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Policy, Practice and Scholarship in Higher Education

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New Vistas | Policy, Practice and Scholarship in Higher Education

EDITOR'S NOTE

Volume 4 | Issue 1

Student voice as reflection of values, opinions, perspectives and cultural backgrounds in the higher education community (HEA, 2017) is currently a key theme on different fronts in the sector. And rightly so. For example, the Office for Students has emerged as a regulatory body, although student level of participation still remains to be resolved. NSS data are a major influence on issues of access, participation and outreach. In learning and teaching, student centred approaches aspire to embed the student voice in curriculum design and to provide our students with the competences they need in order to succeed after their studies.

Of high relevance to these developments, Walker's reflective article examines the evolving purpose of the English universities from elite institutions to engines of social mobility. This purpose has recently been impacted negatively by commodification of knowledge and the marketisation of higher education. What shines through Walker's narrative is the belief that our students will be important voices in the discussions yet to come in the sector.

Two of the papers in this issue explore environments where learning is effective because it takes place outside traditional transmissive boundaries: via peer assisted learning and student debates. Churchyard considers the application of peer assisted learning to facilitate an enhanced interactive learning environment and student experience. There is evidence that his intervention enhanced the student experience and helped to stimulate engagement. Thomas discusses the value of student debates and motion-writing exercises across all disciplines, starting from a public health-perspective. A valid contribution, as the motion-writing aspect of debate has not been widely discussed as a pedagogical exercise.

Another aspect of the student voice is giving our postgraduates and undergraduates the opportunity to engage in academic writing and scholarship activities. In this vein, Gilbert explores one prevailing commonality between mental illness and crime and discusses whether there is a correlation between the two. The article contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between mental illness and offending.

Two articles report on strengths the University has in discipline-based research. Khan engages with the unique challenges of demography, discussing the specific needs of a diverse group of women at particular risk, within the ageing population. Little research has been done about the circumstances of single women living alone and how changing relationship status impacts on their needs and wellbeing. He also highlights the importance of education for women living alone in terms of how they may be able to adjust and cope with the challenges of later life. Lohneis brings Erik Ambler's crime thriller '*The Mask of Dimitrios*', a masterpiece of the genre, to our attention. He focuses on Ambler' inversion of the conventional spy story aesthetic and its traditional 'heroes' and shows Ambler's protagonists as 'the opposite of suave, the opposite of superman', engineers, managers, writers and academics who respond to the crises they face as might you or I.

Professor Stylianos Hatzipanagos
New Vistas Editor

MISSON STATEMENT

***New Vistas* is published by the University of West London (UWL) and provides a forum to disseminate research, commentary, and scholarly work that engages with the complex agenda of higher education in its local, national and global context.**

Published twice a year (with occasional special issues), for a broad (academic, international and professional) audience, the journal will feature research and scholarly analysis on higher education policy; current issues in higher education; higher education pedagogy; professional practice; the relation of higher education to work and the economy; and discipline-specific research.

We welcome thought-provoking scholarly contributions from external and internal authors, with the explicit intention to give a voice to early-career researchers and scholars.

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New Vistas | Policy, Practice and Scholarship in Higher Education

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UNIVERSITY OF
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Patricia Walker | University of West London, UK

WHY UNIVERSITIES MATTER

Assessing the evolving purpose of the English universities from elite institutions for the education of a privileged minority to engines of social mobility for the masses

Learning and teaching has taken place in an organised form across Western Europe since ancient times: university origins lie in the Christian cathedral and monastic schools

The purpose of the university

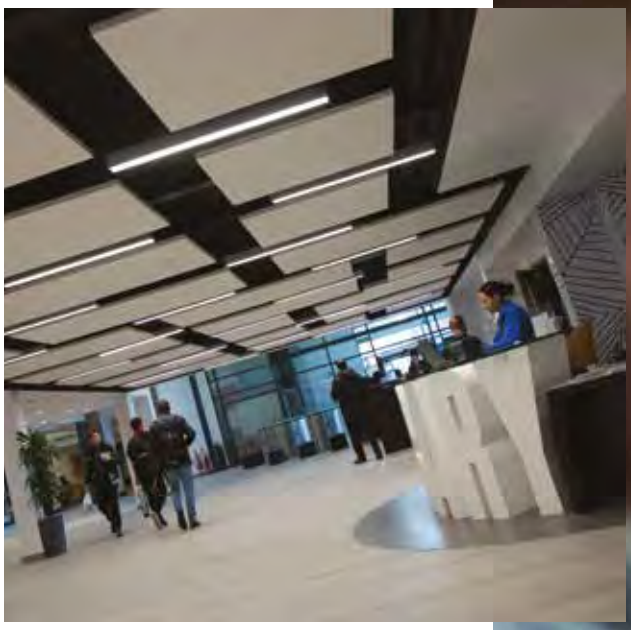
What is a university and what is it for? Simple questions, though in the case of the English institutions they provoke complex and multifaceted answers. Some might say a university is what the government wants it to be, for it is said, what the state wants in society, first it puts into its educational institutions. It will be argued here that universities and higher education (HE) are worthwhile in their own right in that they transform the lives of individuals. Our HE institutions furthermore shape our society for the better and are powerhouses for economic growth.

Learning and teaching has taken place in an organised form across Western Europe since ancient times: their origins lie in the Christian cathedral and monastic schools; it is difficult to ascertain the exact dates of the foundation of these ancient centres of learning. The *universitas*, the schools or guilds, were corporations of students and masters. Until the 14th century they were a self-regulating community recognised and sanctioned by civil and ecclesiastical authorities. In terms of curriculum, the three most important subjects were grammar, logic and rhetoric. This was known as the *trivium*. Students then progressed to the other liberal arts geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy (the *quadrivium*). The curriculum came also to include the three Aristotelian philosophies: physics, metaphysics and moral philosophy; transmissive or didactic teaching, remained the primary focus for hundreds of years.

Scott (1984,14) analyses the changes which took place over time throughout the liberal universities of Europe demonstrating how in early times they stood slightly apart from society, in time and place. Universities' unworldliness and distance from society – a near-spirituality sustained by the superior authority of religion – was exemplified by the privileged nature of the participants, aristocratic and wealthy in financial and cultural terms, the curriculum fitting them for gentlemanly pursuits and emphatically not in preparation for any career.

There was teaching at Oxford, a *universitas* as early as 1096, and in Cambridge in 1206. There were universities founded in Scotland during these early times St Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen but not another university in England until University College London in 1826 and University of Manchester in 1824. There were no further university foundations in the UK until the nineteenth century, although the eighteenth century saw the establishment of a number of medical schools such as St George's (1733) the London Hospital Medical College (1785) and the Royal Veterinary College (1791) later to be incorporated into the federated University of London.

In the Victorian age, from 1837 onwards, a long period of relative peace and prosperity was enjoyed in the nation, fuelled by the industrial revolution and the expanding empire, resulting in growing national self-confidence throughout the country. At the turn of the century, large institutions, often referred to as civic universities, were founded by wealthy industrialists in northern and midlands manufacturing and engineering cities such as Birmingham (1900), Manchester Victoria (1903), Leeds (1904) and Sheffield (1905). These universities were designated university colleges but were collegiate in a manner unlike their forebears. They admitted men only, though without reference to social class or religion, and delivered a curriculum focussed on imparting contemporary skills, often linked to engineering. The buildings were imposing, monuments to capitalism and progress.



The university's coming of age

Throughout the decades following Britain's involvement in two world wars the British government and people were impatient to make progress – to re-build a new society led by technology. Universities came to be seen as the engines of production, knowledge creation displaced the education of students at the heart of institutional endeavour. Universities saw themselves as key players in the process of social change specifically their role in producing highly skilled labour and research output to meet perceived economic needs. Hence a shift in the paradigm governing the purpose of a university occurred, driven not least by the technological revolution hungry for an educated workforce. As the sixties emerged, the fear that Europe and the US was losing ground, in terms of scientific development, to the Soviets, resulted in demand exacerbating for advanced technological and scientific knowledge production, so 10 Colleges of Advanced Technology [CATs], were founded. Later, Birmingham CAT became Aston University, Brunel CAT became Brunel University, Bristol CAT became the Bath University of Technology in 1966 (afterwards University of Bath).

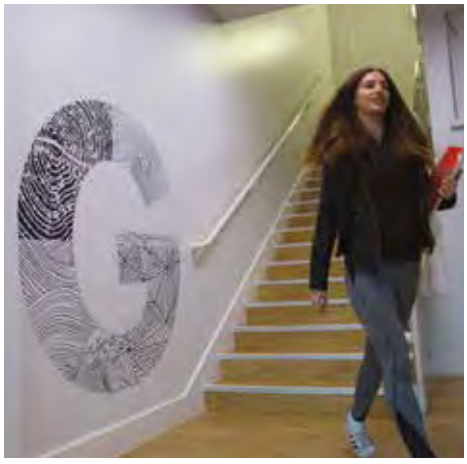
What is more, the 'bulge babies' born after WWII reached university age in the sixties. With the sheer increase in numbers of 18 year olds, a number of new universities – known variously as campus universities, green fields or plate glass – were established in cities like York, Lancaster and Norwich and in counties such as Surrey, Sussex and Essex. The government had appointed a committee in 1961 chaired by Lord Robbins, tasked with: '[reviewing] the pattern of full-time higher education (HE) in Great Britain and in the light of national needs and resources to advise Her Majesty's Government on what principles its long-term development should be published. (Robbins Report by HMSO in 1963). Robbins was concerned to address a perceived gap in vocational HE especially since the CATs had been given university status. In particular he emphasised the need to widen access and cautioned against any dilution of quality. Many of his most important recommendations were not accepted and for nearly 30 years the pattern of development that it proposed was in abeyance.

Who is a university for?

Hitherto, unlike many comparator nations, participation in higher education in UK H.E had historically been very low. In the 1950s only 3.4% of young people had a university education, in the sixties, 4.2% increasing to 8.4% in 1970. (Parliament UK, 2012). So, if the purpose of the university is to extend human understanding and engagement with civic values, then over 90% of the population were denied that privilege. On 18th October 1976, Prime Minister Callaghan made a seminal speech at Ruskin College Oxford arguing for a huge expansion of degree level courses and post-graduate degrees to be offered by non-university institutions thus laying the foundations for what came to be known as the *binary system* of HE, universities on the one side and the further expanded polytechnic sector on the other, though the divide was far from clear cut and somewhat blurred by the nomenclature , university colleges, 'polys' which had enjoyed a number of previous incarnations and variously named technical institutions including further education (FE) colleges offering HE courses. It is worth noting that the principal aim was to widen as well as *increase* participation in advanced education, these developments having been predicted by government advisor Eric Robinson who contended that, '…the future pattern of HE in this country can be set in the development of these institutions as comprehensive people's universities' (Robinson, 1968:193) signalling a marked shift from the erstwhile socially exclusive institutions of the past.

Unfortunately, it was not only the problem of status, always an issue in class-conscious Britain, which bedevilled these new polytechnics, but crucially, the issue of purpose. Both flanks of the binary divide offered bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates. The polytechnics however, swiftly began to withdraw the offer of their traditional vocational qualifications such as the Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas, see Walker 2010. The move was criticized as 'academic drift' (Pratt and Burgess 1974:50) but ironically, this was later accompanied by a 'vocational drift' on the part of the universities responding to student demand. Over time the two sectors became fairly homogeneous in terms of course provision so there was little to choose between them. In 1992, the government decided to dissolve the binary divide and re-designated the polytechnics and other HEIs as universities.

The polytechnics swiftly moved to enhance their image with new names and new logos but almost before the paint was dry, HE commentators began to dub them 'the new universities' despite many of them having been in existence in one form or another, as demonstrated above, since the 1800s –to



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distinguish them from the 'old' universities some of which had only come into being in the 1960s. Not everyone in UK was enthusiastic about the re-purposing of the universities. Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher wrote in her memoirs that the universities had been expanded too quickly in the 1960s, and in many cases (in her view) standards had fallen and the traditional character of the universities had been lost see Thatcher 1995.

The university as a public good

The term modern university tends to be used for those institutions which the late nineteenth century reformers dedicated to free inquiry and the advancement of knowledge, as *mass* institutions. This is not only in the sense of increased numbers of students relative to the mediaeval institutions, but in the consciousness that knowledge from that point onward was in a sense mass-produced as opposed to what Rueben refers to as the 'artisanal production of knowledge' (1984:54). If the education system is the expression of the nation, the university system can perhaps be seen as an expression of the age.

Historically, and perhaps because education was seen as a public good, British students were not required to pay university tuition fees; HE was funded by the public purse. Students from overseas however, from whom there was an established demand, paid at the point of delivery. Numbers of overseas students rose year on year particularly as the newly independent nations of the Commonwealth endeavoured to educate their younger generation to meet the development needs of their respective countries. In 1969 with demand from home and overseas rising, a decision was taken to levy a differential fee for overseas students.

A decade later in 1980 Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher moved to impose tuition fees on international students reckoned on a full-cost basis. She calculated that students from overseas, perceiving a university education as an essential 'good' in economics usage, would be willing to pay for it personally, thus opening up a vital income stream for universities and the UK economy, the justification being that non-UK domiciled students should not benefit from taxation to which they had not contributed. Whilst many overseas students were funded by their respective governments, some educationists feared that the increased costs would impact on the ability of students from poorer countries to continue their education, which concern was realised initially but not subsequently. Notwithstanding, from this point onwards a price tag was attached to a British university education which re-purposed into a marketable commodity. After Thatcher's death it was claimed she,

> '….waged war on the universities. In particular she felt that the universities were complacent because they were over-protected from the market. She therefore introduced them to greater accountability and to market forces' (Kealey 2013).

Certainly, the policy realised the opening up of a vital income stream for the UK economy and

individual institutions. Kealey opines, 'Mrs. Thatcher's policy was a success. After a transient dip in international student numbers, they have soared ever since, to provide a vast influx of funding and the beginnings of a market to British universities'.

So HE found itself in a relationship with the economy, marketing its goods like that of any other corporation or firm. It followed inexorably that the purpose of, especially the curriculum, and its alignment with pedagogies and assessment, would edge closer to the needs of the workforce and the career agendas of the students.

The university as a business

Because international students' status had changed from guest to client, they came to acquire a degree of what might be considered 'consumer power'. Universities began to seriously consider the efficacy of established traditional practices, like linear course design and three terms across the year and began to develop policies and practices which were client sensitive. Modular courses, a preparatory or enabling curriculum, foundation courses began to evolve. A climate was developing in which innovation and flexible responses to diversity became more commonplace. This climate was to become increasing receptive to the underrepresented non-traditional students in the home market.

In 1997 there was a change of government and incoming Prime Minister Tony Blair was determined to emphasise HE's crucial role in supporting social mobility. He therefore set out to increase participation rates throughout the UK. Universities' expertise in marketing HE internationally was directed towards achieving this goal. Not only the under-30s were targeted but women returning to learn, mid-career professionals desirous of post-graduate qualifications and, especially in London, home students from the successive waves of immigrants from the enlarging European Union, as well as those from the traditional sending areas of the erstwhile British Empire and Commonwealth. The post-92 universities were ready with their enabling curriculum of flexible programs and e-learning platforms to optimize learning opportunities. Whilst developed for orienting overseas students into an unfamiliar learning environment, these arrangements were to ease a new, non-traditional, home student population, into the culture of HE.

Blair chose to finance HE expansion by cost-sharing with those who would benefit financially from a university education so required student to contribute £1,000 initially, towards tuition. It was feared that the change in financial responsibility from the state to the individual would threaten the strategy of HE expansion. Initially, this was not the case. Blair saw HE and the knowledge society as drivers of a prosperous economy and cohesive society, so set a target of 50% of all 18-30-year olds to experience HE by 2012 which was universal participation in Trow's terms an ambitious target given the history of under-representation in this country (Trow 1973). By 2010, however, under New Labour's education and employment policy, that target was fast becoming

a reality. Figures from the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, confirmed the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) for 2010/11 was 46% pushing up to 49% the next year. In 2010 Labour lost the general election and the Coalition which replaced them had a different agenda for HE.

The threat to universal participation

Seeking domestic savings with immediate effect the Conservative led coalition cut the existing universities' teaching grant by 80% and removed the cap on student numbers. Universities in England swiftly responded with the imposition of a fees hike which made Thatcher's policy benign in comparison; from £3000 an almost threefold increase to £9,000, whilst some specialist institutions and science courses fees were higher. The scramble for extra students began. Margaret Thatcher's vow that 'international students will not be a burden on the taxpayer' was echoed by the newly appointed universities minister who vowed, 'students will not be a burden on the taxpayer'. (Guardian 2010).

The policy was deeply unpopular with students and initially with universities who baulked at pressure from government to derive their revenue principally from fees and services to students. With the imminent loss of government funding the obvious reaction was a recruitment drive to increase student numbers; international, home, and non-traditional. There were a number of problems with this strategy, not least the decline in the number of 18- year olds, the traditional university cohort, which had been predicted by the

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National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) as far back as 1989. Willets, the universities minister, referring to the lifting of the cap on numbers said, 'This is what our reforms are all about, putting choice and power in the hands of students'. The University and College Union accused ministers of wanting to return us to a time when money, not ability, mattered most for success. Although overall the number of full time students had not declined the numbers of part-time and older people had. UCU warned that if we want to compete with other leading economies and produce highly-skilled workers as the government claimed, we cannot afford to have a system that erects barriers to the means of social mobility for the masses. , '…we must strengthen democratic social values and re-strengthen the educational alternative to money and inheritance as determinants of social participation and selection' (Marginson, 2015). Of which, thus far, a university education had been a powerful determinant. However, encouraging the previously unrepresented classes had never been a view espoused by the British establishment. Ann Widdecombe, former Conservative politician wrote in the Daily Express in 2011.

> The real problem is that we have too many universities, too many students in them, too many Mickey Mouse degrees and too many of the old polytechnics obliged to masquerade as third-rate universities when they could be first rate vocational institutions'

This view was later expressed somewhat satirically by a practising academic,

> It was an elite, class fenced, activity in the 50s. Today it's a commercial commodity, open to everyone and anyone - the supermarketisation of HE! We now have universities ranging from the Lidl level right up to Fortnum and Mason via Waitrose level (Izbudak 2013).

When in 2014 Universities Minister David Willett signalled a further expansion in the number of HE providers, including private, the *Telegraph* published the violent response of former Vice-Chancellor Sir Roderick Floud, '… close half of Britain's messy muddled universities because we've got too many'.

In their plan for growth, the government had claimed that they attached great importance to education and hi- tech industry in order to promote jobs and prosperity. The jobs of the future would increasingly require people with capabilities and skills that a STEM education provides. A House of Lords report however claimed, 'Apparently there is a mismatch between the *supply* of STEM graduates and postgrads HEI's are supplying and the demand from employers.' So the government gave universities freedom to recruit as many students as they liked whilst simultaneously directing them to the importance of STEM subjects to the economy. Can we see this as free market, liberal market, or quasi liberal market, bearing in mind the government also polices quality and standards, assurance, and student complaints.

Universities matter to governments

It is important to get this right because Universities certainly matter to the state and there are a number of reasons why.

UK universities and their students generate significant economic activity equal to £95 billion gross output in 2014–15 and make a substantial contribution to GDP, equal to £52.9 billion gross value added (GVA), supports almost 944,000 jobs of all skill levels in the economy – generates £14.1 billion worth of tax receipts for the government that can be reinvested into public services, which is equivalent to 2.7% of all tax receipts received by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs in 2014–15. Moreover, the NUS claims that student expenditure supports 80bn of UK's economic output. As for international students (i.e. from outside the EU) in London alone a net contribution of £2.3bn (fees, spending, family visits) is made, more than they use in public services. Currently about 4 out of 10 young adults are graduates engaging in the workforce and earning it is estimated, £9k more than non-graduates. Furthermore, 93% of students in some universities (the University of West London for instance) were in employment within 6 months of graduating, an achievement not matched by some Russel Group institutions, thus contributing through taxation and spending power to government coffers. The eroding of public funding has caused institutions to use their skills in knowledge production to engage in research collaborations and flexible working practices with business resulting in £3.5bn across the sector.

This all sounds very positive until we factor in that the knowledge industry, for such it is, has to a certain extent resulted in a loss of collegiality. As we have seen, institutions are operating on business lines, and rival providers, not only private but HE courses offered by FE colleges, means there is competition for students who are wielding their consumer power.

Cynics might say it is not selection of students but seduction and in a crowded market jostling for students, financial risk is exacerbated, some institutions may go to the wall, go bankrupt, or be forced to merge.

And the playing fields are uneven. Those institutions regarded as prestigious, that grew from an advantageous position century ago, have been able to build on that advantage, through endowments and the sponsorship of wealthy alumni, to continue to improve their relative position and outstrip their rivals. The market works this way unless corrected by policy, so a clear relationship has developed between resource rich universities and student competition for places, resulting in market stratification. The HEA claimed in 2014,

'Higher education is being profoundly reshaped by its marketisation, with league tables, branding, discourses of 'excellence' and competition for students framing such moves… In the contemporary context of English higher education there is increasing pressure for universities to position themselves as 'world-class', to compete in a highly stratified field'.

Universities matter to students

The data confirms this. HESA's first release of official student enrolment data for 2016/17 shows an increase in the number of students in higher education, though a decline in part-time students. The provisional Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) that measures participation for 17-30 year old England domiciled first time entrants for 2015/16 was 49%. This was an increase of 1.4 percentage points from the previous year, a steady rise since 2006/07 (other than the fluctuation of 2011/12 and 2012/13, coinciding with the introduction of a higher tuition fee cap). Whilst the HEIPR for both males and females has increased, the gender gap in 2015/16 widened and is estimated to be 11.9 percentage points, up from 10.2 percentage points a year earlier with females continuing to lead. It is interesting to reflect that women students at Oxford, regardless of the quality of their work and grades earned, were not allowed to graduate from the university until 1920. Today, it is more likely for women to study at university than men.

Higher education has the power to change people's lives, a point which may have been missed by the government during the last election. In a Manifesto of 84 pages there were about 200 words basically reiterating their previous promise to 'abolish the cap on higher education student numbers' so, onwards towards the faux free market and the concept of education as a marketable commodity. Supply is a given, with the proliferation of new providers. In terms of demand, it seems increasingly clear that in a meritocratic society where the highly educated can command higher salaries, a university is now an essential good in economic terms, a long term object of capital investment which individuals will endeavour to find the resources to finance.

It is equally clear that any commodity, and HE is no exception, will require consumer satisfaction. Consumerist technologies which increasingly are used to foster (or fake) greater competition between institutions, and between departments occasioning stress to academics and students. Alleging to demonstrate transparency and accountability, all manner of performance indicators and surveys of students and recent graduates are paraded in the public domain. Moreover, data from surveys use selective counting with only certain aspects of university life analysed, are then compiled as league tables (Walker 2016, 2010).

Universities transform lives. They encourage students to see the world differently, to engage with new networks, and break through their existing boundaries to future opportunities for employment and otherwise. So how is it that there seems to be invisible but unsurmountable barriers to the participation of some groups. Fewer people from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds participate in HE and when they do they tend not to do as well as their more privileged peers and without robust data on socio-economic status is not easily available, the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification as a measure, having been discontinued following concerns about the validity of the data. A great deal of attention has been paid by educators in the early years sector, on the challenges facing low income children from their entry into the foundation stage of education, but without a comprehensive analysis informing and underscoring class attentive policies and practices the current inequity in participation will continue.

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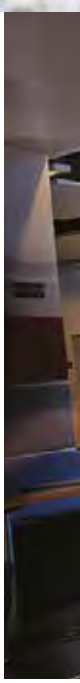

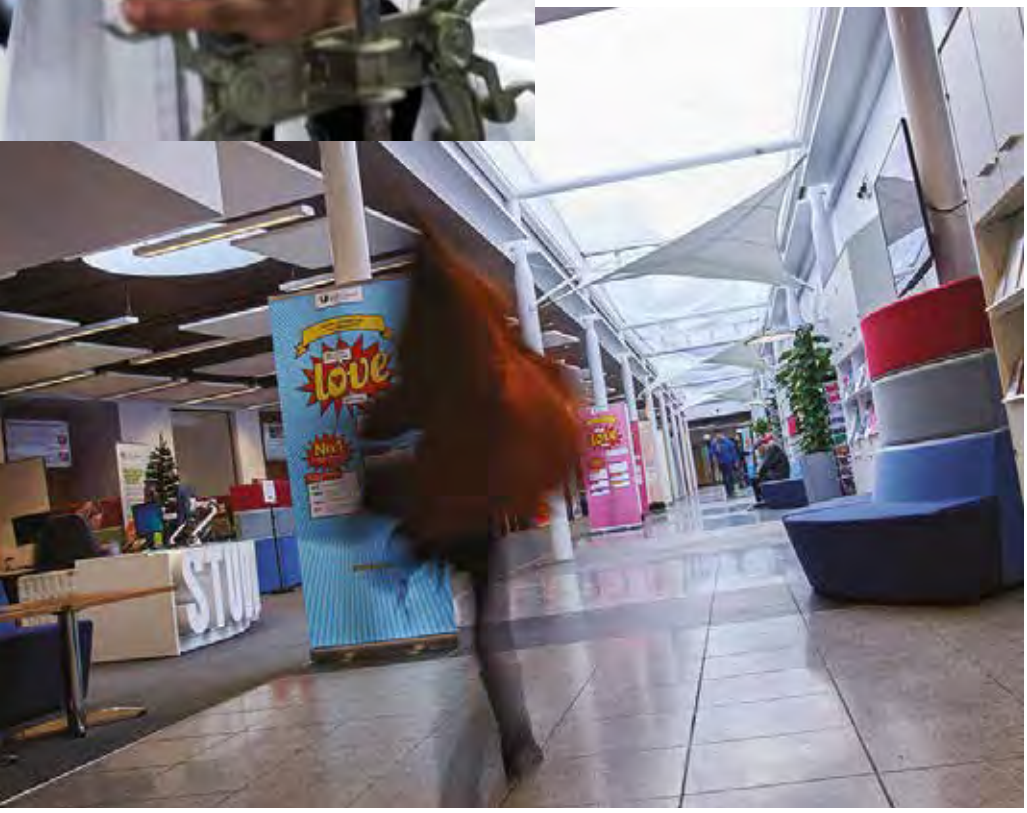

Conclusion

It is incontestable that the British university has evolved as a major world class centre, characterised by internationalisation and globalisation. Its strong reputation, facilities and relationships will certainly not disappear overnight but may be under threat. The HE sector is united in its determination to maintain current levels of opportunity for all, not least those who are currently underrepresented, black and minority ethnic, students with special educational needs, disabled, and young people brought up in the care of the local authorities. The nation's students – both domestic and international – will be important voices in the discussions yet to come. They may decide they will not collude with the remorseless commodification of knowledge, but neither will they be its victims.

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Keywords

Universities' mission; government policies; economics of Higher Education (HE)

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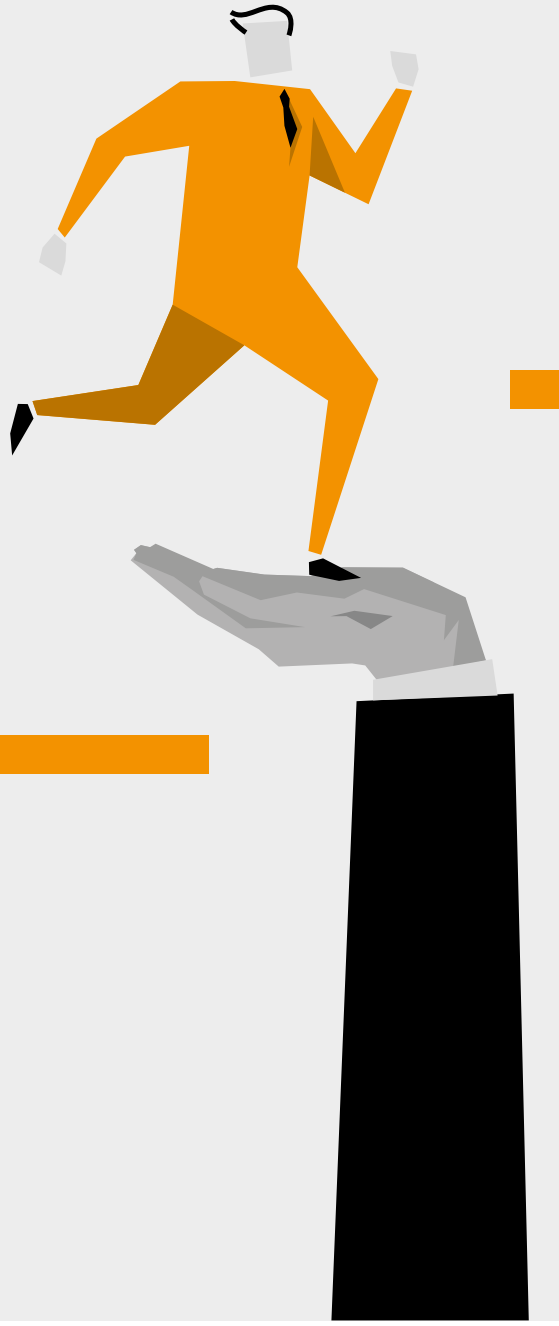
THE BEST OF PALS

The application of near-peer assisted learning in the teaching of research methods skills, using Information and Communication Technologies



The review suggests peer assisted learning is particularly effective in enhancing student experience in areas that require practical skill development (sciences, medicine, research)

This article will assess the application of near-peer assisted learning (N-PAL) in the teaching of research methods skills using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), in order to facilitate an enhanced interactive learning environment and student experience. A near-peer is an individual who has recently gone through experiences that someone (one or two stages behind) is now or soon will be facing.

PAL and N-PAL

In a Higher Education context, Topping and Ehly (2001) have encouraged the use of student peer assisted learning (PAL) strategies in addition to, but not in replacement of, the traditional lecturer led model of teaching. Ten Cate and Durning (2007) discuss the psychology of why peer tutoring may be a particularly effective addition to Higher Education teaching. This goes beyond the basics of social interactionist theory and reaching the upper tiers of the individual's potential within their zone of proximal development (i.e. the difference between what learners can do without help and what they cannot do) with assistance from a more advanced peer (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Topping and Ehly, 2001). Ten Cate and Durning suggest that congruence (lack of distance) between the student and a slightly more advanced peer, contributes to the student's ability to engage with the peer. This congruence, which is both cognitive (thinking in a similar way, on a similar intellectual level) and social (being at a similar education stage, with no position of authority), may encourage engagement with peer teaching as a supplement to other methods of active learning.

Dawson, van der Meer, Skalicky and Cowley (2014) performed an extensive review of recent PAL studies conducted between 2001 and 2010. This focused mainly on the outcomes of module grades and pass/fail of the module after PAL and support was consistently found for improvement on both of these outcomes. In addition to this, improved satisfaction was established, suggesting reduced anxiety from the provision of additional support in a less formal lecture environment, and further opportunities to ask questions outside the lecture, where large cohorts sometimes make it difficult to do this.

PAL has been frequently applied in the Sciences. Both Coe, McDougall and McKeown (1999) and Tariq (2005) found that peer led assistance in the form of additional small group seminar guidance for Chemistry and Bioscience undergraduate students was positively evaluated by both peers and participating students. Although the results of Ashwin (2003), focused on a Further Education context, they provide a warning about making sure that Higher Education PAL/N-PAL is encouraging greater quality of learning by facilitating deep learning (a meaningful understanding of the content, which is used in interaction with previously learned knowledge), rather than surface learning (a superficial, temporary understanding), in order to merely repeat facts (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1982). Ashwin found that while attendance at PAL sessions was positively related to performance on Chemistry and Mathematics A-Level examinations, there was also a decrease in meaningful orientation towards learning materials after participating in PAL sessions (reflected in qualitative feedback from peer tutors as well). An additional field where PAL is utilised frequently is Medicine. For example, Han, Chung and Nam (2015) found when practicing upper-limb dissections that those students in smaller peer-assisted learning groups (with peer tutors trainedby the faculty giving guidance during the session) showed improved perceived and actual understanding the course content in comparison to solely learning from a faculty demonstration. Han *et al* state that tutees also felt more relaxed when making enquiries in the peer-led sessions than the faculty-led sessions. Some concerns were raised by students about the competency of the peer tutors though.

Cusick, Camer, Stamenkovic and Zaccagnini (2015) have applied N-PAL interventions in providing generic research skills training to postgraduate students in sessions across an academic year (with recent graduates of the programme with PhD scholarships as near-peer tutors). This found that the intervention was consistently positively evaluated, with qualitative feedback suggesting students appreciated the additional alternate source of advice, and the friendly environment.

Rationale

The review suggests PAL is particularly effective in enhancing student experience in areas that require practical skill development (sciences, medicine, research). Within Psychology a particular instance of practical skill development that may benefit from N-PAL, would be in the teaching of Research Methods workshops. On this basis, the aim of this study is to see whether undergraduate students learning ICT skills in introductory research methods workshops appreciate the support of a near-peer assistant, in addition to the lecturer, when developing these skills. The overall research question is: Does having a near-peer assistant helping in ICT workshops for Research Methods in Psychology enhance the student experience of these classes?

Description of the innovation
Participants

Seven first year Psychology undergraduate student participants in the 'Research Methods in Psychology 1' class selected for this trial provided feedback. A mix of traditional (18-21 years old) and mature entry students (21 and over) gave qualitative written feedback on having a near-peer assistant helping in the ICT workshops using a feedback form. The class contained a mixture of students with English as a first or alternate language.

The student who agreed to be the near-peer assistant in the three workshops was a third year Psychology undergraduate student, Tara (this is a pseudonym)*, with previous experience as a mentor to first and second year Psychology undergraduates at UWL. A short semi-structured interview was conducted with Tara about her experience of the trial.

Materials and Procedure

The trial took place during weeks 10-12 of the 'Research Methods in Psychology 1' module run at UWL. These workshops were focused on learning and running the statistical analysis (an independent samples t-test) for the second assessment of the module. Prior to beginning the trial, the researcher informed Tara about what would be expected, in terms of guidance on the materials being taught, as well as how Tara would be expected to provide guidance in the form of talking students through the processes to obtaining the answers they were seeking, but not directly giving the answer to the students.

At the beginning of the ICT workshop in week 10, the researcher informed the class that the student near-peer assistant (Tara) would be helping out in ICT workshops over the next three weeks. The students and the near-peer assistant were informed that any feedback provided, when requested by the researcher, would remain anonymous in any write up of the study (students were asked not to put their names on the feedback forms), and that they did not have to answer any questions they did not wish to. This explicit description of the research was in line with ensuring ethical principles developed by the British Psychological Society (2014) were followed, in terms of giving an informed picture of the study, and that the participants' anonymity and right to withdraw from participation were ensured. The students had also received a lecture on Research Ethics by this stage and were aware of their ethical rights.

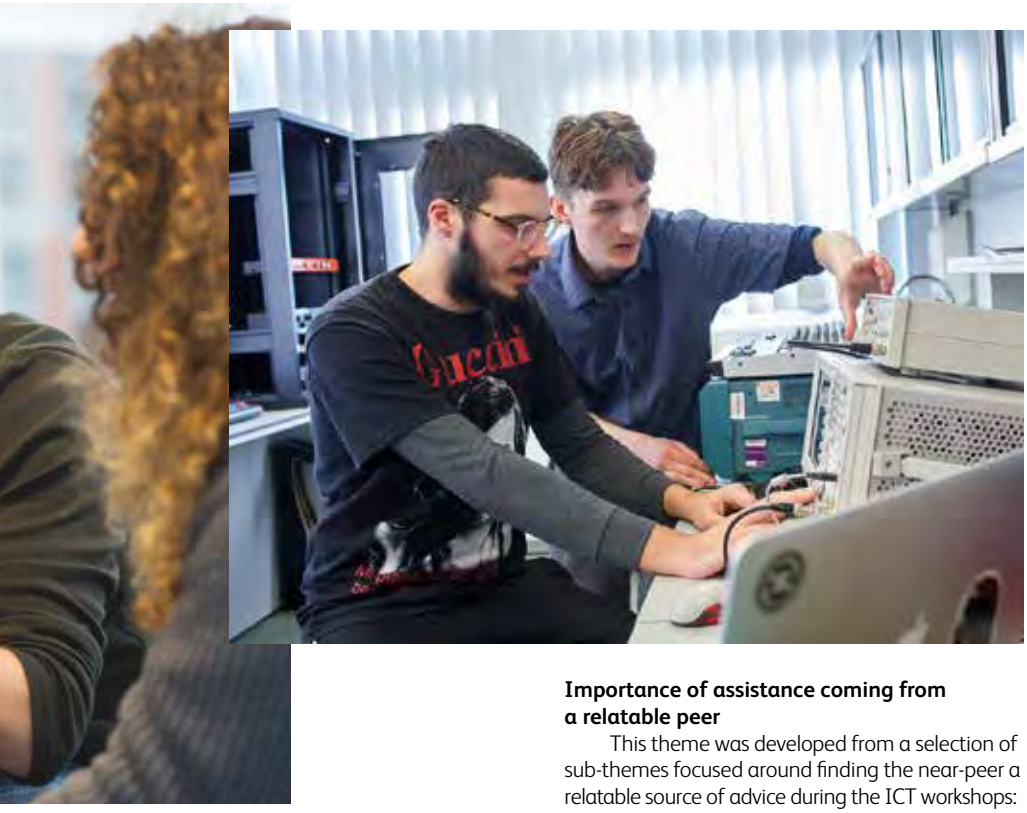
The student evaluations of the trial used a feedback form developed by the researcher that allowed the students to suggest what they enjoyed about having a student near-peer assistant in the workshop, how they thought the experience could be improved, and whether applying N-PAL to other modules would be useful. These forms were issued at the end of the second workshop in week 11 (as week 12 was a drop-in session). A consent form and interview schedule were also developed for the semi-structured interview conducted with the near-peer assistant after the final ICT session in week 12.

Evaluation of the innovation

Conducting a thematic analysis, using the guidelines developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), led to the development of three themes in the student evaluation data: Importance of assistance coming from a relatable peer, Peer facilitates engagement with course and a standalone Appreciation for near-peer assistant theme. Table 1 provides a list of the themes and sub-themes developed, along with some quotations from the student's evaluation data (designated by S1, S2…). Where appropriate, supporting quotations from the interview with the near-peer assistant are also provided. In the quotations any word in brackets [ ] indicates an addition by the author for clarity.

Theme	Sub-themes	Example supporting quotations
Importance of assistance coming from a relatable peer	Been there before	*'It's a great help having someone who has experience of what we are just now hearing, sometimes for the first time' (S1)*
	Near-peer perspective on course	*'..we can learn more about this course from a different view' (S4)*
	Approachable	*'Some of us find it easier to communicate with someone who is same level' (S5)*
Peer facilitates engagement with course	Access to help	*'A great help while the lecture can continue' (S1)*
	Wanting more contact time with near-peer assistant	*'We may also find additional help for our module in present or future as well' (S2)*
	General study skills advice	*'…can also give us ideas how to improve on this course' (S4)*
	Encouraging action/activity	*'…encourages us to perform better in our lectures' (S2)*
Appreciation for near-peer assistant		*'Student peer is helpful and useful (resource)' (S2)*
		'I think this is a good support for us' (S4)
		'I think it was a great idea to have a student peer assistant helping out in the IT workshops' (S6)

TABLE 1: Table of themes developed via thematic analysis of the student feedback forms



The students not only appreciated the extended contact in class, but in fact would have found more contact time with the near-peer assistant beneficial (wanting more contact time with near-peer assistant)

Importance of assistance coming from a relatable peer

This theme was developed from a selection of sub-themes focused around finding the near-peer a relatable source of advice during the ICT workshops: 'Is useful because the students can understand better their student struggle...' (S3).

In particular several students in the workshop found the near-peer relatable due to the fact that they had been through the same experience of learning the material in these workshops fairly recently (two years ago) on the same module: 'It's a great help having someone who has experience of what we are just now hearing, sometimes for the first time' (S1), and also '…it helps to have someone who has done this course before.' (S7).

Student 4 expands on this to emphasise that the near-peer sharing their experiences with the students was also welcomed: *'The student shared her knowledge and experience with us'* (S4). So having been through the same module level experience previously (been there before) makes the student near-peer relatable to those students currently undertaking the class.

Students 2 and 4 also go on to mention that the near-peer assistant can also give the students in the class a student perspective on the course in general, as well as at module level (near-peer views on course): 'It provides a different point of view.' (S2), '…we can learn more about this course from a different view' (S4).

These two elements of being a relatable near-peer also contribute to the students in the ICT workshops finding the near-peer approachable with student 5 mentioning: 'Some of us find it easier to communicate with people who is same level as us' (S5). Tara also refers to this, making the distinction about the main characteristic that differs between a lecturer and a near-peer assistant in the eyes of a student being taught: '…comfortable having someone there who is also a student, not necessarily the teacher who is then going to assess their work.' (Tara).

Overall these sub-themes within the student evaluations suggest that it was particularly important that the assistant in the class is on a near-peer level with the students in the class, due to the students finding the near-peer more relatable due to their more advanced student status. This innovation has enhanced the student experience of Research Methods ICT workshops through providing an additional source of advice from a more senior undergraduate student.

Peer facilitates engagement with course

This theme emerged from a selection of sub-themes focused around finding the near-peer to encourage further engagement with the course, in terms of the materials, and skill development generally. One way in particular that the near-peer encouraged engagement with the course is through providing more access to help in class. Whilst the lecturer will always assist all the students in a class in sequence, the lecturer cannot be in two places at the same time, helping individual students with differing enquiries. This is where the near-peer assistance was of particular use to the students: 'Getting more help. Getting more attention.' (S5), and 'Yes, it is helpful to have extra assistance, because there is more help, faster.' (S7). Student 6 expands upon this:

> 'When the teacher is with other students and your stuck you have to wait, but with a student peer assistant helping out you don't have to wait as long, and the class can move on quicker – If your behind while the teacher is talking the assistant is there to help.' (S6)

Having the near-peer assistant there helped the workshop to run more smoothly, with those who were struggling being able to gain more intensive one to one support. Tara's observations also refer to this when she states:

> '…they seemed happy that they couldn't just bother the lecturer all the time with every question…they didn't feel like they were interrupting maybe, and they didn't feel like they were taking all of the lecturers' time…' (Tara).

The students not only appreciated the extended contact in class, but in fact would have found more contact time with the near-peer assistant beneficial (wanting more contact time with near-peer assistant). This was reflected in particular by students 1 and 2 who stated: 'An idea might be that a peer assistant can attend for a few minutes before and after the session and maybe during breaks.' (S1), and 'We may find also an addition help for our module in present or future as well.' (S2). Student 1 notes that the peer assistant trial was a 'Great idea – pity not available from beginning (week 1)' (S1).

However, the students were clear that the near-peer assistance is most beneficial for Research Methods (when responding to the 'Do you think

having student peer assistants help out in the seminars/workshops for other modules would be useful? question), due to the more challenging technical, practical components of the work: 'Particularly useful during Research methods which is by far the most difficult subject.' (S1), and also 'It could be, but I think research methods is more useful because it requires more practical work.' (S7).

Although the students (also in response to this question) did refer to the fact that the near-peer assistant could also be useful in order to ask for insight into general study skills advice as well (general study skills advice): 'They can also give us ideas how to improve in this course.' (S4). Student 3 provides potential examples of this:

> 'It can be useful for other modules even just for explain how can be an easy way for study properly or write in a good way.' (S3)

This was also implied in the context of study skills required beyond the technical IT skills required for the Research Methods in Psychology module as well: 'Yes, I think it will be useful as other students can support us in any issue related to the units of this module.' (S4)

An underlying theme of the near-peer encouraging action/activity in classes was determined in the analysis: '…encourages us to perform better in our lectures.' (S2), with Student 6 specifying:

> 'I think it would be helpful if we had a peer assistant in our [theory] workshops as well, just encourage us to communicate in groups more.' (S6)

Whilst students are encouraged to talk to each other about the problems they work on in the theory workshops, this does not always occur whilst the lecturer is engaged with assisting other students. Having the near-peer assistant present in the class as well helped promote interactivity between the students in these instances. Tara also felt the students were more comfortable using the SPSS software with an additional pair of hands to help out in the ICT workshop as well: '…from what I've seen, they definitely were more comfortable using it…' (Tara).

Overall these sub-themes within the student evaluations (supported by the reflections of the near-peer assistant as well) suggest that the near-peer assistant has enhanced the student experience of Research Methods ICT workshops by helping facilitate student engagement with the course, predominantly by providing greater access to help and advice, and also being there to act as an additional stimulant for student performance in class.

Reflections

Both the feedback from the students and near-peer indicate that the student experience was enhanced by the additional presence of the near-peer assistant. Having the near-peer assistant proved useful in the class, particularly in instances where some students required more intensive one to one guidance, as this allowed Tara or me to continue providing guidance to other students who needed it. As I had a background teaching these students prior to the study, it could be questioned whether this may have influenced my interpretation of the data, potentially skewing it in a more positive light as I hold rapport with the students.

Discussion

The findings from the Thematic analysis conducted are consistent with the literature suggesting that PAL/N-PAL innovations provide a positive student experience (Coe *et al*., 1999; Tariq, 2005; Dawson *et al*., 2014; Cusick et al., 2015). The themes made it evident that the innovation enhanced the student experience of Research Methods ICT workshops through providing an additional source of relatable advice (Tara), who helped stimulate engagement with the course. The Appreciation for near-peer assistant main theme, and Wanting more contact time with near-peer assistant sub-theme reflect the students' desire for greater provision of near-peer assistance as part of their in-class student experience.

The access to help sub-theme also supports the suggestion by Dawson *et al* (2014) that PAL provision can be used to help reduce the anxiety of initially learning a subject. Providing greater access to help as part of the Research Methods ICT workshops can reduce the anxiety felt by students about learning statistics focused content and skills. A near-peer assistant is particularly suitable to help reduce this anxiety, as this study supports the near-peer being found to be relatable by the students in class, potentially due to the fact they have completed that specific module previously (reflected in the been there before sub-theme). This supports Ten Cate and Durning (2007) suggestion that students experience social congruence with the near-peer assistant. In part due to having completed this part of the course already, the students also had a great respect for the views of the near-peer assistant on the course and development of study skills at first year stage, as the near-peer had been in the same position previously (reflected in the sub-themes Near-peer views on course and General Study Skills advice). This appears to alleviate the concern of competency of the peer tutor referred to by Han *et al*., (2015). The point Tara makes about students additionally being able to ask questions of someone not assessing them, potentially explains Han *et al*., (2015) finding that students feel more relaxed when making enquiries of peers than teaching staff (regardless of lecturers ever open stance to being asked questions). The Encourages action/activity sub-theme suggests that N-PAL schemes, such as the one conducted for this study, could act as a potential catalyst for stimulating more

This innovation would also offer the opportunity to capable third year near-peer students to obtain teaching experience in an academic environment, which may prove useful for those planning a career in education, whether at higher education or other levels

successful academic performance by encouraging greater in-class engagement.

When Tara was asked about what was different in being a peer assistant for a class of students, in comparison to the student mentoring she had previously done, she pointed out that being a peer assistant seemed to have less assessment driven focus and more emphasis on helping students to use the software themselves. This supports the approach of encouraging meaning oriented learning.

Future directions

Now that this innovation has been successfully piloted to enhance the student experience in a smaller group of students, I would like to conduct future work to expand this on a larger scale to the full module length, and with multiple classes undertaking Research Methods modules at level 4. Expanding this innovation would have positive implications in terms of the TEF Assessment criteria (TEF, 2017). In particular the enhanced engagement from interacting with near-peers would be a beneficial (and cost-effective) way of contributing to both the Student Engagement (TQ1) via additional forms of stimulation and contact, and Positives Outcomes for All (SO3) by having near-peers to aspire to.

This innovation would also offer the opportunity to capable third year near-peer students to obtain teaching experience in an academic environment, which may prove useful for those planning a career in education, whether at higher education or other levels (FE or secondary). This expansion could help contribute towards the Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice (LE2), Employability and Transferable skills (SO2) and Employment and Further Study (SO1) criteria of the TEF by providing a unique provision for students to develop and acquire the communication skills needed in order to be successful teachers by practice, and scaffolding of those who currently teach professionally.

Note (*): *I would like to thank the near-peer assistant Tara (a pseudonym, for ethical reasons) for her involvement in this trial. Her assistance and diligence in preparation and engagement with the trial were much appreciated.*

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Keywords

Near-peer; N-PAL; Research Methods; Student Experience; Higher Education

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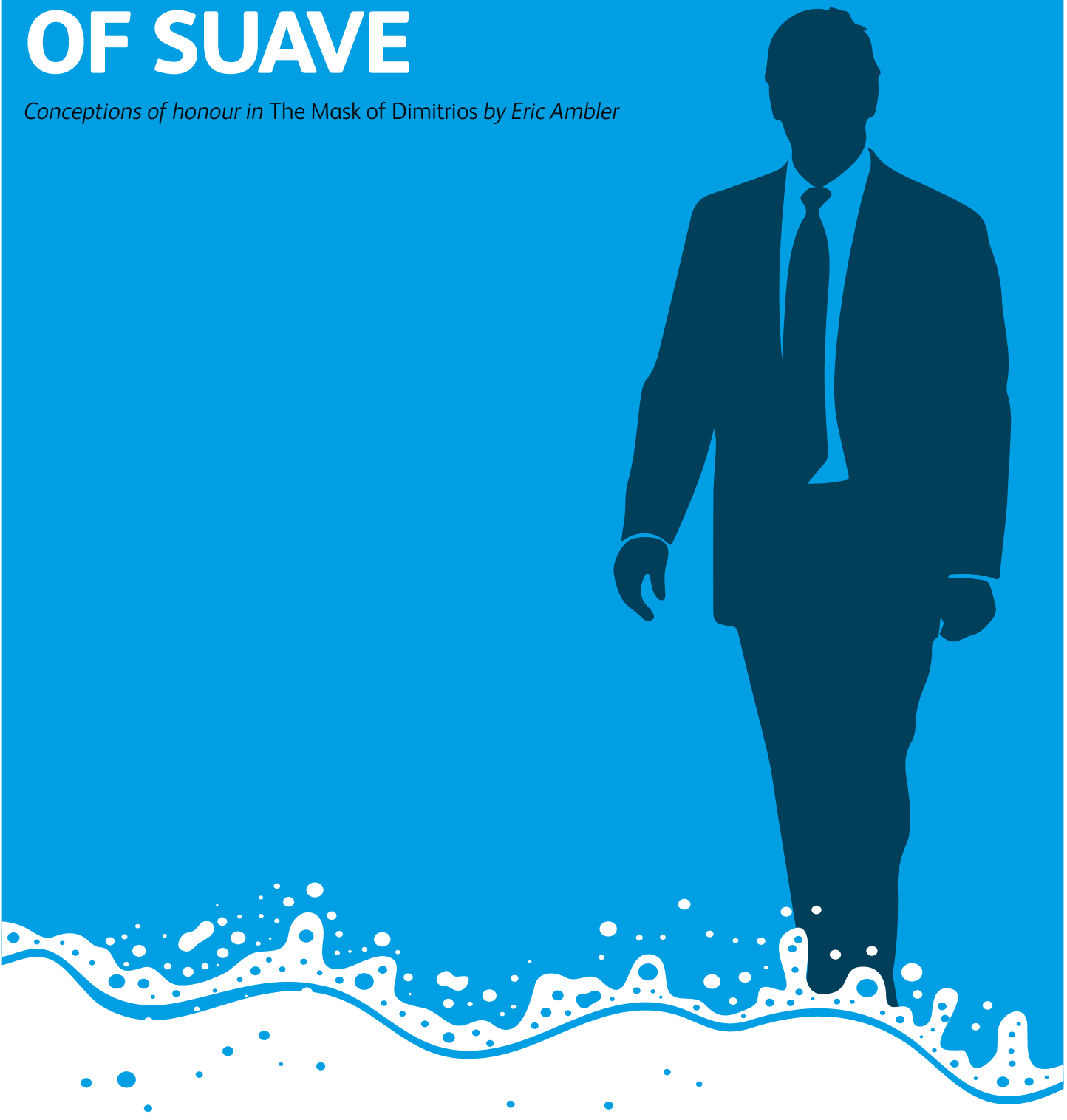
THE OPPOSITE OF SUAVE

Conceptions of honour in The Mask of Dimitrios *by Eric Ambler*



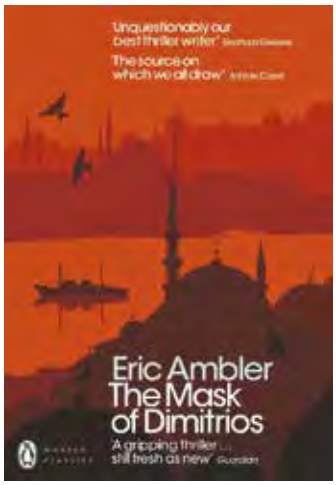
The popular author, Eric Ambler, fell out of fashion towards the end of a career that spanned nearly 50 years, but remains in the eyes of many critics a transformative figure in genre thriller writing.

The opposite of suave

Ambler successfully inverted the conventional spy story aesthetic established by John Buchan, William Le Queux and H.C. McNeile and set out to raise the quality of the popular espionage thriller by introducing ''realism', moral and literary seriousness, and popular front politics' in to his work (Denning, 1987: 61). His protagonists were 'the opposite of suave, the opposite of superman' (Fenton, 2009: VI), engineers, managers, writers and academics who respond to the crises that Ambler contrived for them as might you or I. *The Mask of Dimitrios* is considered a masterpiece of the genre, and the most highly regarded from his first group of six novels, written between 1936 and 1940.

Honour is a common trope in the spy thriller and tends to be driven by questions around the nature of identity and conceptions of reputation, fidelity, and betrayal. The purpose of this article is to explore the central paradox at the heart of the Dimitrios narrative in relation to honour as an interchangeable moral equivalent, which in the typical Amber novel becomes a shifting commodity that is traded, elided, and re-invented through the various interactions of the principal characters, but also something that becomes an abiding determinant of their fate (Ambler, 2009:1).

The premise for the story is perhaps conventional enough as it foregrounds a fatal convergence of two social opposites, in this case a former university academic and writer of popular crime fiction Charles Latimer, and Dimitrios, a notorious criminal assassin ignominiously murdered, whose corpse has been recently dredged from the Bosporus. Purportedly embarking on a piece of creative writing research, Latimer seeks to find out more about Dimitrios. His investigation takes him across Europe and exposes an establishment hamstrung by corruption, and one bent on conspiring to service political power by any means – and at any cost.



Ambler successfully inverted the conventional spy story aesthetic, his protagonists were 'the opposite of suave, the opposite of superman', engineers, managers, writers and academics who respond to the crises that Ambler contrived for them as might you or I

Ideology of Englishness

By invoking Providence, Ambler hints at human fallibility, casting doubt on the reliability of the protagonist, Charles Latimer, and his motivations in the pursuit of truth. He sets up Latimer as an arbiter, a political scientist who has critiqued a gamut of opposing ideologies before becoming a writer of pulp fiction, all of which are founded in Judeo-Christian codes of conduct and concerned with questions around civic identity, and among other things: European anarchism, democratic socialism, and racial theory. These are presented to us through Latimer's 'ideology of Englishness', an implicit hegemony of Western ethical values; a corollary of which is a largely Christian, but martial conception of honour: courage, loyalty, duty, and service (Denning, 1987:118).

For instance, one of Latimer's academic treatises apparently investigates Alfred Rosenberg's work, then a principal tenet of Nazi thinking (*The Mask of Dimitrios* was published in 1939), which notoriously rejects conventional Christianity and espouses a myth of blood superiority, echoing earlier conceptions of muscular Christianity, but most notably celebrated in the chivalric romances of the late Medieval period and the promotion of chivalric values during the Crusades, it underpins the ordering of a world that is governed, if not by Christian-based hierarchies, then a 'Nordic' (white or 'Aryan') Nazi supremacy, manifestly Western in outlook and in direct opposition to the East. Though Latimer may be unreliable, the moral standard of the narrative world he inhabits is anchored in Western 'superhuman law' (Ambler, 2009:1).

Latimer's retreat into writing fiction suggests a withdrawal from the world away from politics into a comfort zone where rules are ideologically palatable and safe; an echo chamber where perceived transgressions are brought to book, and a pragmatic acknowledgement that life does not imitate art, and that art, as characterised by the prosaic titles listed as his novels conforms to the prescribed rules of procedural detective fiction. As the Turkish Chief of Police, Colonel Haki, puts it: 'In a *roman policier* there is a corpse, a number of suspects, a detective and a gallows' (Ambler, 2009:11).

Colonel Haki first appears as an admirer of Latimer's work, who reads 'nothing but *romans policiers*'. The relationship between the two raises questions that dog the nature of Latimer's obsession with the Dimitrios case, and in particular around the ethical underpinnings of academic research, or what could be described as honourable cause and the moral position of the academic-cum-novelist (Ambler, 2009:109). The cult or fetishization of knowledge, or perhaps how new knowledge can be squandered in the writing of fiction (from an Academy standpoint), informs the doubt and guilt that pervades the author's central consciousness in the narrative, and provides insight into the more narcissistic impetus driving Latimer's quest: 'To have hold of the truth, to have explained that he was trying, for purely academic reasons, to trace the history of a dead

criminal named Dimitrios would have been a long and uneasy business' (Ambler, 2009:40). His subsequent meetings with Haki set up a central theme of identity and displacement and how this is mediated around all of the principal characters in the novel.

There follows a discussion between the two men that centres on the plotting of a detective novel, but this is overtaken by Haki's tantalizing offer for Latimer to experience true crime first hand, one that in Haki's view bears no comparison to any degree of verisimilitude in fiction: 'You see, Mr. Latimer? There is your story. Incomplete. Inartistic. No detection, no suspects, no hidden motives, merely sordid' (Ambler, 2009:14). The complicity of both men to share confidential information about Dimitrios; introduced to us as an archetypal criminal to demonstrate a point, and eventually proffered to Latimer on a mortuary slab by Haki as an indulgence, highlights if not the ennui that prompts the dishonourable nature of the arrangement in the first instance, then the stereotypical practices of a corrupt foreign (non Western) establishment, and the hypocrisy of an ethically moribund protagonist.

Taxonomy of Honour

What begin to emerge are the precarious hierarchies of values that intersect, intimated by the author in various ways throughout, mediated by Latimer and the various subaltern sources he enlists to investigate the life (and death) of Dimitrios. A pragmatic taxonomy of honour conception laundered by societal norms, immediately locates Latimer and Haki as somehow more honourable than their subject by dint of their status, despite their conduct; in effect exercising just one among many competing sets of (moral) standards in the narrative, and echoing the author's initial opposition that 'if there should be such a thing as a superhuman Law, it is administered with subhuman inefficiency' (Ambler, 2009:1).

Latimer is 'fascinated by the details contained in the police dossier', and this provides a measure of character, in the same way that other documents and reports, official or otherwise vouch for character and speak to a taxonomy of honour in the narrative. Letters of introduction, court depositions, registers of residency and refugee status, passports, death certificates, identity cards, letters of transit (see also *Casablanca*, dir. Michael Curtiz 1942), news reportage, and anecdotes all remain elliptical or fraudulent tokens of identity and are acknowledged as such. To be the subject of a secret police dossier, on the other hand, would already categorise Dimitrios in this taxonomy as honourless, or dishonourable in one reading, but in another speaks to a cemented reputation, and might be considered a badge of honour amongst his criminal peers or the political interests that would seek to employ his services. The dual reading of the Dimitrios dossier is pivotal and represents a central paradox at the heart of the narrative in relation to honour, and one activated by identity and its displacement.

Haki gives Latimer sanction to investigate Dimitrios by discussing the dossier, but most importantly, by agreeing for him to view the

corpse – which brings his reputation, or at least an incomplete police record, and the man together, but at the same time creates a distinction between the two. The body of Dimitrios on the mortuary slab and the 'squalid pile of clothes that was his estate' (Ambler, 2009:20) is a stark image, one that perhaps presents a moral truth to Latimer and recalls his earlier evocation of Old Testament lore: 'he died by violence. That is something very like justice' (Ambler, 2009:12), but the spectacle in the morgue is 'pitiable', despite it being 'the end of an odyssey', reinforcing the notion that actually there is no honour under these circumstances, only degradation and opprobrium; that honour is for the birds.

Uneasy Business

Through a series of encounters all characterized by conventional business practices (introductions, deals, payments) Latimer comes to understand the role of the *Eurasian Credit Trust*, an apparently reputable purveyor of transnational business finance based in Monaco, but in addition one that apparently operates clandestinely supporting criminal and espionage activity as well. The proximity between acceptable business practice and criminality is best articulated by Haki in his brief cameo of Dimitrios as the embodiment of the intersection between the two, amongst a

The ironic use of Trust *intimates Ambler's own scepticism regarding the fidelity of international financial institutions, and to some degree the lengths they go to manage and brand their reputations, however secretive their practices*

group he dubs 'the professionals, the entrepreneurs, the links between the businessmen, the politicians who desire the end but are afraid of the means, and the fanatics, the idealists who are prepared to die for their convictions' (Ambler, 2009:11). This description, and in particular the use of *entrepreneur* connoting the active propagation of business activity for profit effectively as a conduit, again reflects the interrelationship between honour and transgression in the novel and highlights the *realpolitik* of international relations and a Janus-like duality. This is later laid bare by the journalist, Marukakis, who describes Dimitrios in terms of a cipher: 'For him there is no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest' (Ambler, 2009:65). Honour is ultimately functional for Dimitrios, an expedience for his own self-preservation.

The ironic use of *Trust* intimates Ambler's own scepticism regarding the fidelity of international financial institutions, and to some degree the lengths they go to manage and brand their reputations, however secretive their practices (the seat of the bank is also apposite to this in regards to codes of behaviour and liminal spaces, which is touched on later). His directorship of *Eurasian Credit Trust* appears to be the apogee of Dimitrios' chequered career trajectory, and clearly ties legitimacy and criminality together, and opens up the idea of the importance of reputation, and how it is in effect serviced by honour. The *Trust*, veiled by client confidentiality, clearly lends Dimitrios the best of both worlds: secures for him the air of respectability, and an honourable place in society, but also gives him freedom to operate unencumbered by any ethical considerations. Latimer's 'uneasy business' is typified by its transactional nature, and by intimation, attendant common business practice where *sharp* and *astute* become interchangeable dependent on your point of view.

The extent to which the characters are prepared to trade information with Latimer, namely the anecdotal flotsam that form the gradual accretion of the Dimitrios reputation-identity, frames much of the action and could be characterized as a series of transactional business deals that tend to be conducted, even when physical violence looms in a a relatively cordial fashion. Peters, Dimitrios' former criminal associate, puts it succinctly: 'The difference between Dimitrios and the more respectable type of successful businessman is only a difference of method or illegal method. Both are in their respective ways ruthless.' (Ambler, 2009:149). Conversely, Latimer also judges Peters as 'loathsome', with a mind 'divided too neatly. With one half he could peddle drugs and buy rentes (Government Bonds), and read Poemes Erotiques, while with the other he could excrete a warm, sickly fluid to obscure his obscene soul.' (Ambler, 2009:145). Latimer finds this dichotomy repellent and paradoxical; an opposition that illustrates a moral ambivalence except in reciprocal business terms; and the only 'honour among scoundrels' (Ambler, 2009:118). What constitutes a register of acceptable business practice appears to transcend or trump all other codes of morality in the narrative, and one that drives 'naked self-interest' as characterized by Dimitrios.

In this business economy, it is the affordability of honour and the accounting of reputation that is thrown into relief as leverage to extort money through blackmail. Blackmail is another common trope in the novel, and one that becomes a useful tool for all of the principal characters, and arguably Latimer also, albeit as a reluctant participant. Blackmail drives the final confrontation between Peters, Latimer and Dimitrios (his plan to fake his own death now exposed) and is prefaced by Latimer's concerns over the shifting moral high ground, and the scene itself is reminiscent of a duel where Latimer, to all intents and purposes, finds himself cast as a second. This duel, however, is fought not to gain 'satisfaction' in the conventional way, but is to preserve honour pegged to the bubble reputation that Dimitrios has procured to service his vanity, and one that gives him his desired status as well as access to wealth through his directorship of the *Eurasian Credit Trust*. In another reading this confrontation would be all about revenge, and a couple of gangsters settling old scores, which of course it is, but in the context of honour Dimitrios is also protecting a necessary business adjunct to his reputation-identity by keeping up appearances, one that his status now demands he must. Dimitrios has understood the utility of honour, and perhaps perversely comes full circle in the more traditional sense, by learning its real cost; the need to aggressively protect something he knows he now cannot lose.

Throughout the novel, the precarious hierarchies of values and their pragmatic taxonomy across religion, nationality, gender, political views and social standing all activate honour in different ways and are established through societal status attached to one of the above. Honour always resides with the establishment, and never with the outsider. Predestination, alluded to by the author at the beginning of the narrative in the form of Providence and one's place in the world, is interpreted differently,

but perhaps as cynically by Peters whose constant reference to 'the Great One' appears alternately as a whimsical way of articulating the nature of the things, and licence for his various nefarious activities (Ambler, 2009:47). The absence of honour in his various criminal dealings is measured and countered by a Judeo-Christian set of values as to what is morally acceptable, but cynically or not, honour becomes irrelevant in the face of destiny, and his use of 'the Great One': 'as someone who understands that it is sometimes necessary, for business reasons, to do unpleasant things' (Ambler, 2009:168).

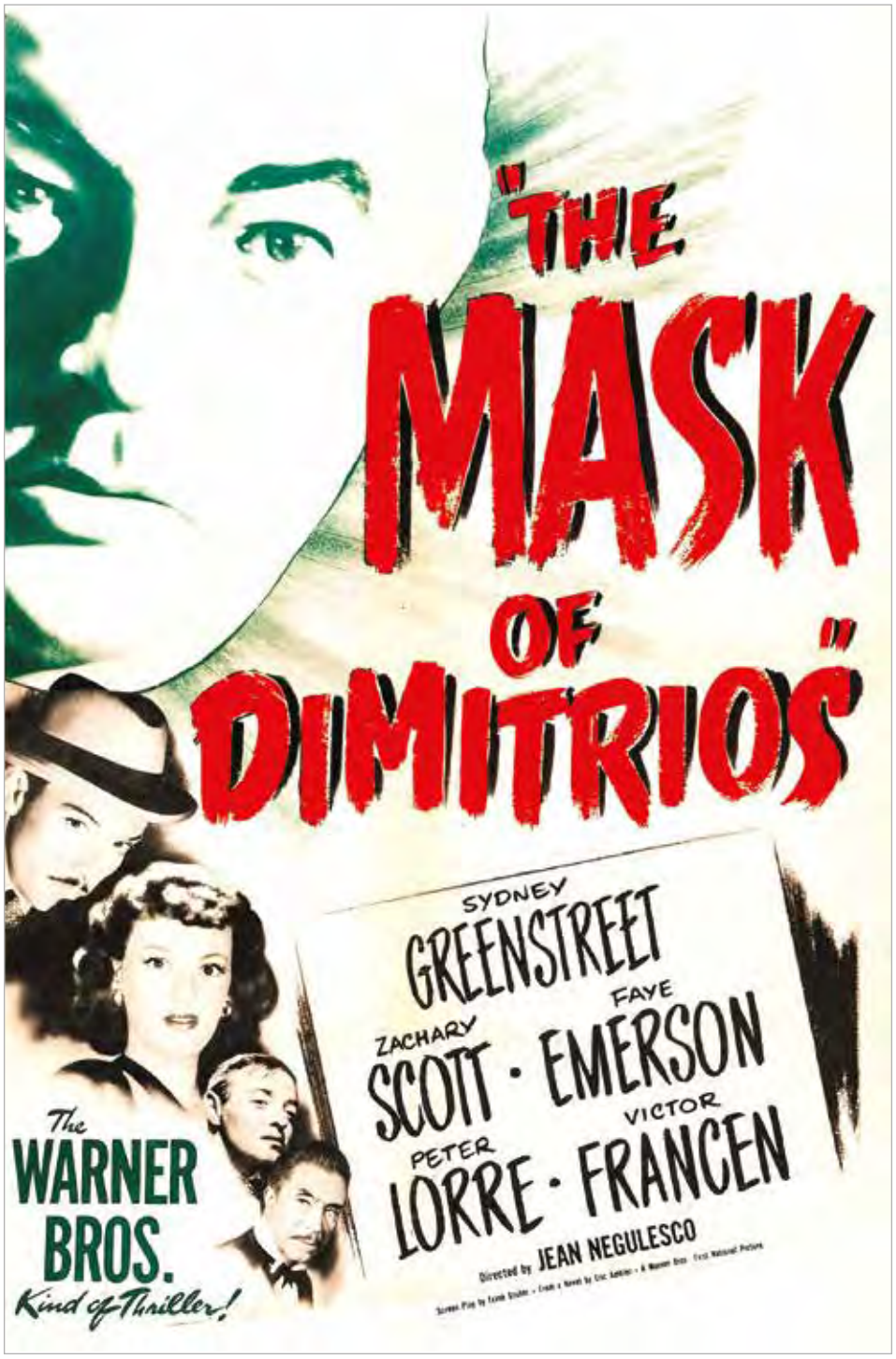
Cultural divisions defined by religion; Christian, Jew, Muslim also bleed into more bourgeois distinctions around national stereotypes, and to some extent the burgeoning appearance of political ideology, and in particular, Marxism (and how it transcends boundaries). Prim Englishmen, Turkish Authoritarians, Russian alcoholics, Greek Businessmen, and Bulgarian prostitutes all vie for a relative place in the sun. The 'ideology of Englishness', however, remains the ultimate arbiter as dictated by Ambler, where a pre-eminent ethical code, though not explicit for the most part, pervades the authorial tone of the narrative; one that is implicitly located in an English value system, and one that pronounces on all others. Latimer, by dint of his peripatetic lifestyle and his rejection of his former academic role takes on an ambiguous status. Though English in origin, his allegiances are questionable but are grounded at least in a Western tradition, and hence why the relationships between civic identity, fixed locations, and codes of behaviour and their semiotic significance become perhaps the more apposite measure of how honour functions in the context of the narrative.

Identity and Displacement

It follows then that Istanbul as a location for the opening of *Dimitrios* is indicative of Ambler's oppositional schema for the action to come, and as a backdrop to the speculative origins of Dimitrios (and his statelessness), becomes a well-trodden generic symbol of the boundaries that exist between East and West, both politically and culturally. This opposition is fundamental to the underlying conflicts in *The Mask of Dimitrios*, which in the context of honour codes freight *Constantinople* as a site of implicit Judeo-Christian ethical superiority, a Charlemagnian sense of entitlement; manifestly colonial ownership, where 'western knights found a world on which the imprint of the glories of the classical past, as a visible heritage was infinitely sharper than anywhere than in their homelands' (Keen, 1984:108). While Istanbul is symbolic in this sense, it is indicative also of the peripatetic nature of the narrative. Dimitrios is described as a 'great traveller' someone who by instinct 'stay[s] on the fringe of the plot' (Ambler, 2009:11), and the narrative as a whole takes place in a host of different countries, and travel more generally in genre narratives such as *Dimitrios* (e.g. *Stamboul Train*, *Casablanca*, any *James Bond*) becomes a necessary adjunct to the action.

For instance, Ian Fleming's meditations on his thrillers as being intended for warm-blooded heterosexual males on trains, and aeroplanes (Vidal, 2009:74), as well as perhaps a measure of how long distance travel was beginning to become more mainstream during the pre-war period, and there is a suggestion that those who occupy the transit/ travel space, and its association with the hedged status of the spy; of shifting allegiance/no allegiance and mercenary imperative, somehow connote untrustworthiness or dishonour. There also exists a tradition that stretches back to antiquity, arguably a rebuttal of this position, and certainly one that became a hallmark of the medieval romance, that of the knightly lone adventurer, and the cults of individualism and errantry (Keen, 1984:226). Errantry could also be construed as a central trope in many Ambler narratives where his protagonists find themselves away from home, and in erring ways their courage, code of values etc. are always tested as a consequence.

The liminality of travel, in effect being stateless suggests that there are different rules for those who are travelling: a perpetual act of escape, where there are no laws, or at least ones that are constantly in flux. Conceptions of honour when one does not belong, and spaces in which the action in *Dimitrios* plays out: holiday villas, hotel rooms, hostels, refugee camps,



The authorial voice frames the narrative as a kind of morality tale where the characters' destiny seems largely driven by their own moral compass, created by colliding and thus exploitable value systems through which the status quo *is rationalised or transgressive behaviour justified*

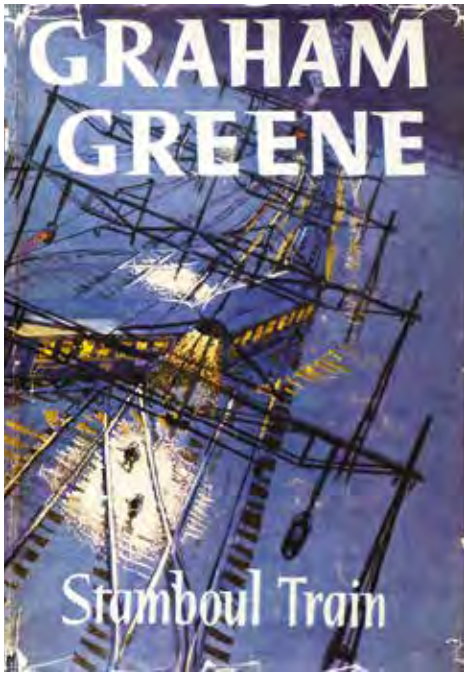


Image: © Nick Jones

train compartments, bars, restaurants etc. again point to the precariousness of colliding value systems in liminal spaces, and what has been described as a 'hollowing out of civic identity', and a diminishing of responsibility when in transit (Mishra, 2016).

Many of the characters in the narrative appear displaced; on the move or foreigners in the places we meet them (Latimer chief among them), which supports Giddens' ideas concerning 'distanciation', because everyone is an outsider there are no deep collective ties; society becomes atomized with no one universal conception of honour. Bauman also considers this to be indicative of postmodern readings in relation to fixity and social conformity, which highlights the paradox of Dimitrios and his dislocated status, and that honour can only exist for him on his own expedient terms: 'I propose that in the same way as the pilgrim was the most fitting allegory of modern life strategy, preoccupied with the daunting task of identity-building and the stroller, the vagabond, the tourist and the player offer jointly the metaphor for the post-modern strategy moved by the horror of being bound and fixed.' (Bauman, 1995:91). Dimitrios is permanently 'on the run' from moral conformity, and ergo in a permanent state of transgression, or another apposite reading, perpetually in limbo or a state of *Original Sin*.

With the imminent prospect of meeting Dimitrios, Latimer has become a compromised documentarist, and a burgeoning accessory to blackmail and murder. His earlier assertion that violent death for Dimitrios is justified rings of hypocrisy, particularly as he is to become now the de facto instrument of justice. Good and Evil are merely 'baroque abstractions' where art and scientific advancement appear in direct opposition to, and are superseded by, the pursuit of power and material wealth (Ambler, 2009:187).

Dimtrios dies amongst a blood strewn mess of thousand-franc notes, literally his own blood money; coupons redeemable for the estimable civic identity he has so desperately acquired; his price for honour. The author presents Dimitrios as a tragic figure who comes to his inevitable, providential end: already an itinerant orphan, he is uprooted by the Greco-Turkish War, and in the ensuing turmoil comes to understand that social formulations such as honour, reputation, and the surety of civic stability are equivocal, and easily sacrificed to vanity and political ambition, or manipulated for material gain. The apparent rise of Dimitrios to a directorship of the *Eurasian Credit Trust* demonstrates he understands that at least to the outside world he must conform to an overarching moral vision that binds society together.

Conclusion

The eponymous 'mask' facilitated in part by this dislocated status, could be reference to a façade of belonging, his throwaway identities become disguises behind which Dimitrios, the economic migrant whose only loyalty is to himself, dons civic fixity as a functional mechanism for social advancement. His attachment to the mysterious La Comtesse is also part of a strategy that elevates him by association to a state beyond reproach, and implicitly ties him to aristocratic codes of behaviour (with its ancient traditions of chivalry); an honourable brand that money does in fact buy him, albeit temporarily, but one to which he can never belong, and one he understands he has to protect, not just to remain in a privileged milieu but as an act of survival. His understanding of how honour works, and the pivotal taxonomy of morality and transgression is reflected in his directorship of the *Eurasian Credit Trust*, with its dual, and characteristically duplicitous functions in this and other Ambler novels; at once a stalwart of legitimate, transnational business finance and a clandestine instigator of deadly intrigue on the international scene.

The authorial voice frames the narrative as a kind of morality tale where the characters' destiny seems largely driven by their own moral compass, created by colliding and thus exploitable value systems through which the *status quo* is rationalised or transgressive behaviour justified. Good and bad can be interpreted, dependent on reading. Tied to this is the dubious nature of mobility, which appears to propagate the evasive nature of honour in the dynamic, shifting fictional world of Ambler in immediate pre-war Europe. In this context, the imminent onset of the Second World War could be characterized as an extreme example of mobility, with all the pejorative ramifications this has, coupled with the irony perhaps that conceptions of honour were first promulgated in feats of arms. Latimer remains in retreat at the end of the novel just as he did at the beginning, only now he is able to understand his sanctuary more readily as a desire to return to an epitome of Englishness and stability. He crafts a sort of excessive fixity, with a detective story set in an English village in July; a citadel of civic identity and Englishness, with its inevitable codes of behaviour and predictably honourable outcomes: 'the clink of teacups and sweet smell of grass on a July evening… It was the sort of thing that he himself would like to hear about' (Ambler, 2009:226).

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Keywords

Ambler, Spy, Creative Writing, English, Media

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SINGLE WOMEN AND LATER LIFE

Health and well-being of older single women living alone in the UK

The study of gender issues that surround ageing is of great interest with women accounting for just under half of the world's population. Understanding different life trajectories and diverse characteristics of the ageing female population is important given the implications for wider society and culture. Women's changing circumstances, attitudes and behaviours are affecting their experience of ageing at both an individual and societal level. These circumstances present new opportunities and challenges for governments, policy-makers and service providers. The situation is particularly important for the UK where there is clear evidence of increasing longevity. During the years 2010–15, the life expectancy at birth for males and females was 78.45 and 82.39 years respectively (ONS, 2014a). Centenarians are also increasing at a faster rate than any other age group with a more than 137-fold increase between 1911 and 2013 (from 100 to 13,780) (ONS, 2014b).

Changing life-style choices are starting to have a marked impact on the shape, size and types of households in the UK (Raeside and Khan, 2007). Women living alone may reflect a lifestyle choice as well as a consequence of other factors such as loss of a partner through separation, divorce or death (Hafford-Letchfield et al, 2017). Living alone may be the result of an inability to find the right relationship at the right time as well as the use of fertility control or the experience of fertility problems in earlier life. Besides these more commonly perceived reasons for living alone in later life, greater diversity in relationship status has also been influenced by choice and sexual identities; evidence suggests that older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are more likely to live alone in old age, with fewer connections to younger generations, thereby increasing their risk of isolation (Heaphy and Yip, 2003). Women are, therefore, increasingly likely to find they are moving into later life without either a long-term partner or children or both (Hafford-Letchfield *et al*, 2017). These kinds of living arrangements are only just starting to be the subject of systematic research.

Single British households

British household studies conducted over the last three/four decades show a considerable increase in the number of people living alone (Macvarish, 2006) with the majority of them being women. Other studies have shown that older women living alone are more likely to have relatively less material resources than their male counterparts (Gaymu and Springer, 2010) and in many cases are dependent on their children and relatives (Khan et al, 2017). Longer life is also associated with multiple morbidities and long-term care and support. Whilst many enjoy longer longevity today compared to the previous generation, they also need to prepare for supporting themselves in circumstances which may also co-exist with increasing social isolation and lack of both economic and practical support, particularly where there is a financial burden of care. Women who have been single and are living alone, may not be able to draw on the range of family and community support often seen in many societies (Lee and Xiao, 1998; Khan *et al*., 2017; Hafford-Letchfield *et al*., 2017). With the changing demographic scenarios, studies have begun to pick up and explore these issues that have huge importance given that UK legislation and policy on care entitlement and provision tend to be underpinned by assumptions about informal care (Raeside and Khan, 2007). These assumptions include the notion that all older people will have caregivers to support them drawn from their families and networks (Hafford-Letchfield *et al*., 2017). Such expectations may be compromised for single women living alone in later life. The aim of this paper is to review one particular source of demographic data alongside the literature in order to identify research possibilities that would better facilitate examination of possible trajectories of older single women living alone in British households.

During the years 2010-2015, the life expectancy at birth for males and females was 78.45 and 82.39 years respectively Centenarians are also increasing at a faster rate than any other age group with a more than 137-fold increase between 1911 and 2013 (from 100 to 13,780)

Rationale for the variables selected

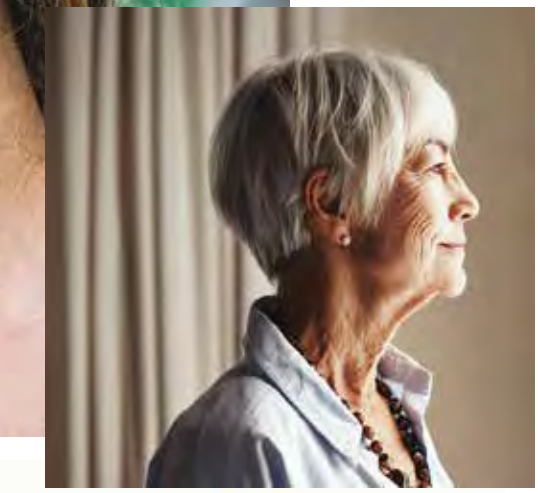
The defining characteristics of the ageing process involve individuals becoming more vulnerable to disease, disability and frailty. In developed nations, the majority of health resources are focused on conditions where age is the biggest risk factor (Kirkwood, 2014). Education has been associated with socio-economic status that in turn impacts on health inequalities in later life (Raeside and Khan, 2007). The World Health Organisation defines health as 'a complete physical, mental and social-wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' thus placing emphasis on wellbeing which goes beyond the existence of physical health. Subjective wellbeing involves an overall assessment of how people are doing without being directive about what particular aspects of their lives contributes towards their feelings of wellbeing (Gaymu and Springer, 2010). However, wellbeing can be measured in a wide variety of ways. Here, we have used the variable of general happiness as an indicator of the overall wellbeing of an individual. Health status is also directly linked with wellbeing which includes general life satisfaction (Khan and Raeside, 2014). Hank and Wagner (2013) have addressed the question of whether and how parenthood and marital status are associated with various dimensions of older peoples' wellbeing, including elements of the individual's economic situation, psychological wellbeing, and social connectedness. European studies on the influences of objective living conditions on the life satisfaction of older Europeans living alone from a gender and cross-national perspective, found that a lower proportion of women living alone declared themselves to be satisfied with life compared to men (Gaymu and Springer, 2010). These different findings have led to debate about the need for gender specific models to measure wellbeing (Hafford-Letchfield *et al*, 2017).

Understanding society data

This study used data from the 'Understanding Society' longitudinal national survey. This data enabled examination of individual behaviour through a cross-sectional approach and the life-course and is scientifically rich enough to capture key determinants of health outcomes within UK society. The survey is conducted annually and is scientifically rich enough to cover each adult member from a nationally representative sample. The same individuals are re-interviewed in each wave. If individuals leave their household, all adult members of their new household are interviewed. The fieldwork period is for 24 months i.e., each wave is collected over 24 months, such that the first wave of data was collected between January 2009 and December 2010, the second wave between January 2010 and December 2011and wave 3 data collected between January 2011 and December 2012. Each person aged 16 or over answers the individual adult interview and self-completion questionnaire. Definitions and the measurements are available in the main documents of the 'Understanding Society' manual.

European studies on the influences of objective living conditions on the life satisfaction of older Europeans living alone from a gender and cross-national perspective, found that a lower proportion of women living alone declared themselves to be satisfied with life compared to men

Higher education is linked with lower reporting of poor health demonstrating that education is an important determinant of health and happinness among this group of women



Results

The target population in this paper are single women who are defined as aged 55 years and over and living alone in the household. Selected variables were considered for the study such as age, belonging to social website forums, highest qualification, place of residence, long-standing illness or disability, health limits, modern activities, satisfaction with health, health status and general happiness.

As women live longer than men it is anticipated that the proportion of older women living alone will increase as they get older. Our analysis on waves 1, 2 and 3 shows that the number of single women living alone in British households is higher than the number of men across all three waves. In wave 1, there were as many as 1,890 men and 3,912 women; in wave 2 there were 1,665 men and 3,317 women and in wave 3, 1,939 men and 3,830 women.

Here Wave 3 data are analysed further in order to answer some key questions. In wave 3, a total of 49,739 individuals were surveyed in which the proportion of single women living alone in households is estimated to be 7.7 per cent. There has been a significant variation in the numbers of women by age cohort although a clear increasing trend by age did emerge.

The majority of single women living alone were in England compared to three other regions. As life expectancy continues to increase, the absolute number or proportion of women living alone is projected to increase further on the basis of familial and social changes. It is important that a proportional increase in independent living should be linked to the availability of appropriate social support (Raeside and Khan, 2007; Khan *et al*., 2017).

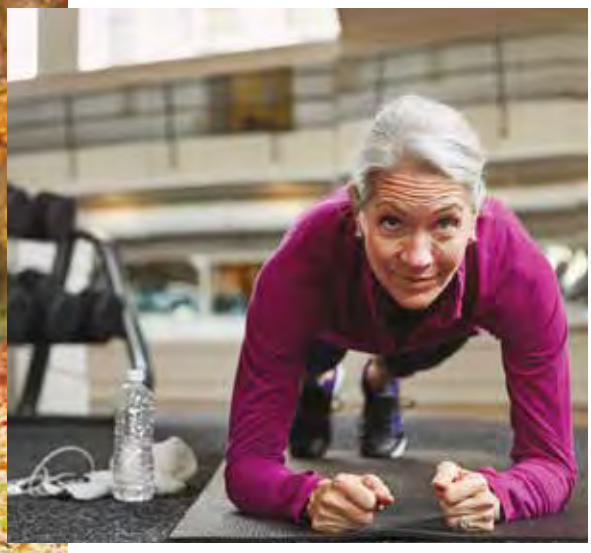
A vast majority (about 89.5 per cent) of respondents in the survey reported that they do not use social networking site or social media. About 40 per cent had no formal education with 29.8 per cent who had been educated up to GCSE and A level. The survey also shows that one quarter of single women living alone are in rural areas and around 15 per cent of them reported a poor health condition. Similarly, single women living alone in the survey reported higher long-standing illness or disability (62.8 percent), to the extent that health limited their ability to perform even moderate activities (52.2 per cent). Conversely, about 58.6 per cent of the women reported that their health situation is at least as good or even better than previously. Moderate happiness is found to be lower for women living alone (6.4 per cent) compared with 11.1 per cent for the total population.

The study reveals a statistical association between belonging to a social network and health status and general happiness. Belonging to social networks appears to lower the risk of reporting poor health. This indicates that interacting with online social networks may have a positive influence on cognitive functions.

The analysis for this study reveals that age is related with long-standing illness or disability which implies that there is a higher chance of suffering from long-standing illness or disability as people age. Suffering from long-standing illness is strongly associated with reporting of poor health outcomes. This means that the higher the age the more likely the person is to have suffered from illness or disability. Results show that the cohort aged 85 years or over has a 2.252 times higher likelihood of reporting a long-standing illness or disability than those in the 55-64 age cohort. Moderate activities are found to have a positive influence on age, but an older person has a higher chance of limiting even moderate activities (potentially 4.11 times higher for the 85+ years cohort compared to the 55-64 cohort). This study shows that age is related to dissatisfaction with health status with the oldest-old age group showing the biggest dissatisfaction compared to those in the 55-64 cohort. Age is found to be strongly associated with general happiness or overall wellbeing and indicates that the higher the age, the lower the propensity of reporting not being happy in the study sample. The study shows that important determinants of health and wellbeing in old age are related to moderate activities, satisfaction with health, health status, and general happiness.

Education plays an important role where the higher the education, the lower the chances of suffering from long-standing illness or disability. Education is also significantly related with limiting moderate activities, as is long-standing illness or disability and appeared to reduce the level of dissatisfaction among single women living alone. Higher education is linked with lower reporting of poor health demonstrating that education is an important determinant of health and happiness among this group of women. It can be considered therefore that promoting educational activities in later life may help to maintain better health and wellbeing.

A higher proportion of women reported poorer health in rural than in urban areas (43% vs 37% with a statistical significance difference at 1% level). Those women living alone in urban areas are less likely to be happy than their counterparts living in rural areas. Long-standing illness increases the likelihood of reporting not being happy.



Concluding Remarks

Having a contemporary research agenda that includes the specific needs of a diverse group of women within the ageing population is becoming important if we are to successfully grapple with the unique challenges of demography. The increasing emphasis on intergenerational relationships, meeting individual needs and developing policies in public health need to take account of the specific characteristics of cohorts of women whose living circumstances are changing within a more fluid society. Little research has been done about the circumstances of single women living alone and how changing relationship status impacts on their future needs and wellbeing. This is particularly true in relation to how key public services such as those providing care and support may need to respond and develop. Ageing women who have experienced long-term singlehood and who have not had children are a group at particular risk (Hafford-Letchfield *et al*, 2017).

The analysis demonstrated that age plays an important role across the life cycle and is a major determinant of health and wellbeing of individuals. Education may be another important variable for women living alone in terms of how they may be able to adjust and cope with the challenges of later life. There were some findings associated with measuring perceptions of health and happiness in this group of women that will need to be interrogated further.

Recap

Ageing and longevity have created many issues affecting older women in the UK, including living alone and social isolation that have become of increasing concern to policy-makers. This paper examines factors associated with the health and wellbeing of older women living alone using data collected in 'Understanding Society', a nationwide longitudinal survey that captures important information on the life course trajectories of individuals in the UK. This survey indicates a trend for increasing numbers of single women by age and place of residence. Women that live alone may need to find a suitable balance in later life and comparing profiles for different groups of older women may help decision-makers move towards an inclusive policy on positive ageing.

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Keywords

Single women, living alone, UK, health and wellbeing

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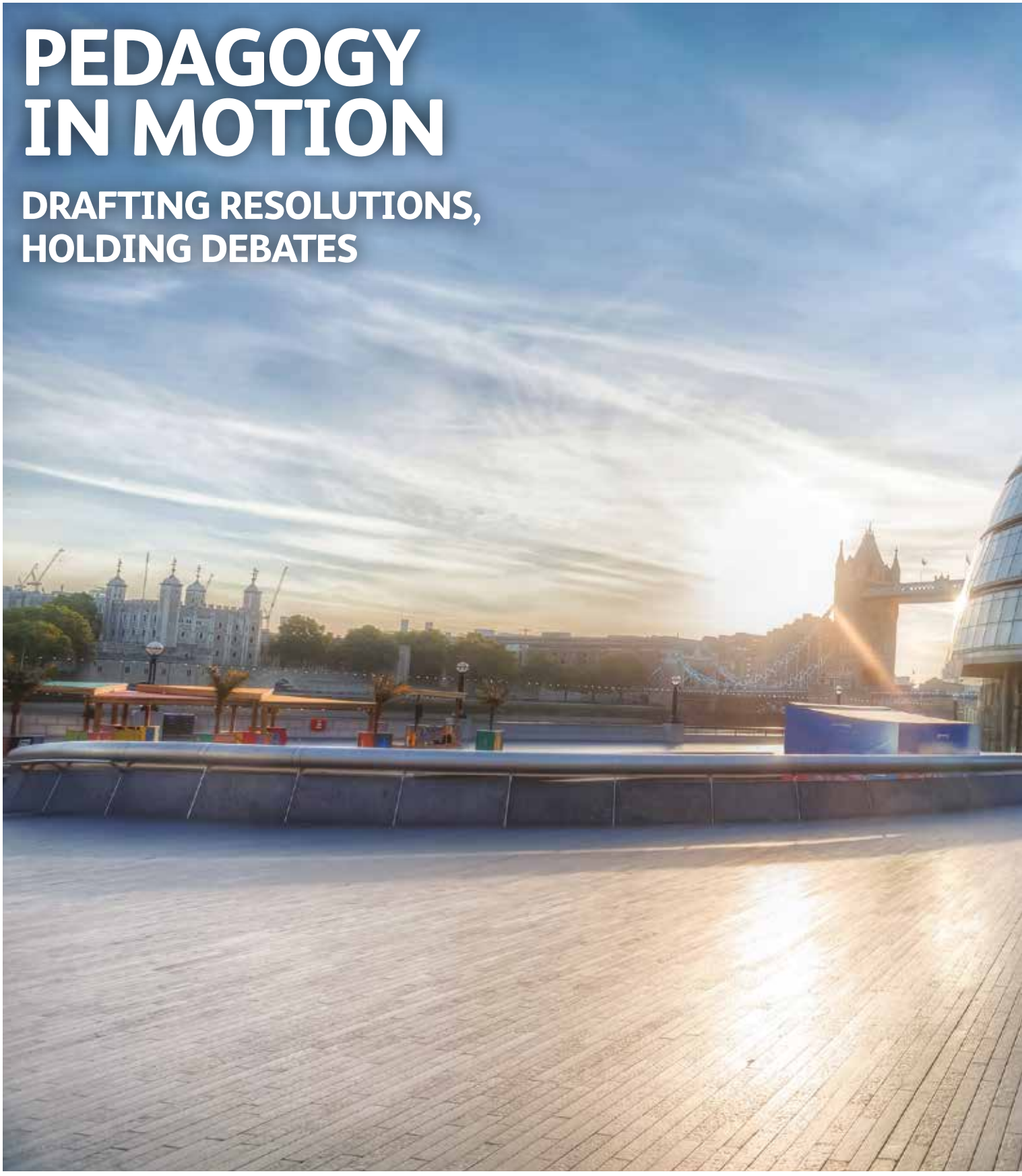
PEDAGOGY IN MOTION

DRAFTING RESOLUTIONS, HOLDING DEBATES



This article discusses the value of student debates and motion-writing exercises across all disciplines, starting from a public health-perspective.

An exercise in reorganisation

The UK coalition government reorganised healthcare in England in 2012. It devolved decision-making on health services away from the Department of Health and created a new planning body, NHS England. The reorganisation was all-encompassing, and it led to the NHS's £100 billion+ budget being channelled through a variety of new organisations. One of the justifications for the changes was to 'take politics out of the NHS'. However, an important group of NHS workers was moved directly into a more political working environment. Local public health teams were relocated from NHS Primary Care Trusts into local authorities. Local authorities are run by elected councils, of all political shades.

In councils, new staff are offered training on 'working in a political environment'. And when public health teams joined councils in 2013, councillors were also given briefings on the role of public health. Nevertheless, the duties of councils in England already covered many of the 'wider determinants of health', such as housing, education, green spaces, leisure services and licensing. In fact, this was the main reason for putting public health under the control of councils, so staff could work more closely with colleagues on 'upstream' public health issues. Evaluation of the reorganisation of public health teams is still equivocal (Peckham *et al*, 2017). That said, a refocus on local democratic decision-making and its impact on the determinants of health is much-needed. While much of the work of local authorities is undertaken by local government staff, elected members conduct council debates, and, prior to these debates, they submit motions, which, if passed, become resolutions for action. Thus, for students to better understand the new public health organisational environment, teaching on resolutions and debates is germane. Further reasons for teaching using debate are discussed in the next section.

Student debates provide active learning simulation experience on the complexities of the politician's role. All employment areas are governed by legislation, from funding for arts to financial regulation. Understanding the policy process equips staff with insights into how to affect change

Debating learning

Using in-class debates for teaching and learning purposes has several benefits. Firstly, student debates provide active learning simulation experience on the complexities of the politician's role. All employment areas are governed by legislation, from funding for arts to financial regulation. Understanding the policy process equips staff with insights into how to affect change. Secondly, student-debating exercises have been used with good effect across all disciplines in higher education to teach critical thinking skills (for instance, (Omelichev, 2007)).

Cottrell (2011: 2) characterises critical thinking as "a complex process of deliberation which involves a wide range of skills and attitudes" and according to her, critical thinking includes nine elements, which she lists. All the areas can be highlighted to students in a debate exercise. The first skill listed, for instance, is "identifying other people's positions, arguments and conclusions". For our purposes, a working definition of critical thinking, derived from Cottrell (2011), is the logical analysis of an issue, considering different perspectives and evidence. Academics have emphasised the need to support students in learning about critical thinking (HEA, 2104). 'Debate', which involves the assessment of evidence from different perspectives and judgements, is a common denominator across various discussions on critical thinking (Moon, 2008: 33, 45; Paul, 1994: 183). For this reason, among others, debate exercises continue to be a well-established pedagogical tool. They are an effective starting point for teaching critical thinking.

A resolution to debate

Resolution drafting is a key stage preceding debate. However, there is a paucity of academic literature on this. In addition, there is negligible published research on the use of motions and resolutions in society, and almost none on the education of drafters. Wallace, Watkins and Dixon-Terry's (2010) article is a lone example of a text, from across a wide range of disciplines, that partly rectifies the omission of writing in this academic field. Yet, theirs is a short 'how to' tool for professionals and does not discuss student-focused pedagogical activity. 'International relations' pedagogical simulations sometimes include a resolution drafting element, but there is no focus on this in the academic literature (Gentry, 2016: 334). However, it is argued here that learning about resolution drafting, alongside debates, can also be beneficial. Educational theories indicate that teaching in stages, with ample opportunities for reflection, increases the effectiveness of a teaching tool (Kolb, 2015: 68). Thus, providing motion-writing exercises, prior to debate, has some grounding in theory. These exercises are outlined in the next section.

Writing motions – a stage in debate

A 'motion', or 'draft resolution', means 'a formal proposal put to a legislature or committee' and a resolution refers to 'a firm decision and formal expression of opinion or intention agreed on by a legislative body [or committee]' (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2001). Wallace *et al* (2010) add that resolutions can also 'inform, educate, create awareness, motivate, [and] initiate dialogue on issues'.

Before teaching using motion writing, the author conducted background research on the organisations that pass resolutions on public health-related issues. These are charities, professional bodies, trade unions, business groups, campaigning groups, co-operatives, political parties, varieties of government councils and international organisations. The last, for example, includes the World Health Organisation that passed resolution 65.8 in 2012 '…agreeing resolute action on the social determinants of health …'. (WHO, 2012). The drafters included Professor Sir Michael Marmot, an international expert on inequalities in health.

Student engagement can be fostered by linking learning to their experiences. Students taking responsibility for initiating the content of resolutions are, in some respects, more immersed as participants in experiencing the whole debate process. In the teaching practice example referred to here, BSc Health Promotion and Public Health students at the University of West London drafted, in groups, resolutions on improving student health. (Resources from the exercises introduced in both 2016 and 2017, as well as evaluation methods and findings, are available from the author on request). The exercises gave lecturers a range of opportunities to link student experience to wider theory and practice. Previous discussions on 'power', for example, were reinforced. The control of agendas and restrictions on topics for debate, and a weak culture of resolution-writing, with most people lacking the skills to participate, was also provided as an example of a hidden form of control.

In our example, the students wrote resolutions on topics covering, for instance, promotion of stairs not lifts; availability of healthy foods; student loans; and aircraft noise. On a later date, following preparation of evidence, the students conducted a class debate on one of their motions: the expansion of London Heathrow Airport.

This article focuses on a broad discussion concerning the extrinsic value of teaching motion-writing and not on the effectiveness of one example. Nevertheless, further analysis undertaken by the author quantified the extent to which written assignments, associated with the teaching referred to, demonstrate debate. This analysis covered essays written in the years before and after debating took place. In the post-intervention essays, an increase in debate, associated with critical thinking, was found. Students also expressed positive views on the series of exercises, including the resolution-drafting aspect.

Debating motions – a discussion

It is intriguing that resolution drafting has not hitherto been discussed in the pedagogical literature. Instructors who regularly engage students in active learning exercises may easily conceive how a motion-writing stage can be added to a classroom debate exercise. They will also be able to design formative assessments, where individual students debate an aspect of a planned assignment. There may be other ways of producing some similar effects. For instance, there exists a burgeoning literature on online activism, or so-called 'clicktivism', including discussion of on-line petitions. Resolution-writing exercises could be recast as petition writing, with a subsequent debate about the petition. But this seems to hold few advantages. The benefits of adding the resolution stage to pedagogical debates are summarised in Table 1 (over page).

Reasons for holding student debates	Reasons for preceding debates with resolution-drafting exercises
Highlights that groups and protagonists may have differences of opinion on policy	Anticipates opposing arguments
Supports team working and speaking skills development	Supports clear and concise writing skills
Promotes critical thinking	Enables future practitioners to support communities in proposing actions to improve health
Encourages a search for alternative arguments	Teaches future practitioners how they might take forward suggestions to improve health – empowerment
Shows the potential to misuse evidenceto make a point	Promotes reflection on options for addressing health problems. Suggests that change, led by students and professionals is possible – empowerment
Teaches about public debates on topics such as 'Drink Debates' that encourage local ideas on addressing harmful drinking	Provides an understanding of the actions of public health leaders (Marmot, 2015)
Benefits in both stages	
Focuses on the need for evidence to back up arguments	
Provides experiential learning on democratic processes	
Breaks teaching into stages, increasing opportunities for reflection and reinforce learning (Kolb, 2015). Progression from motion writing to debate supports confidence building.	
Provides an engaging and memorable learning environment	
Helps lecturers to make connections to questions of 'power'	
Votes on motions can educate researchers, and others, about constituencies' opinions, thus complementing research using opinion poll data and focus groups, for instance	
The opportunities for further research on both debates and resolutions are evident	
Stimulates creative thinking, reflecting public health being an art as well as a science (Naidoo & Wills, 2016: 61)	

TABLE 1: The benefits of pedagogical debates and resolution-drafting exercises

The complexity of the term 'critical thinking' was highlighted at the start. And the components of 'debate' were identified as core to critical thinking. While debate can help to teach critical thinking, the question as to whether resolution writing itself should be part of this learning experience, needs to be explored.

The value of teaching resolutions can be assessed from the perspective of their use in society. Students may develop a good understanding of drafting resolutions. But if they are learning a redundant skill, of no wider currency, then the teaching practice is more questionable. Therefore, it was important to provide the background research identifying that resolutions on public health are in fact used across society and internationally. From this background research the author conducted, it can be surmised that resolutions are a feature of one route to agreeing actions to improve health. Thus, to teach these skills may contribute to individuals or communities controlling resources for health gain and empowerment. The value of 'teaching empowerment' is a more normative question, when contrasted to teaching critical thinking, and allows us to draw on an ethical perspective and reflect on our reasons for teaching. If empowerment is a key driver, then teaching on the setting-up of debates will hold more interest. However, the students in our groups reported that drafting resolutions also increased their understanding of 'agenda-setting', that is, state or private actors' power to control what in society gets discussed (Lukes, 1974). So, learning was not just about students' own direct personal empowerment, but it also supported their critical analysis of others' power.

A further justification is that students are also being taught, through active learning, to analyse the power of others. In addition, they might be better equipped to empower others

The paucity of academic literature on resolutions has been highlighted in this paper. There is a lack of pedagogical literature and academic political science research, for instance, on analysis of resolution topics, trends, outcomes and organisational context, including training provision. The cause of this can be speculated on and some potential limitations might be that:

- set exercises are too simplistic and not sufficiently challenging – they are self-explanatory;
- students may go off the topic and come up with irrelevant issues;
- empowering students and future professionals is not the perceived role of health promotion educators;
- pressures on the curriculum and increasing class sizes have de-prioritised debate and associated motion-writing;
- a lack of literature and experience among academics has meant that a culture providing these exercises has not been developed;
- a downturn in group participation has meant that lecturers have perceived students not to be interested in these procedures for achieving group agreement;
- teaching may cause tensions over politically partisan issues, that is, differences of opinion over controversial political topics;
- resolutions are too much associated with trade union and labour movement practices and not used sufficiently in professional organisations, charities and business organisations.

Health promotion and public health teaching covers concepts that are well known across the social sciences, such as, 'nudge theory', 'locus of control' and the 'ladder of participation' (Naidoo and Wills, for instance (2016: 67, 155, 173)). But students and staff may like to reflect on where 'promoting skills in drafting resolutions' fits into these models. Promotion of active decision-making via drafting and voting on motions seems to be an alternative that might complement 'nudging' in certain circumstances, for instance. Richard Thaler recently won a Nobel prize for his nudge theory by suggesting changing 'the 'choice architecture' in which individuals make decisions, for example removing confectionery counters from supermarket checkout areas' (Naidoo and Wills, 2016: 67). The potential of further research in this area is evident. For example, office workers' involvement in drafting and voting on motions to restrict presents of sweet foods at work might overcome problems with, on the one hand, control by more authoritarian means, or, alternatively, a laissez-faire approach that risks increasing obesity (Naidoo and Wills, 2016: 114).

Teaching students by facilitating the resolution writing process, prior to debate, is worthwhile if it is assumed that student empowerment and fostering a strong internal locus of control is valid. For instance, Wallace *et al*'s (2010) objective was 'to empower and educate health professionals to initiate and follow through on the policy development process within any authoritative body'. A further justification is that students are also being taught, through active learning, to analyse the power of others. In addition, they might be better equipped to empower others. Nevertheless, the motion-writing aspect of debate has not been, at the time of writing, widely discussed as a pedagogical exercise.

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Keywords

Critical thinking; debates; empowerment; pedagogy; resolutions

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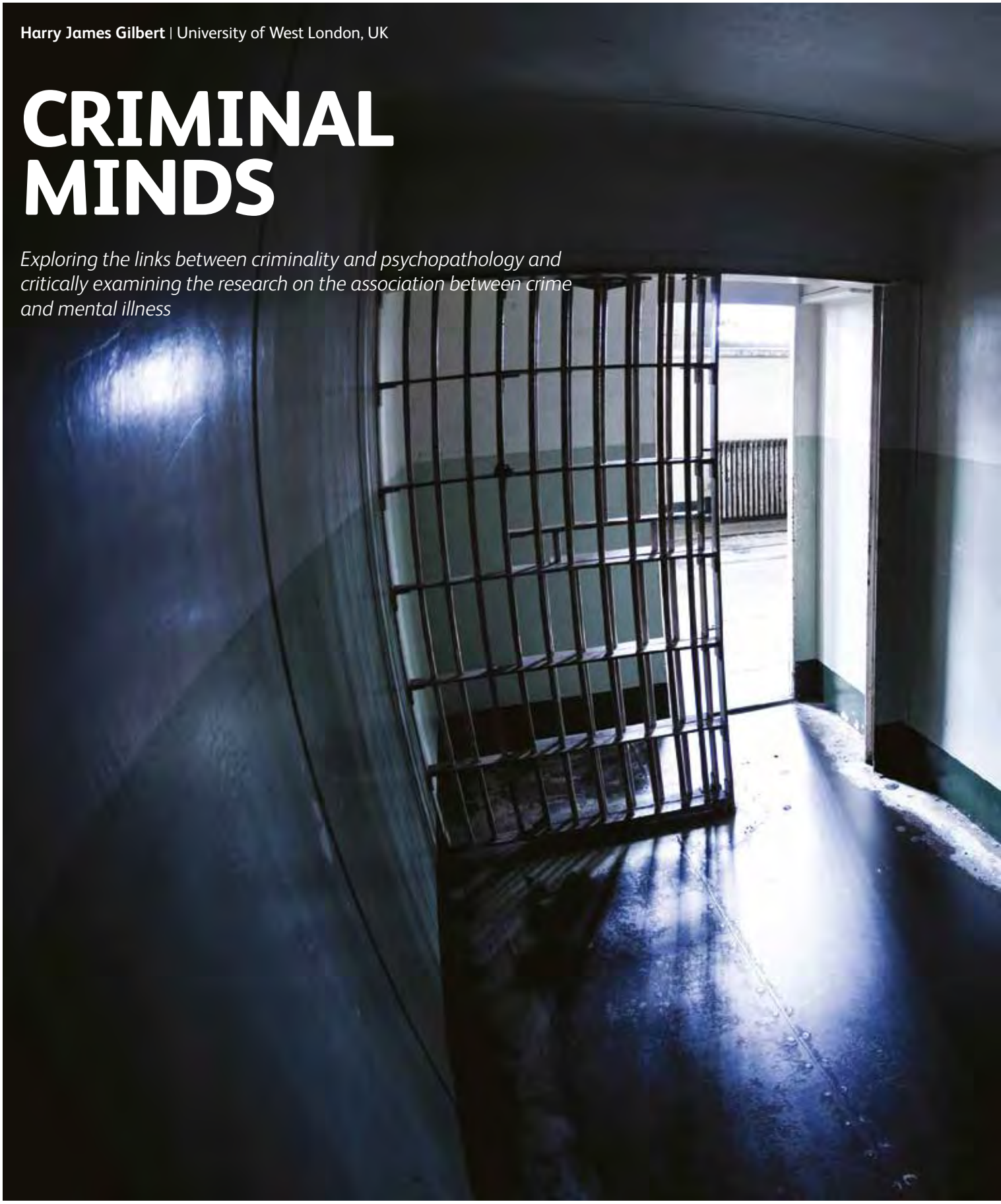
CRIMINAL MINDS

Exploring the links between criminality and psychopathology and critically examining the research on the association between crime and mental illness



A review found prisoners had a significantly higher risk of having psychiatric illnesses compared to the US and UK general populations, and particularly higher rates of major depressive disorder and antisocial personality disorder

Research has suggested one prevailing commonality between mental illness and crime, and that is there is an associative correlation between the two. This association between mental illness and crime has been found in prison figures, reoffending rates, and across criminal offences. However, despite the considerable body of research, there is still no precise understanding of the relationship between mental illness and offending. Recent findings suggest that mental illness is rising amongst prison populations, so it is important to expand empirical understanding of the relationship between offending and mental health. This article aims to critically examine some of the main empirical findings on the relationship between mental illness and offending.

Defining mental illness

To start with, it is important to define mental illness. Mental illnesses are cognitive conditions that cause harmful dysfunction to oneself, society, or both (Schug & Fradella, 2015). This definition is based on Wakefield's (1992) work which suggests that mental illnesses should be defined as conditions that cause dysfunction in terms of failure of biological or psychological, mechanisms to operate as usual. Wakefield added that for a condition to be defined as a mental illness there must be harmful consequences produced from the dysfunctional condition to either the individual or society. However, Wakefield's definition is flawed by a lack of clarity. For example, it is unclear how much harm does a mood disruptive behaviour need to cause for that behaviour to become a disorder. This subjectivity determining if psychopathological conditions are present is a significant issue for mental health professionals and increases the possibility of improper diagnoses. Despite this, the definition 'harmful dysfunction' manages to capture both the observable impairment, and the subjective harm, that is normally associated with mental illness.

Prevalence of mental illness and crime

Fazel and Seewald's (2012) multi-national meta-analytic review investigated the prevalence of mental illness in prison populations and found prisoners had a significantly higher risk of having psychiatric illnesses compared to the US and UK general populations, and particularly higher rates of major depressive disorder and antisocial personality disorder. Notably Fazel and Seewald's findings have significant validity as they only integrated studies into their meta-analysis that measured mental illness using validated diagnostic instruments, decreasing the chance of incorrect diagnoses, and studies which had random prison samples, mitigating potential confounding sampling biases. Furthermore, in UK offender populations higher rates of mental illness have been found in female offenders, older offenders and ethnic minority offenders (Brooker *et al,* 2002). It has been suggested that female offenders overrepresent mental illness relative to male offenders because criminality contradicts feminine gendered behaviour, which in turn affects the increased likelihood of psychiatric diagnosing (Weare, 2013).

Linking criminality and psychopathology

If mental illness rates are higher among offenders relative to the general population, the question remains why. Historically major shifts in public policy in the 1950's led to mass deinstitutionalisation of psychiatric hospitals, gradually moving psychiatric patients from hospitals to the community (Torrey, Kennard, Eslinger, Lamb, & Pavle, 2010). Though this novel policy shift was intentionally humanitarian, it later led to mass inadequate care of individuals with severe mental illnesses, ultimately resulting in what Torrey *et al* described as the "mass criminalization of the mentally ill" who estimated approximately half of individuals discharged from the deinstitutionalisation process ended up in US jails.

Abracen *et al* (2014), found that parolees with psychiatric conditions have significantly higher reoffending rates relative to parolees without a diagnosed mental illness. They argued that the reason for higher reoffending rates among mentally ill individuals outside of prison is predominantly due to lack of coordination between the criminal justice and mental health systems. This causes individuals receiving mental health care inside prisons to suddenly receive little to no care after their release, which can often result in decompensation and eventually reincarceration.

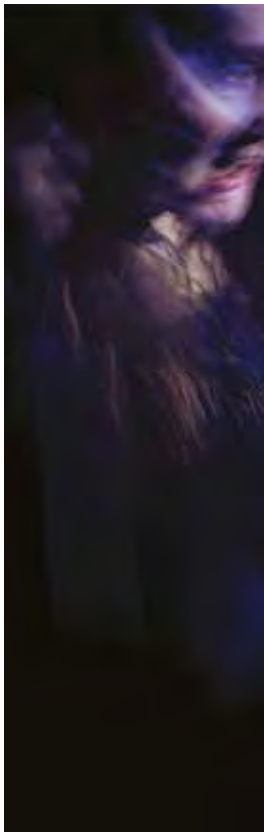
The research on the relationship between mental illness in offender populations and violent offending suggests there is a small but significant causal relationship. For instance, Silver, Felson and Vaneseltine (2008) investigated the relationship between mental illness and violence in a prison population, controlled for associative demographics, substance abuse, and prior criminality variables, and found a significant causal association. Additionally, Felson, Silver and Remster (2012) found psychosis and major depression conditions significantly increased the likelihood of committing violent offences to other prisoners and/or staff, possibly due to the psychopathological effects on cognition and emotional regulation.

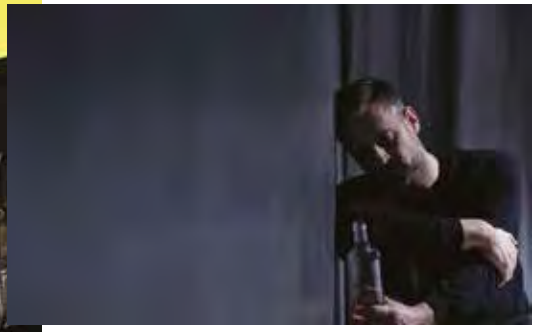
Research has also suggested certain mental illnesses have a larger impact on offender violence, particularly psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia. Hoptman *et al* (2009) found neurological evidence suggesting individuals with psychotic conditions had a dysfunctional prefrontal cortex and amygdala regions compared to healthy controls, suggesting that these brain regions relate to emotional control and their malfunction can lead to reduced ability to control emotional impulses. Notably, reduced emotional control and frontal lobe dysfunction has been found to correlate with criminal aggression and violence. Additionally, Felson *et al* (2012) found that psychotic illnesses increase the likelihood of offenders acting violently because delusional beliefs affect cognitive rationality and increase hostility biases. For instance, when individuals believe they are under threat (whether they are or are not), they are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviours.

Confounding Factors

The high prevalence of co-occurring substance abuse is a significant confounding factor affecting the understanding of the relationship between mental illness and offending (Drake & Bond, 2010). Between 50% and 70% of US prisoners have co-occurring substance abuse and mental health problems. Co-occurring substance abuse and mental illness is significant because research has suggested that this dual diagnosis exacerbates psychopathological symptoms, decreases likelihood of complying with psychotic medication, and reduces impulse control. Thus, it is likely that substance abuse has an interactional effect with mental illness and offending. But what remains unclear is whether mental illness or substance abuse (when co-occurring) is the more significant predictor of criminality. For example, Fazel *et al's* (2009), meta-analysis found that psychotic conditions are significantly associated with the risk of violent offending. Yet Fazel *et al* also noted the same levels of risk of violence were found in prisoners with just substance abuse issues, suggesting additional risk found in psychotic offenders is generally mediated by substance abuse, though this finding might be explained by undiagnosed mental health issues.

Co-occurring substance abuse and mental illness is significant because research has suggested that this dual diagnosis exacerbates psychopathological symptoms, decreases likelihood of complying with psychotic medication, and reduces impulse control. Thus, it is likely that substance abuse has an interactional effect with mental illness and offending





The question of causality

Does mental illness cause offending, or does the criminal justice processes cause mental illness? The likely answer is both factors play an interlinking causational role. For example, neurological evidence suggests that stress plays a major role in the susceptibility of developing mental disorders and enhancing psychopathological symptoms (Esch, Stefano, Fricchione & Benson, 2002). Schnittker and John, (2007) found evidence suggesting the incarceration process increases stress levels significantly. Both Esch *et al.*, (2002) and Schnittker & John (2007)'s combined findings suggest that for individuals who have committed a crime, the criminal justice system enhances the probability of developing mental disorders and increases psychotic symptoms. Silver, Felson, & Vaneseltine (2008) suggest psychotic conditions within a prison environment increase the likelihood of violent offending. Thus, it is likely both mental illness and offending factors seem to interact with each other and inflate criminogenic factors (elements that cause or likely increase criminal behaviour). For example, mental disorders have been found to increase the likelihood of living in socially and economically deprecated areas, and those areas have been linked to higher probability of committing crime (Sirotich, 2008). Therefore, offending and mental illness factors are likely to interact and enhance the likelihood of each other's occurrence.

Conclusion

The relationship between mental illness and offenders is multi-layered and complex. The high prevalence of confounding factors has made it difficult to isolate the effect mental disorders may have on offending and subsequently blurred the relationship between the two factors. Nonetheless, the research does suggest more people with mental disorders are ending up in prison. This trend does not directly mean there is a causal relationship between mental illness and criminality, but it is likely that both factors (offending and mental illness) enhance criminogenic factors and the susceptibility to develop a mental illness. This is critical as prisons are not effective environments in supporting the treatment of mental disorders. Therefore, it is likely that if offenders are treated more effectively within the criminal justice system, with the combination of improved mental health services, the number of individuals with mental disorders in criminal populations will fall.

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Keywords

Mental illness, crime

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Course
PhD Education

Year completed
2017

Title of thesis
Arts interventions and the desistance process: agency among female offenders during incarceration and upon release

Sophie's doctoral research focused on a small group of female offenders in England and the ways in which engagement in the arts during incarceration supported and accelerated their rehabilitation via a process of desistance theory. Desistance is a modern criminological phenomenon which describes how and why offenders stop their offending behaviour rather than more traditional models of rehabilitation which look retrospectively and consider the reasons why people offend. With this in mind the transition from 'offender' to 'ex-offender' was considered, as were the ways in which agency acquired through the arts can be applied throughout the continuing stages of rehabilitation. The research gave a voice to six marginalised women, enabling them to articulate their own experiences through art during a difficult period in their life.

A desistance model developed by Giordano *et al.* (2002) contextualised alongside Archer's (2003) theory of identity formation was critically evaluated. Links and comparisons between evolving reflexive identities and transitional stages of desistance were presented in order to answer the research questions. In doing so, it was determined that identity subgroups bear great resemblance to specific stages in the desistance process. Critical analysis further established that an individual could develop or re-establish an identity as a result of the creative activities they engaged in during incarceration.

This research has demonstrated that the practice of arts in prison for women participants can be prolific in its ability to build confidence and the associated assertion of agency and autonomy. This was largely achieved and evidenced through the consideration for personal narrative of artworks and artefacts of great importance and sentiment to the women. This also demonstrated the element of distance travelled, vital to any rehabilitative process.

The use of artefacts as data collection also offered great insight into personal journey and space in terms of psychological and reflexive activity of the participants. These artefacts have provided new phenomena in thinking around critical discourses in prison arts and how they relate to desistance theory. In particular, the emphasis of identity formation and how the physical piece of artwork can portray this process.

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This research has demonstrated that the practice of arts in prison for women participants can be prolific in its ability to build confidence and the associated assertion of agency and autonomy

Supervisors:

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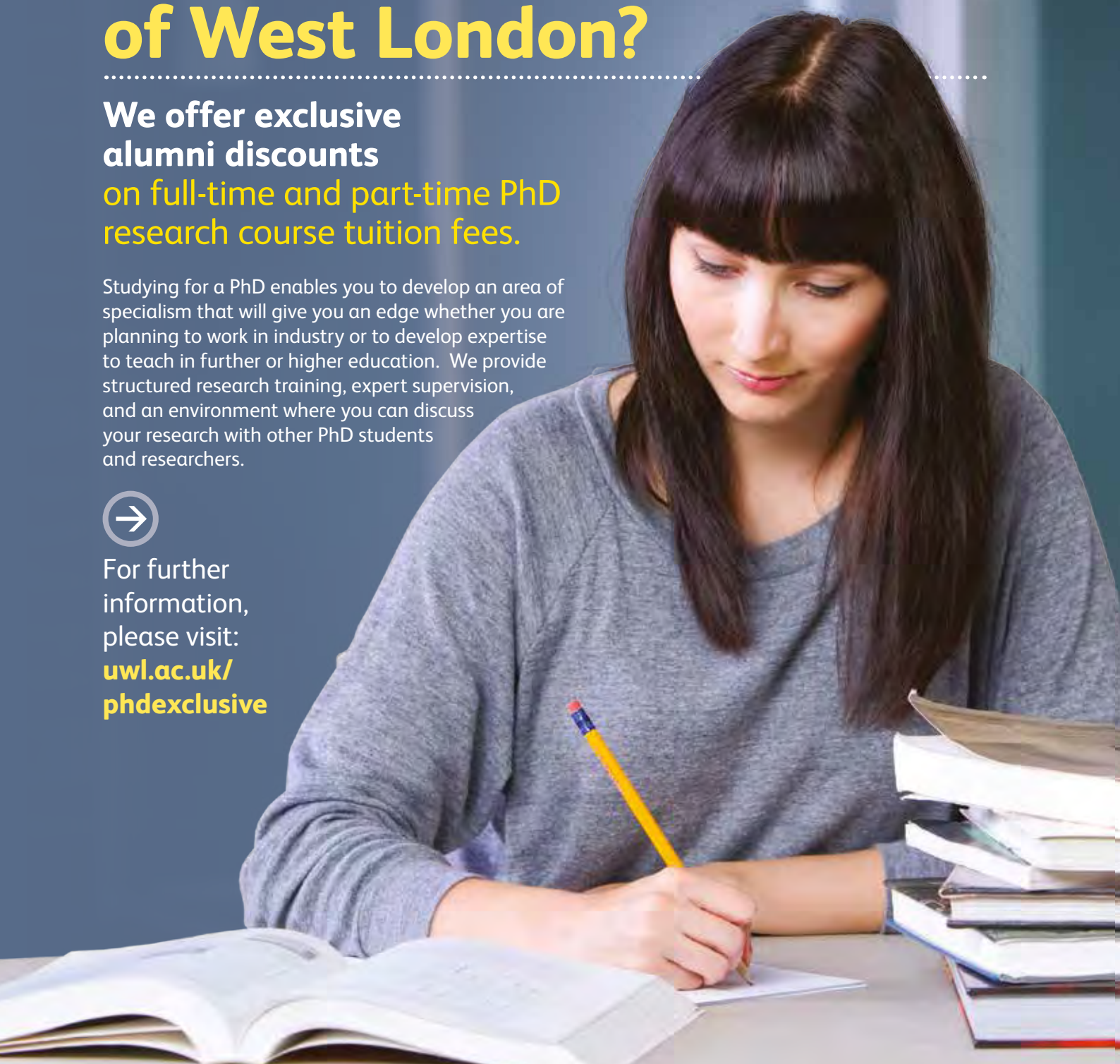

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