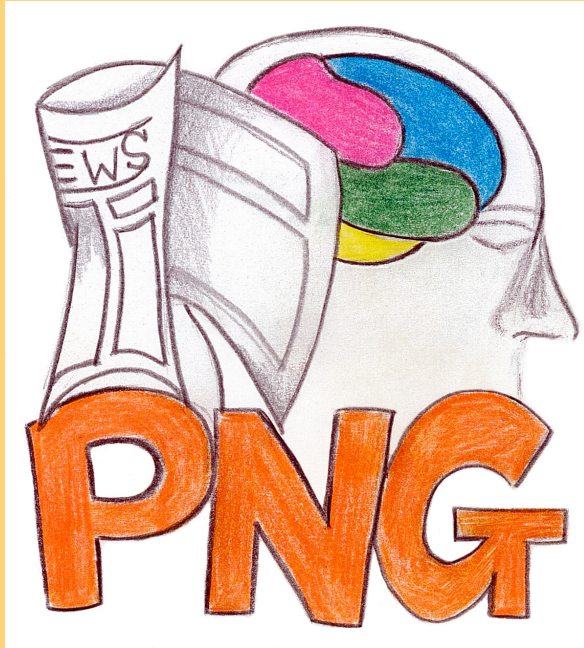




Newsletter

Welcome back!



We hope that everyone had a lovely break and we look forward to another great term!

As you know, the newsletter team's goal is to keep you updated on everything happening in and around the department. This includes information about teaching as well as research. Our members also like to point out psychological phenomena that are of interest to all of us. Thus, in this issue, read about frontrunner Keishema Kerr's view on imaginary friends (p. 5) and how we all might be narcissists in training (p. 2).

If there is anything you would like to read about or if you have a piece of information that you would like to share with others, please get in touch. We love to hear from you.

As always, special thanks go to our graphics team Christie and Stelliphy who designed this issue. They also came up with a logo for the Psychology Newsletter Group (PNG). Many thanks to them! Have a good term, everyone!

**Narcissists
in training
p.2**

**60 Seconds
Interview
p.3**

**Funding by the
British Academy
p.3**

**Essex
Babylab
p.4**

**Imaginary Friends
p.5**

Narcissists in training



By Keishema Kerr

The idea of narcissism is a term that originates from the Greek mythology; Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection after rejecting a woman. The core trait of a narcissist is their primary concern in their own wellbeing, thoughts and values. According to Dr. Larry Rosen, narcissistic personality disorder has been on the rise for 20 years. Without a doubt, 2013 was the year of the “selfie”, with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the invention of front facing cameras, is today’s expansion of social media and communication technology turning us into narcissists?

Twitter, for example, is a forum in which users have 140 characters to post anything they want, including images and/or video. Other than the character limit, users are unrestricted and the majority of tweets consist on people’s opinions on daily events. This public display of thoughts is almost like a public diary in which people thrive of getting retweets and favourites from others. Are these just fuelling narcissistic behaviour? An online survey done by Science Daily revealed that both university students and adults use social media in different ways to boost their self-esteem.

A key characteristic of narcissism is the pseudo self esteem; the perceived confidence and sense of superiority of narcissists is not the result of genuine positive self-esteem but the lack of it. This leads narcissist to crave validation from others and in its absence, providing self-validation. It is from this self-validation that the sense of superiority comes into play; it is a defensive technique, as narcissists appear not to care for others’ opposing viewpoints as other are

seen is inferior. On Twitter people communicate by replying to tweets of people they follow. NPD is characterized by an overwhelming need for admiration with sufferers believing they are of primary importance in everybody’s lives. World famous controversial rapper Kanye West has over 10 MILLION followers on Twitter but only follows his fiancé Kim Kardashian, does this mean he doesn’t care about the thoughts and feelings of others? We all know about his ego...

Celebrities are constantly being pinned as narcissists, especially the likes of Rihanna, Justin Bieber and the Kardashian sisters through the use of Instagram. These stars plague us with pictures of themselves for likes and comments on how good they look. But isn’t that the nature of the app? OOTDs (outfits of the day), “my meal” posts and selfies are on the rise! The word selfie has even been added to the Oxford English Dictionary. A parody account has even been made for Darth Vader, featuring a “selfie”. As funny as it is, it has been argued that social media like Instagram and Facebook have made us even more obsessed with personal appearance. Picture editing features called filters can be used on Instagram to turn the most hideous of pictures into front-page perfect portraits. Deception I hear you say, yes. But as many people, not only narcissists, strive for perfection it allows users to correct any imperfections they believe they have. Research on Instagram has found over 51 MILLION pictures featuring the hashtag “#me”. Statistics like this show how we have become self absorbed, much like narcissists. The twenty first century has even been nicknamed “The Age of Narcissism” with research suggesting that there will be no decline in ego-itis in the foreseeable future. Are you guilty of serial selfies?

60 seconds with... Nicolas Geeraert



Quick choice, tea or coffee?

Double espresso.

What would you tell your 18-year-old self?

Have fun! This will be the best year of your life.

You have the chance to be a fly on the wall for any celebrity. Who would you pick and why?

I am not really interested in celebrity culture and I don't like flies, so I would

Most memorable concert or person you'd like to see live in concert.

I would have loved to see Pink Floyd's original Dark Side of the Moon tour.

If you won the lottery what would be the first thing you'd buy?

A family dinner to celebrate the occasion.

What was your first job like?

As a student I worked in road construction, factories, and warehouses. Most of these jobs were petty, but it paid for my studies.

Can you play an instrument?

Not really... Although I did play khene for a while. It's a musical instrument from Thailand's North-eastern region of Isaan.

Don't forget to have a look at one of Nicolas' latest publications including his work on why it's important to choose your (international) contacts wisely! <http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~geeraert/pubs.html>

Funding Success!



Dr. Karla Holmboe was awarded a grant of £9,981 by the British Academy to help fund a British Academy Early Career Regional Networking event. Her planned event on "Longitudinal Methods in the Social Sciences" was one of 33 events to be held in 20 regional centres across the UK that was granted funding. Longitudinal methods are essential for understanding developmental changes in both individuals and in society. Without longitudinal methods we would know very little about stability and change over time. Longitudinal research involves specific challenges such as complex data analysis and the workshop will cover some of the key methods in longitudinal research and will also include talks on some of the research questions that can be addressed using a longitudinal design. The workshop will bring together early career researchers from a range of different disciplines including Psychology, Education, Sociology, Economics, and Linguistics, who are specifically interested in longitudinal research, in order to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration within and across fields.. Congratulations to Karla and we look forward to hearing more about how the workshop went!



A new year often brings with it exciting new research opportunities, and this year the Department of Psychology is pleased to announce the launch of a brand new research group: Essex BabyLab. Headed up by one of the department's newest lecturers in developmental psychology, Dr. Silvia Rigato, Essex BabyLab is keen to further investigate infant and child cognitive development.



Located in room 3.735 in the CBS (Centre for Brain Science) some of the first studies to be conducted will utilise EEG and eye tracking software to learn about babies' recognition of other people, and infant learning about our multisensory world. We

understand that babies won't want to sit around too long with head nets on because they'd rather be crawling around and getting up to mischief, so we make our studies simple, fun and interesting. Our infant participants take part in a selection of games whereby they are invited to look or grasp at several interesting images or events, whilst older children are presented with different objects in more interactive situations.



Even though we are registering lots of participants who attend local nursery schools and clubs, we need more babies to be participants!! So, if you are a parent of a very young child (aged 0-2 years) we would like to invite you to register them for inclusion in our forthcoming studies. To register please visit our webpage at www.essexpsychology.macmate.me/BabyLab. On our webpage you will find information about our researchers and the upcoming studies, and an online sign-up form. Parents who register their child will be contacted when we are running a study suitable for their child's age, asking when it would be the best time for them to come and visit us. Our young participants receive a small gift for helping with our research.

We are also on facebook www.facebook.com/essexbabylab so why not type in the address and see what we have been o 'like' us getting up to of late? Whilst you're having a look around the page don't forget to 'like' us.



IMAGINARY FRIENDS

by Keishema Kerr

The concept of imaginary friends has always intrigued me. My older brother had one and I can't help but feel that I was never creative enough as a child to construct my very own personalised friend. Parents always have the cutest stories about how children state, "you can't sit there because Boo is sitting there" or blaming broken household appliances on a heavy handed *Jada* that no one else can see. Having a vivid imagination as a child has manifested itself into make-believe friendships that last for years. Since I felt like I have been somewhat deprived of an advantageous childhood experience, I thought I would research the nature of imaginary friends further.

According to new studies from the University of Washington and the University of Oregon, by the age of 7 years, 65% of children have reported having an imaginary friend. This is surprising given it was previously thought that the creation of imaginary friends was a sign of psychological problems - be it, loneliness, neglect from family, or the inability to make real friends. Parents have been told to only begin to worry about these coming into play (pardon the pun) when their child avoids real life interactions to play with their imaginary friend. It has now become widely known that children who have imaginary friends are usually emotionally healthier as adults and tend to have better verbal skills. Imaginary friendships are commonly formed when children are going through transitional periods, as the companion is a source of comfort and they can boost children's confidence and self esteem.

It has been found that children with imaginary friends were more likely to engage in private speech which in turn children use to guide their behaviour. The research conducted by British child psychologists suggested that this private speech helps develop the ability to think in cognitive tasks. It has also been found that the younger the child, the more likely the imaginary friend is to resemble a physical object. In these relationships, children are more likely to adopt a more parental role with the imaginary friend in comparison to relationships with animals or make-believe people. There has been a common pattern in studies on studies on imaginary friends, which is that girls more commonly create them. It is widely believed to be due to boys being more likely to imagine becoming an imaginary character like a superhero than having one as a friend.

In general imaginary friends should not be discouraged despite the stigma which has been refuted by numerous studies conducted supporting the long-term benefits of the fantasy play. So post-imaginary friend investigation, I now have been left with the sinking feeling that my childhood development was somehow inadequate in comparison to those who were able to form a make-believe friendship. Is it too late to give it another try?