)).

Dr Afroditi Pina  
November 2015.

## Café Psychology

The School of Psychology will hold a special equality week themed Café Psychology talk on Monday 16 November at 5pm in Keynes Lecture Theatre 4. The speaker will be Dr Georgina Randsley de Moura who is the Head of the School of Psychology.



The talk will summarise the financial and social benefits of diversity in organisations, particularly focusing on within and between group processes that drive inequality and unconscious bias – and how these can be attenuated. Various research streams from psychologists will be reviewed, highlighting how our understanding of the benefits of diversity has grown. The talk will emphasise work and case studies from the School of Psychology at the University of Kent and how these have informed public debate, training, and further research.

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## “My Nan is so cute” (!)

The following piece is an excerpt from a GroupLab blog entry written by Postgraduate Researcher Ruth Lamont. To read the full entry, go to: <http://bit.ly/1M8Nc29>. GroupLab is an opportunity for the members of the Centre for the Study of Group Processes (CSGP) at the University of Kent, to meet and discuss current research, new ideas and future plans. For more information about CSGP, please go to: <http://bit.ly/1HJCSJR>.

As a postgraduate researcher looking at age stereotypes I often visit day centres and community groups, asking people over 65 to help with my research. With only chocolates and sweets as an incentive, I sometimes have to practice the art of persuasion! To my surprise I have found that in just approaching older adults for their assistance, I was already confirming some of my hypotheses. One individual said something along the lines of ‘Oh no, I’m far too old for that sort of thing, you would be much better asking one of the young staff, they’ll be able to do it’. Even those that did kindly help sometimes questioned why a ‘young thing’ like myself would want to research old people.

Even before being given a test, some of the people I approached appeared to feel inadequate because of their age. As an experimental social psychologist, what felt alarming was how readily some older people adopted negative self-perceptions, and that this already seemed largely beyond my control.

European Social Survey (ESS) results- “Older people were stereotyped as friendlier, more admirable and more moral than younger people” but “Younger people were viewed as more capable.” (Abrams, Eilola & Swift, 2009)

We all spend a life-time internalising stereotypes of ageing until we reach old age ourselves and realise we are the targets of these stereotypes. Just the presence of a younger person may make these stereotypes salient.

A recent review and meta-analysis that I conducted with Hannah Swift and Dominic Abrams shows that stereotypes of ageing can directly affect older adults’ behaviour (see Lamont, Swift & Abrams, 2015). We statistically analysed international evidence from 37 studies, both published and unpublished, to conclude that:

**older adults’ memory and cognitive performance is negatively affected in situations that signal or remind them of negative age stereotypes.**

This phenomenon is known as ‘age-based stereotype threat’ (ABST). Some of the 37 studies used official-type reports on age differences in performance as ‘fact-based’ cues to age stereotypes. Other studies gave subtle hints that performance was being pre-judged because of age criteria. For example, they told people taking the test that both young and old people were taking part, or that it was a ‘memory’ test, or that it required ‘fast responses and current knowledge e.g. about technology’ etc. Our

meta-analysis revealed that older people’s cognitive performance suffered most with these more subtle cues to age stereotypes were used before cognitive testing.

Researchers have previously concluded that stereotype threat affects ethnic minorities and women, but this new meta-analysis highlights that we should be just as concerned about stereotypes of age. For more information on stereotype threat you can visit [ReducingStereotypeThreat.org](http://ReducingStereotypeThreat.org)...

The paper, titled *A Review and Meta-Analysis of Age-Based Stereotype Threat: Negative Stereotypes, Not Facts, Do the Damage*, is published in the American Psychological Association’s journal *Psychology and Aging*.

## Diversity & Leadership in Organisations - A New Lab Group

The School of Psychology and the Centre for the Study of Group Processes is excited to announce that it has launched a new bi-weekly research lab on “Diversity and Leadership in Organisations”. All of our current members (including staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students) are interested in questions regarding the role of diversity and leadership in organisations and the research we conduct ranges from finding pathways to increase diversity in leadership, to research on leadership potential, unethical leadership or the reactance towards deviant views. The lab offers opportunities to discuss recent papers, aspects of study design, research results and anything we find interesting about leadership. The lab is open to all, especially students and it can really help with project design and research ideas. If you are interested in joining our lab group, have a research idea you would like to look into or just want to know a bit more about what we do, we would love to hear from you so please feel free to drop a line to: [acl23@kent.ac.uk](mailto:acl23@kent.ac.uk).



Pictured above: A recent lab meeting with participants “power posing”.

## Anne Frank Trust News

Anne Frank Trust UK ([www.annefrank.org.uk](http://www.annefrank.org.uk)) and Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) will collaborate on a new research project focusing on the impact of racism on young people within schools and will take a closer look at the confidence levels in teachers to tackle this paramount issue effectively.

The analysis will be used to inform both our work with young people throughout the UK, and to explore the potential for great collaboration around shared areas of interest.

Chief Executive of the Anne Frank Trust UK, Robert Posner, reflected on the opportunities created by the new project saying:

“At the Anne Frank Trust we want to ensure that young people today do not grow up in an ever more dangerous and divided world. We educate young people about the history of ethnic and faith-based persecution to help them to understand the dangers of prejudice.”

“We educate young people about the history of ethnic and faith-based persecution to help them to understand the dangers of prejudice.”  
“Our aim is that young people play their part

in creating a future free from hatred. We are pleased to be working with Show Racism the Red Card to better understand how racism is tackled in the classroom by conducting joint research into students’ attitudes and teachers’ preparedness to address racism.”

Also speaking of the new partnership, Ged Grebby, Chief Executive of SRtRC said: “Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) has worked on a regional basis with the Anne Frank Trust UK in the North East over a number of years and well aware of the organisation’s reputation nationally, especially the successful Ambassadors programme.”

“We are really excited to be developing this relationship further by working together on an important piece of research which will help to further establish the need for greater anti-racism education for young people and adults throughout the UK.”

Further details of the research project, which will be delivered in association with Kent Psychologists including Professor Dominic Abrams, Kiran Purewal, and Dr Rachel Calogero (co-supervisor), will be announced shortly.



# Uneven Change in Gender Equality

The following article was written by Pelin Gul, Associate Lecturer and Postgraduate Researcher in the School of Psychology.

Despite the widespread gender discrimination that still exists in various forms all around the globe today, there is no doubt that sweeping changes have taken place in the last half century which have helped to raise women's position and status in society. Many forms of sexism in institutions have become illegal, women's employment, educational attainment and political involvement have dramatically increased, and women have entered traditionally male domains as well as top-level managerial and leadership positions.

While all these revolutionary changes have taken place regarding women's status, what has been happening regarding men? One would think that gender disparities in society could be minimized if similar changes have occurred regarding men's entry into traditionally female domains. In fact, the change regarding men's involvement in typically female domains (e.g., housework, childcare, nursing, teaching, etc.) has been much slower compared to women's (see Croft, Schmader, & Block, 2015 for a review). This uneven change in the gender system has been well-documented by sociologists and economists, and various explanations for the reasons behind this uneven change have been put forward (England, 2010). A plausible argument is the financial incentive standpoint. It is not financially beneficial for men to move into typically female occupations because female-typical jobs are associated with low status and low pay rate in comparison to typically male jobs. While this can partly explain the nature of the asymmetrical change in the gender system, it tells us little about the social psychological processes that are preventing men from taking on female-typical roles.

The precariousness of manhood hypothesis offers an important social psychological perspective on this issue (Bosson & Vandello, 2011). According to this hypothesis, manhood (relative to womanhood which is obtained through biological maturation and thus cannot be lost easily) is an unstable and tenuous social status which can be lost easily and thus needs constant validation and affirmation. The fear of losing manhood and failing to be a real man makes men more sensitive about potential threats to their masculinity. Because of this, men demonstrate their manhood to others through acts that signal masculinity such as aggressive displays, toughness and risk-taking. Affirming manhood can even take the form of derogating and socially distancing oneself from effeminate/gay men (Carnagi, Maass & Fasoli, 2011). Such internalized notions of manhood can clearly pose barriers to men's move into occupations and activities that

are stereotypically feminine.

Even though the precariousness of manhood is a universal phenomenon, certain cultures can bring masculine identity concerns into sharp relief (Brown & Osterman, 2012). In cultures where manhood is intimately linked to honour (honour cultures), people are socialized with the idea that attaining traditional notions of manhood (toughness, strength, courage, capacities to protect and provide) are required in order for men to earn status in society. Men who are socialized with honour ideals may be even more resistant to moving away from masculine domains and embracing feminine roles.

In my research, I have been examining the self-presentations and preferences of men and women who are socialized to have precarious and honourable manhood beliefs. I have found that men who strongly hold honour ideals present themselves in more masculine traits and make more gender-normative activity preferences, while disavowing feminine ones. Such a strong link between gender-normativity and honour beliefs did not appear among women.

Research into the structure of masculinity, such as its precariousness and associations with honour, can help explain men's relatively higher resistance to internalizing typically feminine traits, values and roles into their self-concepts. It can also extend our understanding of why it is harder to crack gender inequalities in certain arenas of life, and why men and women react to gender-related changes in society (e.g., feminism) in different ways.

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# Can Mindfulness Reduce Ageism in Hiring Decisions?

Vanessa Dias, who is an Eastern ARC PhD Studentship holder and member of the Centre for the Study of Group Processes, wrote the following article:

Britain's workforce is ageing. By 2020 the average age of the UK workforce will be over 50 (Office of National Statistics, 2006). Couple this with evidence across different disciplines (e.g. Psychology, Sociology, Public Policy) that younger candidates are usually preferred over older candidates, even if they are not as well qualified (Gordon & Arvey, 2004; Krings, Sczesny, & Kluge, 2010), suggests there is increasing risk and potential for older workers to face age discrimination and exclusion from the labour market. Unfortunately age discrimination is a frequent phenomenon in our society. Evidence from the 2008/9 European Social Survey states that one third of people report being treated unfairly because of their age. The specific term for this kind of prejudice and discrimination is "ageism" and it refers to the stereotyping of, and discrimination against, people based on their age (Abrams & Swift, 2012).

Experiencing ageism can negatively affect health and wellbeing (Abrams & Swift, 2012) but stereotypes about older people and age prejudices can also disadvantage them. For instance, older workers are more likely to be evaluated negatively in interviews and in performance appraisal compared to younger counterparts (Postuma & Campion, 2008). Age biases also exist and manifests in hiring decisions. This has a huge impact not only at the individual level – people feel useless, depressed or even stressed, but at the organizational level it can also lead to less age diversity, which has been associated with reduced productivity and creativity. At the social level, people may perceive older people as a burden by looking at them as a threat to economy or as less competent at work which therefore constitutes as a barrier to older people when their will is to work longer and financially support themselves. As a result, measures must be taken in order to reduce bias and negative stereotypes of older workers. This is especially relevant since the Default Age of Retirement was abolished in 2011, which means that people can choose to continue to work as long as they want to and as long as they don't face discrimination.

So why do employers prefer younger over older candidates, even when there are proactive guidelines and policies, such as the Equality Act, 2010, that means that discrimination based on age is unlawful? It could be that, despite knowing that older people can perform as good as younger ones, decisions are often made in a...

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# Can Mindfulness Reduce Ageism in Hiring Decisions? Continued

...procedural and automatic thinking mode.

This means that sometimes we make decisions without really reflecting upon reality: if you are not fully aware when you are making a decision, your mind will pick the easiest, more familiar or simplest option which can be informed by stereotypes, habitual and automatic modes of thinking. For instance, that the saying “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks” depicts clearly that ageism is deeply rooted in our social way of thinking and behaving, and could be linked to stereotypes that older workers are less capable of learning new skills. These stereotypes need to be challenged in order to guarantee justice and equality in the workplace.

Drawing on social psychological theories of ageism and paradigms of mindfulness, my PhD research will explore how mindfulness can reduce such biases that lead to age discrimination in hiring decisions. The psychological study of mindfulness

– the ability to be fully aware in the present moment – has demonstrated that mindfulness meditation is an intervention that enables people to operate not in a procedural and automatic manner but in a reflective mode which allows them to see what is there and not what their minds think is there. Therefore, mindfulness meditation allows us to perceive others as they really are and it refrains us of discriminating others by social categories like race and age (Lueke & Gibson, 2014). My previous work (Dias, 2014) already provides some support for this idea – usually people tend to select a younger candidate for a job interview, but when exposed to a brief mindfulness induction this bias was reduced – and now I intend to go further by integrating and developing a new theory-evidence based perspective on ageism at work that joins social and organizational psychology.

Some people are perceived to be too old for particular job roles or positions, when in reality much of the time older workers

perform as well or even better than their younger counterparts. Therefore, if we are looking for the right person to have in our team/organisation it’s better to be fully aware of who that person is, without judging them upon his or her age. So let’s not do business as usual – instead let’s do business with consciousness and full awareness.



## The Language of Mental Diversity

The following was written by Chloe Tyler who is a Postgraduate Researcher in the School of Psychology and a member of the Centre for the Study of Group Processes (CSGP).

**“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me”.**  
(Except that they can, and they do).

Michel Foucault discussed the power of words - their ability to harm or help. I, myself, emphasise the power of the words we choose to use, encouraging college students during diversity presentations to consider their choices.

Consider: I give you a chocolate brownie and ask you to provide a label for it (chocolate brownie). I then ask you to tell me what that label makes you think, feel. You may say “hungry”, “chocolatey”, “sweet”, and “can I eat it now?”

I reply that “no”, you cannot! That word ‘no’ itself has power: You do not eat the brownie (or maybe you rebel, and do!).

Now, I add the word ‘mouldy’ to the label ‘chocolate brownie’. The power of that word!

You look at the brownie in disgust, revulsion – you inspect it, turn it this way and that. Yet, the brownie has not changed.

You rightly ask: What do (mouldy or otherwise) chocolate brownies have to do with diversity?

Well, please consider the labels in which we describe those with ‘mental illnesses’:

Mental(s),  
Psycho(s),  
Schizo(s),

And on and on.....

Let us now consider *Sam*. You have known Sam for several years. You know their likes, dislikes, demeanour and personality - you like Sam. Yet, someone mentions that they have a ‘mental illness’ and consciously or unconsciously your impression of them changes. You behave more cautiously around them - you talk to them differently.

*Mental illness* - these are but words. However, language truly has power over people. Most certainly we must consider what the term ‘mental illness’ *does* to someone, and who the term actually benefits.

“People know what they do; frequently they know *why* they do what they do; but what they don’t know is *what* they do *does*.” (Italics added) — Michel Foucault, 1988, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*.

Currently the term ‘mental illness’ reduces individuals to a victim of a disease, a contagion, an inflicted mind. Yet, those labelled as such are so much more!

I implore you to truly think before you speak, please do not reduce someone to a label – we are all part of a diverse, complex and beautiful tapestry. Infuse your language with words that reflect this.

I thank you,  
Chloe

### References

Foucault, M. (1988). *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason*. US: Random House, Inc.

## Need Help/Advice?

If you have any personal or academic issues that may affect your ability to study you can talk to Lisa Clark, Student Advisor for Psychology.

Please email her at: [psychadvisor@kent.ac.uk](mailto:psychadvisor@kent.ac.uk)

There are a range of services available to all Kent students including the following:

- Careers and Employability Service
- Disability and Dyslexia Support Service
- International Students
- Counselling
- Chaplaincy
- Medical

Plus many more...

You can find more out about Student Services from the following webpage: [www.kent.ac.uk/guidance/](http://www.kent.ac.uk/guidance/)

## Any Suggestions?

If you have any comments or suggestions for the staff in the School of Psychology, then you can feed these back to us by using our suggestions box located outside the Psychology Student Office (Keynes M1.13).

## Kent Psychologist

The School of Psychology’s Newsletter is for students and staff. We welcome contributions from both staff, students and alumni for future issues. If you would like to write an article or have any news you’d like to share, please contact Carly Turnham.

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