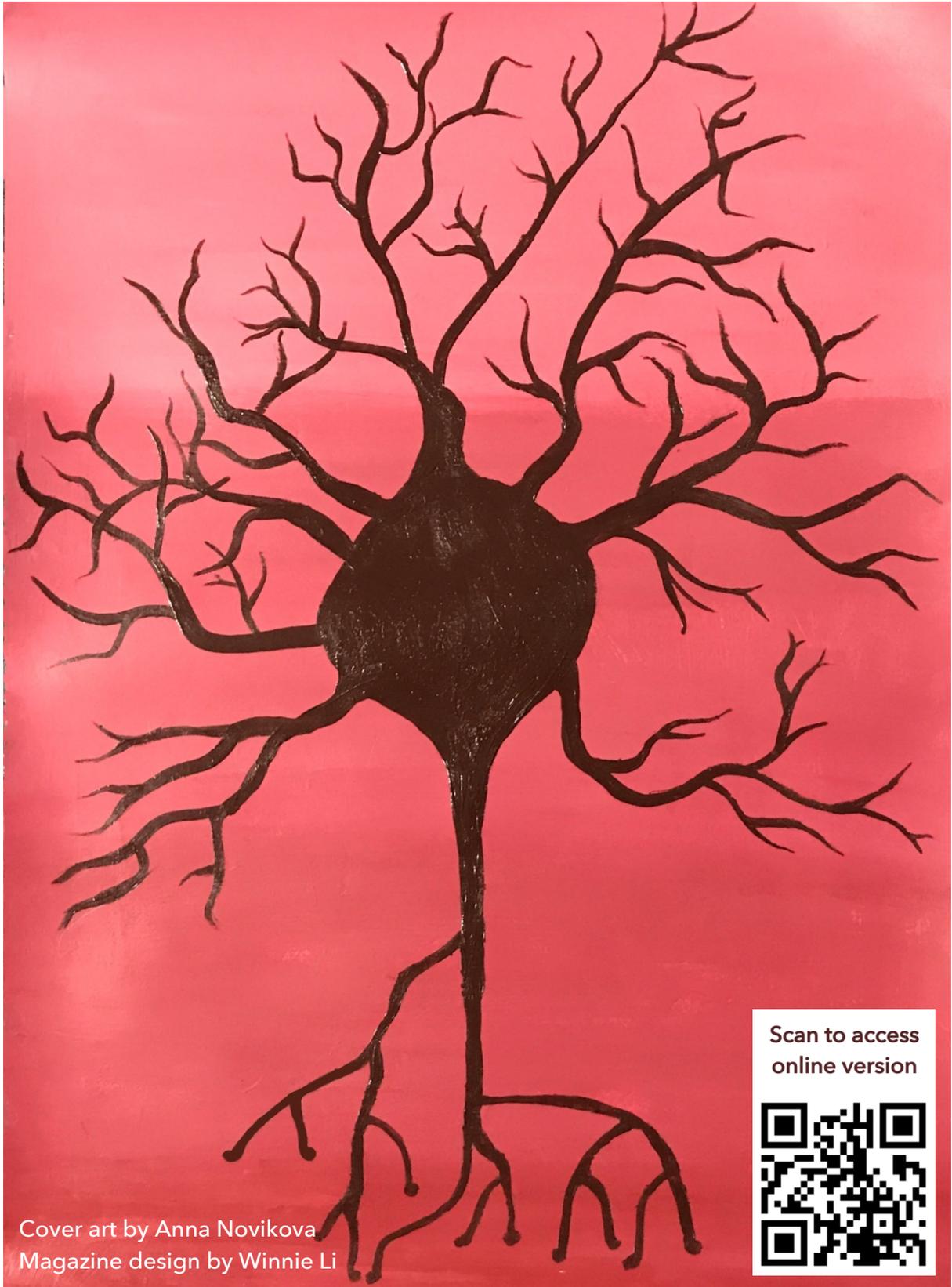


# —MAZE—

MAZE 2020 ISSUE 1



Cover art by Anna Novikova  
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## Letter from Editor in Chief

The MAZE committee is proud to have been able to relaunch MAZE and release its first issue 5 months after the committee was formed. In this issue you will find interviews we conducted with a science communicator and the founder of MAZE, a diverse range of contributions from students and graduates, as well as volunteer opportunities for psychology and neuroscience students. Our mission is threefold: 1) unlock the potential within students, 2) create a platform for students to develop science communication skills, and 3) share ideas. As part of that, we have opened MAZE to encourage contributions from other institutions across Scotland. This has allowed us to receive high quality articles for the current and next issue, and it has also been a valuable networking experience for us.

MAZE welcomes contributions in the form of articles as well as artwork for ISSUE 2, to submit please see information at the back of the magazine.

I would like to thank all the authors for submitting their work to us and also the entire MAZE committee for their dedication to the magazine.

Happy reading! - Winnie

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## Interview with Dr Clare Jonas, a professional science communicator

### What is science communication and what do you do as a science communicator?

Science communication is the practice of making the methods and findings of science accessible to as many people as possible, especially people who aren't experts in the area. It's different from teaching science in that it doesn't have to be formal or in-depth, and there's no testing afterwards to see what people have learned.

I've done lots of different things as a science communicator. For example, in my previous job at Bloodwise (a blood cancer charity), I spent a lot of time talking to the researchers we funded so that we could communicate their breakthroughs to people affected by blood cancer. I acted as a kind of translator – people with blood cancer often want to know what researchers are doing but may not have the science background to make sense of the academic papers.

I also do science communication freelance or just for fun in my spare time – in the last couple of weeks I've visited two local science clubs to give informal talks on synaesthesia, and I've just finished writing a blog about why people like flatpack furniture!

This is just one way to do science communication – other science communicators might demonstrate scientific findings in museums, provide science advice to governmental ministers, or visit schools to run one-off activities.

### Why is science communication important?

As you'll probably know if you've read a journal article or attended a conference, scientific writing and speaking that's by experts and for experts is often really difficult to understand for people who aren't familiar with the topic, even if they really want to know about it. A lot of scientists are good at explaining their work to non-experts, but some scientists aren't good at it, don't like doing it, or simply don't have time! A science communicator can be really helpful in those situations.

Science communication isn't just about making science accessible to people who are already interested. It's also about making science appealing to people who don't believe in science or don't like science. This is a really difficult problem, mainly because we can get in an infinite loop of opinions: I believe that science is useful, you believe that science is useless. Empathy comes in handy here, because it's no good just giving people information – that won't change anyone's opinions. Instead, you need to work out why someone has different beliefs from you, find common ground, and build from there.

### How did you get involved with science communication? What inspired you to become a science communicator?

I used to be an academic, and in fact I worked at St Andrews! I was a teaching fellow in the School of Psychology and Neuroscience. After a couple more jobs in academia I realised it wasn't for me and started looking for other things to do – that's how I found the job at Bloodwise. It contained a lot of what I enjoyed about academia (teaching and coming up with creative ideas) but I didn't need to work such long hours to get my job done. By the time I'd been doing it a few weeks I knew that it was the career path for me!

### How do you choose what to write about?

For my website, blogs are partly inspired by questions that my friends or family want to know the answer to, like [whether the phase of the moon affects your sleep patterns](#). Other blogs are

questions that I've wondered about myself, like [why you can 'catch' a yawn](#). Still others are about topical things, like during the 2018 World Cup I wrote about [whether a team's kit colour can affect their chances of winning](#), and at Hallowe'en I like to write about spooky things like [out of body experiences](#). I'm only one person but I have a lot of ideas, so sometimes I ask a friend or colleague to write a blog - Dr Kate Cross wrote [a great one on whether it's a good idea to steal your friend's boyfriend](#). I'm always happy to hear blog ideas if there's a topic a reader wants to know about!

## **What do you need to get involved with science communication? Can anyone do it?**

It helps to have a science background, as you might imagine, but it doesn't need to be in the science you want to communicate about. My training is in psychology and neuroscience but to do the Bloodwise job I had to learn a lot, very rapidly, about cancer science.

I don't have any formal training in science communication, but I use a lot of what I learned during my time as an academic (teaching complex subjects, running workshops about science for schoolkids, even how to keep people's attention by making them laugh) to figure out how to make things accessible to people, so if science communication is something you come to after a career change then you might already have the skills you need. If that's not the case, there are also courses in science communication that you can take, usually at MSc level. Quite a few universities around the world now offer these, including [Manchester](#), [Edinburgh](#), [Utrecht](#) and the [Australian National University](#).

## **What is the most exciting/ interesting thing you've had to do on the job?**

One of my freelance science communication activities is a workshop on synaesthesia (the mixing up of the senses) and I love it - it's half introduction to the topic, half playing with plasticine. To get people to understand what synaesthesia might be like, I get them to pick an emotion, imagine what it be like in terms of colour, shape and texture if it had a physical form, and then make it! It's amazing how often you can predict the emotion just from seeing the sculpture: anxiety's often grey and brown and spiky; contentment is usually round and in bright colours.

## **What is the biggest challenge you've faced as a science communicator?**

When I'm doing science communication about an area outside of my own research expertise, sometimes it's a bit of a battle to get a scientist to explain something in words simple enough that I can understand! I know if I can't get it then there's no hope I can explain it to someone else, which means having to admit that I didn't understand and getting them to repeat it in simpler words - and that means some careful phrasing so the scientist doesn't feel I'm blaming them for not explaining it well enough. It does get easier to have that conversation with time, though.

## **With whom do you engage as a science communicator? (e.g. public, schools, government?)**

All sorts of people! As I said earlier, a science communicator essentially translates academic language into everyday words. At one end of that translation process I'm talking to the scientist. At the other, it might be colleagues, members of the public, children, teenagers, potential donors to a charity, or (though I haven't yet done it directly) the government, if it's something that might affect their policy. I always have to keep in mind who I'm talking to, what they already know, and how interested they're likely to be in what I have to say.

# Interview with Sarune Savickaite, founder of MAZE

## When and why did you start MAZE?

I started my studies at the University of St Andrews in September 2011. Towards the end of my second year and start of the third year I realised I wanted to get more involved with the department. Especially, as I spent my first two years in Biology and Chemistry labs. I worked in publishing briefly and have always had a passion for it. I realised we did not have a magazine or a newsletter at the school. I booked an appointment with the head of school at the time, Prof Verity Brown. She loved the idea and I started planning the first issue. As we did not really have a budget to start with, the first issues were photocopied in black and white. After a few issues I went back to the Head of School, Prof Keith Sillar, and he agreed to pay for some printed copies. We finally could produce a more substantial publication. I kept the same style and the logo. After a few initial issues I persuaded more people to contribute and in my final year, the issue looked a lot more like a magazine. I know that the magazine ran for a while before a short break. I am very pleased that MAZE is being re-launched this year.

## What challenges did you encounter when you founded the magazine?

The main challenge was finding people to write for the magazine. I initially asked lecturers and Dr Akira O'Connor was one of the first ones to write for the magazine. I recruited my friends and wrote a few articles myself. Getting people involved was definitely the hardest part.

## Why is it important get involved and publish in magazines like MAZE?

Academia is time consuming and there is already a lot of writing involved, especially at the postgraduate level. However, it is increasingly more important to write for the general population and people who might not know your research. Translating your work into a more comprehensible scientific writing is a great skill to have, especially, if you want your work to be noticed. It is also a great practise explaining the topic of interest and helps with general writing skills. I would encourage people to write more, especially if they want to continue their studies at a postgraduate level.

## What are you doing now?

I am in the first year of my PhD at the School of Psychology, University of Glasgow. After graduating from the University of St Andrews I moved to Glasgow and took a short break before starting to look around for postgraduate funding. It can take a while to find the right supervisor, write the application and get the studentship. I contacted Dr David Simmons at the University of Glasgow, who knew my undergraduate supervisor Prof Julie Harris. We discussed my research interests and serendipitously he had recently spoken to local software development company Sublime about collaboration possibilities. We have realised we can combine the novel technology of Virtual Reality (VR) with vision research in autism. We wrote the proposal together and the rest is history.

## What is an industrial partnership (and how do you find one)?

I was awarded industrial partnership award by ESRC in 2018. I was funded for master's and 3 years of PhD (1+3). Industrial partnership studentship with ESRC does not differ from standard ESRC studentships too much. Industrial partners, Sublime in my case, contribute a certain percentage towards the studentship. The rest of the collaboration is up to the student and the supervisor. In my case, I spend around 50% of my time with Sublime and have a desk at their Glasgow offices. The work I do with Sublime closely overlaps with my PhD. Other industrial partnership might be slightly different.

Interdisciplinary research has become a lot more common over the last few years. Majority of the research bodies issue awards for projects with a measurable impact. Thus, working with industrial partner is a perfect way to secure funding for postgraduate studies. A lot more companies are now seeking collaborations with universities and academia. I would encourage students to seek connections and network. Approach companies of interest during your undergraduate years and ask for any volunteering or internship opportunities. Increasing numbers of academics have contact with various business, so your supervisor might already have some interesting collaborative studentships. I always say ask - 'closed mouths do not get fed'.

For more information on our industrial partners visit their website at [www.sublime.cc](http://www.sublime.cc).

### **Tell us something about your PhD project**

We are at a very early stage of my project. I am currently working on collecting more data for our first experiment, which I have started in my Masters, and writing up my literature review. Title of my project is 'Using Virtual Reality to Understand Inner World of Autism'. We started with a simple drawing task, the Rey Osterrieth Complex Figure, and asked our participants to complete it in the virtual environment, using TiltBrush by Google. We have tested only neurotypical participants and we plan to set up a few more experiments before testing diagnosed autistic individuals. Our aim is to allow individuals with limited verbal capabilities to express themselves visually in the virtual world via various drawing tasks. We are also looking into perceptual aspects of autism and how it manifests in three-dimensional environment. For more information on my work visit my personal website at [www.sarune.info](http://www.sarune.info).

## **LETTER FROM FEATURES EDITOR**

My vision for 'Features' prior to our call for submissions was for it to be a section that students could relate to. Features is a section for students to communicate their experiences with academics, internships, and opportunities, both within and outside the University. In this issue, the first features article is about a graduate's experience with an internship opportunity. The second is written by a current student who explores the reason she wishes to pursue Clinical Psychology. Overall, receiving articles and editing them has been an exciting process and I am looking forward to continuing this for our next issue as well!

**Tahira Kaur Chopra**

second year undergraduate

# Clinical Psychology: My Calling

by Kaenat Kohli

University of St Andrews, second year undergraduate

Ever since my childhood, courtroom drama always intrigued me. At a very young age, I had decided I wanted to become a lawyer. Visiting the courts, studying history and political science from a young age, I made up my mind on what I wanted to do until I attended my first psychology class in high school. My curiosity in the subject started with a simple question put forth by my psychology teacher in class - "What and why do people think?" It forced me to introspect. Where does one even begin to trace their thoughts? Does it all come from the brain? If it doesn't, then what do we investigate outside the brain? Self-analysis eventually led me to fall in love with Psychology. This article will describe my journey into choosing Psychology as my major.

I found myself questioning human behaviour, their varied reactions to everyday situations, their struggles, and so on. What governs these differences? What is the driving force behind one action causing countless diverse reactions in us humans? It made me go beyond the prescribed syllabus to try and unravel the many wonders of the conscious and unconscious mind. Everything changed thereafter for me. Gaining a deeper insight into an individual's motives, behaviour, emotions, feelings, thoughts and actions helped me understand the intricacies of the human mind and more so a better understanding of myself. I, therefore, witnessed self-growth while finding myself making more informed decisions. I found myself in a myriad of situations where I successfully managed to gain a better insight into the workings of human behaviour.

Having studied psychology for over 4 years now, Clinical Psychology is the area that fascinates and intrigues me the most. Learning

about different disorders and the functioning of the human brain in class and at close quarters by shadowing esteemed clinical psychologists by observing patients, I managed to learn qualitative, quantitative and problem-solving skills necessary to become a clinical psychologist. Working with animals and underprivileged children till date has made me resilient and more well-versed with human and animal nature and have made me realise how passionate I am to pursue a career in psychology. It is very important in today's day and age to understand the actions and behaviour of people we surround ourselves with.

Clinical Psychology is the path I have chosen for myself in order to further understand the intricacies of the human mind. It will not only help me understand myself better but will also be a crucial step for my self-growth. Once I complete my studies and manage to gain enough work experience in this field, being able to help in improving an individual's mental health and sense of well-being would be the most rewarding job of all. To be able to make the smallest difference in a person's life is the most gratifying and fulfilling emotion for me; therefore, I feel extremely passionate about this subject.

The mind, having facilitated countless researches ever since humans became conscious of it, has time and again captivated us with its workings, yet this is one subject which will never be fully comprehended. The intricate machinery that the human mind is, cannot possibly be completely mastered, but by continuing to study psychology at a university level, I hope to understand its complexities to a great extent more so in the future.

***"The mind is a beautiful servant, but a dangerous master." - Osho***

# SLV Global

by **Katriona Goodsell**  
**Plymouth University graduate**

*"SLV.Global is a Mental Health organisation operating in Bali, Europe and India. They provide students and graduates from around the world the opportunity to gain valuable, practical experience in the mental health sector whilst being immersed in a unique and exciting culture."*

I completed my undergraduate degree in Psychology in 2017, and quite honestly, I was lost afterwards. I knew I needed a break from academic work - although I had wanted to continue with a master's course or a Clinical route after my degree, I couldn't remember a time when I hadn't been studying. However, what became very apparent very quickly, was that I couldn't get any graduate jobs because I didn't have enough experience in the field. Faced with the daunting reality of being a graduate with a 0-hour hospitality job, I turned to volunteer. Ideally no, I wouldn't have been taking unpaid work, but if I wanted to stay in the field I had chosen and wanted a career in, then I was going to have to risk it. That's when I stumbled across SLV.Global on a Facebook Ad. Say what you will about our phones listening into us being a bad thing.....mine was a positive turn out, where I found not only work experience in the field of psychology but also the chance to travel - perfect!

Over the course of the past 2 years, I have now completed all of SLV.Global's programmes and placements; including 14 weeks in Sri Lanka, 4 weeks in Bali, 2 weeks in India and I am hoping 2020 will allow me to complete the new programme in Croatia. Funding my way through these opportunities differed every time. I found the "Fundraiser's Hall of Fame" on SLV.Global's website incredibly useful - with past volunteers sharing their top tips for fundraising. For my first adventure I found big events, such as Ladies Pamper Evenings and Pub Quiz nights to bring in lots of money in one go. For my second trip, I did little and often fundraisers like cake sales, office games and "Blind Date with a Book." Each way of fundraising is unique and different, and I've even asked local councils, charities, Rotary clubs and the W.I for donations! Even working and saving can work if that's what fits your schedule best.

I wish I had known about these opportunities before graduating, because I can't even begin to imagine the amount of time I would have saved if I'd been able to complete these during my summers whilst studying. However, it isn't all bad, as by getting the hands-on work experience and the cross-cultural knowledge that I have from these placements, I now studying a master's at one of the Leading Universities for Global Mental Health in the country.

I recommend SLV.Global to anyone and everyone who either wants to expand their knowledge of Mental Health, wants to get that hands-on work experience, and wants to travel whilst doing so! They provide a certificate of completion and a professional reference at the end of every placement/programme and couldn't be more helpful from beginning to end (there really is no question too big or too small!).

If anyone has any questions about the courses available, or wants to get more information, you can find them on Social media, email them at [info@slv.global](mailto:info@slv.global) or look on their website [www.slv.global](http://www.slv.global)

## **LETTER FROM REVIEWS EDITOR**

Working as the Reviews Editor for MAZE this year has been both a new and fun experience for me. I really enjoyed reading the submissions and I'm sure you will too! One of them is a review of a Spectator article, which looks at how some scientific findings can be reframed to suit certain political convictions. The second is a review of 'Take me as I am, whoever I am', an episode that is part of an anthology series, which has as protagonist a woman with bipolar disorder. They're both great so make sure to give them a read!

**Theodora Sabadeanu**

fourth year undergraduate

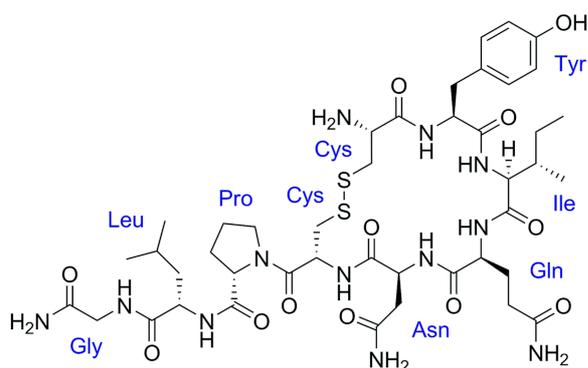
# The Oxytocin Myth

by Natalia Zdorovtsova

University of St Andrews, fourth year undergraduate

It should come to us as no surprise that biological and neuroscientific research, upon reaching the general public, can cause some to reframe findings to suit their political convictions. If ideologues can portray their beliefs as 'reflected within nature', they can persuade others into complacency: *well, if it's natural, there is nothing we can do about it*. Complex biological interactions are reduced to meaningless soundbites: "testosterone makes you masculine"; "oestrogen makes you feminine"; "serotonin makes you happy". Hormones and neurotransmitters become regarded as buttons which, when pressed, directly result in specific behaviours and attributes across all individuals. It is no surprise that these supposed effects can be interpreted with incredible ease as ideologically relevant.

Let us take a Spectator article by Rod Liddle published in August, 2017. Liddle, who writes intentionally inflammatory social commentaries, tends to inspire both praise and bitterness in readers across the political spectrum. This is shown immediately by the title of his article: "Take oxytocin and you too can be a liberal halfwit". Conservative agenda? Check. Eye-catching, shock-inducing buzzwords? Check.



This is a diagram of an oxytocin molecule.

Oxytocin, like many other hormones, contributes to a wide variety of functions across the body. It is also believed to influence behaviour.

In his article, Liddle suggests that "if we gave liberals oxytocin inhibitors, they would end up being at least borderline rational, able to debate the issue without screaming 'they are human beings!' and sobbing uncontrollably." In stating this, he makes it clear that he views liberalism as a disease, with oxytocin as its primary cause. If only we could restore everyone's brain to its highly rational, no-nonsense Platonic ideal—then, surely, everyone would discuss political issues in a perfectly emotionless manner. Further along in his article, Liddle mentions that "In British schools, 90 per cent of students taking computing at A-level are male. Just as almost 80 per cent of students taking physics are male. There has to be a reason for this, and it cannot simply be down to institutionalised gender inequality." Attempted reification of discriminatory political beliefs through an appeal to science? *Check*.

How, then, did we reach the point where this type of reporting can be accepted by readers? Why is oxytocin so poorly represented by the media as, in Liddle's own words, a "cuddle drug"? And, of course, what are the actual functions of oxytocin?

There is an established link between oxytocin release and affiliative behaviours, such as pair bonding. The findings of a study conducted in 2012 also suggested that the initial period of romantic love may be characterised by intense increases of activity in the oxytocinergic system of the brain (Schneiderman et al.). Oxytocin's stress-reducing effects have also been observed. In prairie voles, oxytocin reduces activity in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis—the body's fight-or-flight response system—and accompanies positive social interactions (Carter, 1998). In addition to this, oxytocin plays a vital role in both inducing childbirth in mammals and promoting maternal behaviour by balancing certain elements of brain activity (Marlin et al., 2015). The evidence certainly

exists for oxytocin as a hormone which aids the formation of kinship and pseudokinship bonds.

But there is another side to oxytocin: not only does it promote affiliative behaviours within pairs and groups, but also encourages the exclusion of those not within the group. Studies have found that oxytocin enhances the recognition of ingroup members' faces and increases levels of ingroup trust (Van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2012), whilst at the same time augmenting levels of ethnocentric ingroup favouritism and outgroup derogation (De Dreu, 2011). Oxytocin does not merely cause affiliative behaviour – it intensifies ingroup/ outgroup polarisation, making us stay closer to those groups with which we identify, and even further removed from others.

Perhaps it is the case, then, that oxytocin levels are not especially high in tolerant, accepting people, but rather in people who exclude others based on societally constructed lines of identification. Or perhaps not—as always, the more research is done into a phenomenon, the more complex and nuanced our definitions become. The point is, we should not trust articles which purport, even light-heartedly (or sardonically), that any hormone or neurotransmitter alone 'causes' people to adopt certain political ideologies or personalities. A recurring theme in neuroscience: everything is always more complex than we can ever imagine.

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# The In-between

by Nona Pop

University of St Andrews, third year undergraduate

Bipolar disorder is a chronic illness most often characterised by dramatic mood swings, periods of mania and extreme depression, usually with onset in early adulthood. For Terri Cheney, New York Times bestselling author, it takes the form of 'darkness' that started 'in high school, when I simply couldn't get out of bed one morning. No problem, except I stayed there for 21 days' (2008). Cinema has a long history of tackling mental disease, yet often falls short, either by further promoting stigma, or by overdramatizing the idea of mental illness as a horror-esque experience. Examples such as *The Shining*, *Shutter Island* or *One Flew over a Cuckoo's Nest* come to mind, which - despite being staple pieces of cinema - nonetheless promote a stigmatized view of mental disease. However, some movies have been able to walk the fine line of clinical and cinematographic relevance.

This year, Amazon released *Modern Love*, a show based on personal essays from a New York Times column, organized as a collage of short movies tackling love and relationships in a modern age. While most of the episodes seem retellings of stories we've seen before, one story stands out. 'Take me as I am, whoever I am' features Anne Hathaway as Lexi, a woman suffering from bipolar disorder, attempting to find love and professional success in the 21st century, concerned about being stigmatized by those closest to her. This particular episode is based on a piece written by Terri Cheney, who authors a series of raw, open writings about living with bipolar disease. The half-hour episode catches Lexi going through manic and depressive stages while battling the concern that her dualistic psyche makes her incapable of intimate relationships.

When portraying any kind of mental illness, it is hard to subdue viewers into an 'abnormal' mentality, without ending up with a clinical and somewhat melodramatic account

of life with a disorder. Our ability to be immersed viewers depends on our capacity for empathy, yet how would you understand the high of a manic phase or the fall into bipolar depression without having experienced it? What John Carney, the director, manages to do is seamlessly create a universe that is not the factual reality in which Lexi struggles with bipolarity, but the insides of her mind. Everything happens in a fast-colourful pace when she is manic, conversations move quickly, and she breaks out into dance in the middle of the street. As the 'darkness' settles in, you can feel everything slowing down, changing colour tone, fading away and losing vivacity not only in the character change, but in the surroundings, in the way the action decelerates. Carney is thus neuroqueering (Yergeau, 2018) filmic representation, meaning that he plays with perceptual techniques that are proper to bipolar manifestations and changing the way we see the world.

What I found particularly appealing from a more scientific standpoint, is Lexi finishing off by speaking of disease management, both in terms of acceptance and openness, but also in terms of medication as 'a little yellow pill I'm very fond of, and a pale blue one, and some pretty pink capsules, and a handful of other colours that have turned my life around'. Stigma attached to drug treatments in personality disorders remains a side effect of antidepressant misuse, or misdiagnosis that have sparked an array of appalling side-effects. Often cinema indirectly promotes a stigma of drug treatment, as identity altering and going into remission with no pharmaceutical treatment, yet this is not the reality for most struggling with mental illness. In bipolar disorder specifically, a long history saw treatment with sedatives. Around the 20th century lithium salts were seen to have a mood-stabilizing effect in its treatment. Since then other drugs including anticonvulsant agents saw FDA approval, making life with

bipolar disorder much more manageable. Most early drugs were defined as 'anti-manic' and focused on treating mania episodes. Modern treatments focus on targeting the depressive episodes (e.g. lamotrigine), a change in scientific focus which might reflect a change in social mentality (López-Muñoz et al., 2018). The fear of "losing the manic" also appears in Cheney's account: 'I think, how wonderful it was to be Gilda, if only in my own mind. But then I remember the price of the sky'.

The bittersweet plot twist is that Lexi doesn't in fact find romantic love, but rather a different kind of love, rooted in friendship and trust. The story ultimately speaks to a higher truth that resonates in all of us: acceptance,

receiving love for all parts of us: the high, the low, the in-between. Hathaway speaks of fan encounters with people coming up to say, 'I know and love someone who has bipolar disorder' (Potts, 2019). Social stigma related to mental illness still challenges our 'modern' world. While suicidal behaviours go beyond social stigma and reflect inherent consequences of living with a mental illness, across types of bipolar disorders there are roughly 25-60% suicide attempts, with 4-19% being successful (Novick et al., 2010). Immersing ourselves in neuroqueer films, fiction and art can not only benefit our own understanding of mental illness, but also help us see the world through neurodiverse eyes and push us a step further away from stigma.

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## LETTER FROM DIGESTS EDITOR

This is my first time being an editor for a magazine, but I am certain that this will always be one of the main highlights of my university career. Reading the submissions is the best part of being a MAZE editor as I get to learn interesting knowledge and findings that open my eyes. Who would have guessed singing Happy Birthday, such simple cheerful activity, is actually so complicated?! And if you are interested in mindfulness or feel that stress is getting the better part of you, be sure to check out the article on mindfulness written by our University's PhD student, which I find to be rather helpful.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the students who submitted their articles. Your effort is truly appreciated.

**Jacob Tan**

first year undergraduate

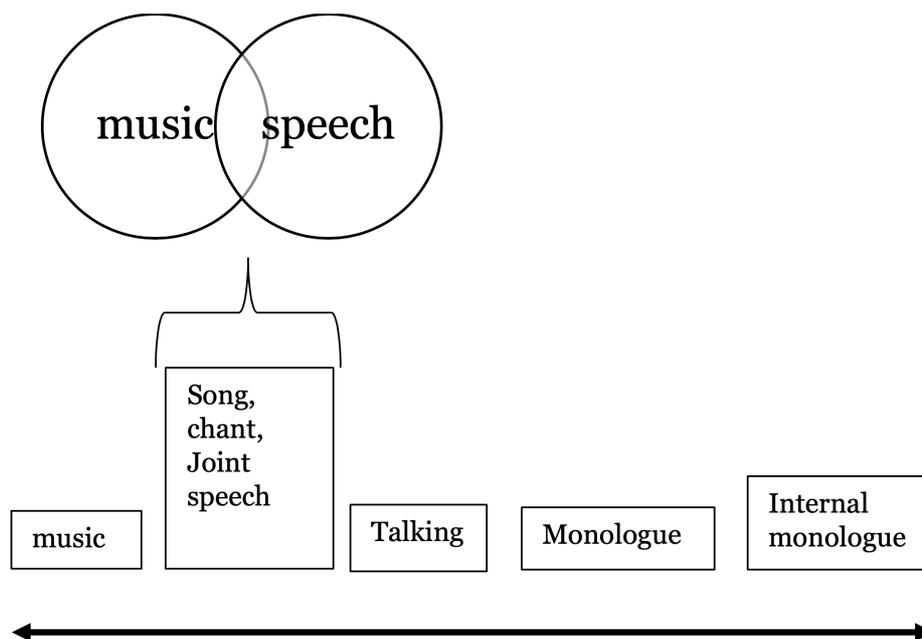
# Singing Happy Birthday - It should be very difficult.

by Callum Wilson

Abertay University, third year undergraduate

Think about the last time you sang happy birthday. It was probably with a group of other people at some sort of gathering and you probably didn't practise beforehand, or even decide what key and tempo to sing in. You might even have been in a restaurant and the table next to you started singing it and you felt a strange compulsion to join in. If we see this activity as one involving a series of individual cognitive information process, it is complicated and involves a lot of attention.

Speaking and singing together is present across a variety of social contexts involving prayer, for example, saying the rosary collectively, political protest, music concerts and during sporting events such as football chanting (Cummins, 2018, p. 11-28). Joint speech and singing occupy a middle ground between speech and music on a scale from individual internal monologue to music (Cummins, 2013). This scale relates to the degree of which speech or music is coordinated. In chanting there is an absence of an obvious meter, and rhythm emerges organically (Cummins, 2013). Laboratory research has been carried out on joint speech. When joint speech is investigated in an isolated laboratory environment it is referred to as synchronous speech (Cummins, 2013).



Simple Venn diagram showing a scale from speech to music as proposed by Cummins (2013).

One issue when researching joint speech or singing is the distinction between speech and music. Speech and music are usually distinguished from each other. Patel (2012), for example, argued that they have separate representations in our long-term memory. However, some research has found that the perception of rhythm in music and speech is neuronally similar (Hausen et al., 2013; Jasmin et al., 2016). Generally, music perception involves more left hemisphere areas whilst speech perception involves more right hemisphere areas (Zatorre & Gandour, 2008). However, as Zatorre and Gandour (2008) suggested, this may have more to do with specialisation of areas to acoustic elements than an abstract difference between speech and music. Cummins (2013) argued for a coordinative scale from silent speech to music as shown above; here song, chant and joint

speech occupy a middle ground. This is supported by neuroscientific research such as Jasmin et al. (2016) [see next paragraph].

So, what happens at the very beginning of the song, and who takes the lead? Cummins (2009) suggests that there is no leader *per se*, at least not for the rhythm. Instead we entrain a rhythm, each member adjusting to a collective mid-point (Cummins, 2011). Mechanical metronomes entrain a rhythm if placed on a freely moving surface, and there is no leading metronome that the others imitate. The average asynchrony of voices speaking together is 40 ms (about the same as a frame change in a movie), although at the beginning of a phrase it is slightly higher at about 60 ms (Cummins, 2011). Joint speech appears to be a collective activity with collective decision making. Cummins (2009) found that we perform better at synchronizing our voices (speaking or singing in time with another voice), if the other voice is coming from a live voice compared to a recording. Two voices can find a midpoint more easily than one voice can imitate another in real time. So maybe that's why those pre-recorded Happy Birthday tracks some children's party organizers use sound so unusual when you hear people trying to sing along. As well as this, brain areas associated with music perception are activated when speaking in time with another voice that aren't activated when speaking along with a recording (Jasmin et al., 2016). Cummins (2009) found that intelligibility of speech isn't always necessary for synchronization, supporting the idea that the behaviour is entrained rather than predicted by one member from the other.

Given that we have this unusual ability to chant and pray and sing as collectives, we need to ask why. It's been hypothesized that joint speech involves becoming a "collective subject" (Cummins, 2018, p. 25). Von Zimmermann and Richardson (2016) found that collectively reading words as a group improved group performance in a computer game. Maybe joint speech has evolutionary benefits for group tasks. People often report feelings of transcendence or joy during large concerts or football matches. Maybe these feelings have something to do with the collective voice.

The small body of research on collective speaking, some of which is mentioned here, offers insight into how we think about speech and music. In a social context such as joint speech we can understand vocalizations operating as a dynamical system instead of as many separate information processing systems (Cummins, 2011). As well as this music and speech are not perceived as discrete, instead there is much overlap in how we perceive music and speech (Hausen, et al., 2013).

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# Staying calm in a stressful student life: The benefits of mindfulness

by Aleksandra Eriksen Isham  
University of St Andrews, PhD student

Many students experience high levels of stress and this may adversely impact student health, life satisfaction, and academic performance. Being able to cope with stress therefore seems pivotal for students' wellbeing. In this article I summarize findings suggesting that mindfulness may help students cope with the stressors of student life.

With all the expectations that student life brings with it, experiencing some degree of stress is almost inevitable. Even so, the issue of student stress should not be dealt with lightly, as research suggests that stress may have negative effects on individuals' health and wellbeing. According to a university student wellbeing report released by Unihealth (2017), 8 out of 10 UK students experience stress and anxiety. Pressure to succeed constitutes a key stressor among young people in the UK (Mental Health Foundation, 2018) and young individuals in higher education report that exams, concerns about career prospects, and money concerns are major causes of stress (NUS Scotland, 2010). These findings are discouraging, especially in conjunction with studies showing that high levels of stress may adversely impact students' health (Hudd et al., 2000), life satisfaction (Weinstein & Laverghetta, 2009) and academic achievement (Vaez & Laflamme, 2008).

On a more encouraging note, mindfulness meditation has shown potential to reduce stress among students. Mindfulness refers to a particular mode of attention characterized by awareness of the present moment in a non-judging and non-reactive manner (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). With this focus on the present moment and on "being" rather than "doing", mindfulness may act as a welcoming break from all the expectations of performance that students deal with. Indeed, several studies suggest that a wide range of mindfulness practices, based on programs

such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, effectively reduces perceived stress among students (Call, Miron, & Orcutt, 2014; Gallego, Aguilar-Parra, Cangas, Langer, & Mañas, 2014; Hindman, Glass, Arnkoff, & Maron, 2015). These beneficial effects of mindfulness are further supported by a systematic review concluding that overall, mindfulness-based programs show promise as stress reducing interventions (Bamber & Schneider, 2016). Moreover, mindfulness appears to have beneficial effects on related issues. In particular, studies have found that mindfulness reduces overall psychological distress, increases wellbeing, and enhances coping among students (de Vibe et al., 2018; Galante et al., 2018).

These studies suggest that mindfulness enhances students' ability to cope with stressors of student life, and positively impacts their mental health. Adding further promise to these findings, a few studies suggest that practicing mindfulness may have long-lasting beneficial effects, with one study showing that increases in wellbeing and adaptive coping were maintained over a six-year follow-up period (de Vibe et al., 2018; Warnecke, Quinn, Ogden, Towle, & Nelson, 2011).

Overall, there seems to be compelling evidence for the utility of mindfulness practice in dealing with the issue of student stress, although further investigation is needed to consider questions such as dose effects and individuals difference factors that may impact the effectiveness of mindfulness practice (Irving, Dobkin, & Park, 2009; Kinnunen, Puolakanaho, Tolvanen, Mäkikangas, & Lappalainen, 2018). In particular, it is necessary to consider how we may best engage students in mindfulness practice, as lack of motivation and discontinuation of practice may prevent individuals from receiving the benefits of

mindfulness (Irving et al., 2009). Hopefully with further investigation of these questions we may develop a better understanding of how mindfulness training can benefit the needs of as broad a student population as possible.

If you are interested in trying out mindfulness there are online resources that offer free, evidence-based mindfulness training. Palouse Mindfulness (<https://palousemindfulness.com/>) offers a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course created by a certified MBSR instructor. Oxford Mindfulness Centre offers several great mindfulness practices on their website

(<https://mbctapp.oxfordmindfulness.org/>) and in their app (Oxford MBCT). Finally, University of St Andrews Mindfulness Society welcomes all students, staff, and community members to their weekly mindfulness sessions. Further information about these sessions can be found on Facebook (@MindfulnessSocSTA) or by emailing the society ([Mindfulness@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:Mindfulness@st-andrews.ac.uk)).

### **Acknowledgements**

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## **LETTER FROM CONTROVERSIAL EDITOR**

I am incredibly excited for “Controversial” section to be a part of the revival of MAZE! Being an editor allowed me to bring my vision to life and combine the things I’m most passionate about - Psychology and debating. I wanted for Controversial to present issues widely debated in the field and our first article definitely does not disappoint. It focuses on various concepts of abnormality and does an excellent job at presenting the strengths and weaknesses of each definition. More exciting debates to come in the future issues!

**Tini Gabashvili**

second year undergradate

# What Is “Normal,” Anyway? Discussing concepts of normality and abnormality

Issac Johann Li

University of St Andrews, first year undergraduate

Normal behaviour is typically considered in opposition to abnormality; abnormal behaviour is recognised as any behaviour that deviates from what is considered normal societal patterns. Because of this contrast, the diagnosis of a patient’s mental health depends on whether they are perceived as normal or abnormal. Yet there is no clear definition of normality, as seen from the assorted definitions depending on variables such as culture, age and time. While it might be normal for babies to cry periodically throughout the day, it would be considered abnormal for a full-grown adult to exhibit similar behaviour.

The discrepancy in definitions can cause problems in clinical psychology as they can greatly influence the diagnosis and effective treatment given to patients in need. In this article, I will outline and evaluate three definitions of abnormality as well as the consequences that they bring when each definition is utilised, especially in the diagnosis of mental health.

## Statistical Infrequency

The statistical infrequency definition categorises behaviour as abnormal when it is rare or statistically unusual within a certain population. For instance, schizoaffective disorder could be regarded as abnormal because it only affects 2 to 5 out of every 1000 people, rendering it statistically rare (“Schizoaffective Disorder,” 2018).

One benefit of this definition is that it reduces bias in diagnosis as it utilises numerical data. Using statistics to define what is normal and abnormal entails that mental disorders are classified through objective data boundaries and not subjective value judgements. This results in a clear cut off point to quantify abnormality, increasing the chance for psychologists to misdiagnose patients due to their personal biases. The reliance on statistics helps researchers make reliable judgements, ensuring the accuracy and consistency of diagnosis.

The statistical infrequency definition also encompasses the entire population. Instead of focusing on the behaviour of an individual in a vacuum, it gives useful insight into a particular characteristic in comparison to a large group of people. This means that social changes affecting a majority of the population are taken into account when determining abnormal behaviour.

Yet defining abnormality using statistics comes with its own faults, as many detrimental disorders are not recognised due to their widespread prevalence. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) found that by the age of 32, half the general population in the US have experienced an anxiety disorder; under the statistical definition, it would be classified as normal (Insel, 2015). The definition conceals severe cases of anxiety which interfere with daily activities and require medical attention (“Treating Anxiety Disorders,” n.d.). Treating a disorder as normal because of its prevalence is counterintuitive to clinical psychology, as it prevents patients in need from receiving treatment.

Moreover, the statistical definition of abnormality includes a number of potentially desirable traits. People do not usually require psychological treatment because of a high IQ, but they still fall under the statistical definition of abnormality. The inability to differentiate between

harmful and helpful behaviours diverts clinicians away from patients who require treatment. This highlights one of the major problems behind the use of statistics when diagnosing patients.

## **Violation of Social Norms**

An alternative definition that can counteract these limitations would be the violation of social norms. Social norms are mental representations of doing what is appropriate in a society. For example, making eye contact is a social norm in Western society as it is behaviour expected from other individuals. The violation of social norms thus refers to the breaking of such expectations. Unlike the statistical infrequency definition, the violation of social norms definition takes into account what is desirable and undesirable for a society. Thus, it can effectively target unfavourable but widespread behaviour such as alcoholism and depression.

As social norms are determined by the environment, this definition retains its applicability across different cultures. After Luhrmann et al. (2015) conducted a number of interviews across multiple cultures, researchers found that participants in Western cultures were more likely to label schizophrenic patients as clinically ill. On the other hand, participants in non-Western cultures, such as those of Ghana and India, were more likely to accept auditory hallucinations as normal. This could be attributed to the significance of spirituality in non-Western cultures; it was normal belief that spirits could communicate with them. Societies across the world differ from one another, something which this culturally sensitive definition considers in its measurement of an individual's normality in his or her own environment.

However, the cultural specificity of this definition has its limitations as well. If normality is different in every culture, this makes it extremely difficult to compare individuals across the globe. Investigating alcoholism across cultures would be problematic: while it might be considered normal for a college student to drink and party in America, the same cannot be said for a student studying in Libya, where alcohol is strictly prohibited. It is impossible to draw a parallel between the former situation and the latter, as the norms of both societies are markedly opposed to each other.

Another problem of this definition is that certain patterns of behaviour may be socially acceptable, but potentially harmful to the individual at the same time. It is socially acceptable, especially in most Asian cultures, to physically discipline one's children. However, research has suggested that physical punishment has been linked to mental disorders such as depression and anxiety (Alfifi, Mora, Dasiewicz, MacMillan, & Sareen, 2012). The social deviation definition does not allow clinicians to effectively diagnose problematic disorders, exposing another flaw of defining normality with reference to social norms.

## **Deviation from Ideal Mental Health**

In the late 1950s, Jahoda suggested that defining positive mental health as normal would make it easier to recognise mental illness, which under this definition would be behaviour that was not congruent with the established ideal. He proposed that positive mental health would involve a number of distinguishing features, including self-acceptance, autonomy and accurate perception of reality.

This definition directly targets the purpose of diagnosis: to effectively treat patients who require clinical support. By ensuring that the concept of normality revolves around health, this definition allows psychologists to identify those who are unhealthy as opposed to those who are simply deviations from the norm. This brings attention to those who actually need it.

While the deviation from ideal mental health definition helps target such individuals, it fails to regard the level of importance of each criterion. Is a person who fails to show autonomy more abnormal when compared to one who isn't able to accurately perceive reality? Which person should be prioritised in terms of treatment? Unlike the statistical definition, Jahoda's theory does not rely on numerical values, reducing its ability to quantify concepts of normality. Jahoda's definition can also be criticised for being ethnocentric, as he constructed it from the perspective of an individualistic society which valued independence, self-expression and personal growth.

However, there are studies that utilise a similar definition under an emic approach. Bolton conducted a study in 1999, collecting data related to perceptions of mental health of a community in Rwanda. In an effort to understand what unideal mental health looked like in a different culture, researchers interviewed locals to identify psychological symptoms potentially caused by the Rwandan Genocide. They found that a local disorder classified as *agahinda gakabije* shared similar symptoms to the Western concept of depression. After comparing the two, results showed that 42% of those who were diagnosed with *agahinda gakabije* could also be diagnosed with depression. This showed that the deviation from mental health definition was applicable to other societies and might even share some similarities across cultures.

## **We Are Individuals. We Are Different.**

As seen from the definitions above, concepts of normality and abnormality continue to be vague and difficult to define. The perception of what is normal also fluctuates greatly, as it can undergo vast changes in short periods of time. Just 50 years ago, homosexuality was still viewed as a mental disorder. Yet today it is accepted as normal in liberal societies, with the United Nations passing its first resolution recognising LGBT rights in 2011 ("LGBT UN Resolutions," n.d.). As such, the many definitions of normal must remain flexible and responsive to modifications, as it functions as an important benchmark for what is to be diagnosed and, thus, who is to be treated in a clinical setting.

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## **INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

# Volunteer Opportunities

by Lana Owen

second year undergraduate

Work Experience is a vital thing when looking for a future career and in St Andrews, there are many amazing opportunities! Last semester I organised a volunteering fair as part of my role as the Volunteering Coordinator of the Psychology and Neuroscience Society. There was a great interest in what opportunities Psychology and Neuroscience students could get involved in to boost their CV, therefore, I thought that I would write a summary of a few opportunities throughout the university and in the community and how to apply.

## Nightline

If you want to be a support for fellow students and to put your sleepless nights to good use, Nightline is for you. Nightline provides an anonymous listening service that creates a safe, judgement-free space for students to talk about what might be weighing on their mind. It runs every night of the semester and you can apply and volunteer with them at the beginning of each semester. No experience is needed and there are no set hours so it can fit around anyone's schedule. Volunteers usually do a shift from 8pm to 7am every 2/2.5 weeks. The crucial thing is that Nightline is fully confidential. They ask that you be discreet through all stages of the application and during volunteering to keep the anonymity of the service. If you want to know more contact: [nightline@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:nightline@st-andrews.ac.uk)

## Sexpression

For all those sex-positive people wanting to spread the message of safe and consensual sex, Sexpression could be the volunteering opportunity for you. Sexpression is a near-peer educating charity that teaches young people about sex and relationships via informal sessions and talks. It hopes to fill the gaps in sex education in the community by teaching a wide range of subjects from consent to puberty. A two-day training session is required before volunteering and a PVG, which can be obtained via the union. To find out more their email is: [standrews@sexpression.org.uk](mailto:standrews@sexpression.org.uk)

## ABC Baby and Child Lab

The ABC lab is a baby and child lab doing cutting-edge research but it's also an amazing opportunity for budding developmental psychologists. It offers opportunities to work as a research assistant for postgraduate students and staff. This involves helping with experiments, participant outreach and public engagement. It's very flexible as the volunteering is on a needs basis. To apply, there is an online application form on their website: <http://developmentlab.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/> and for more information, you can email them at: [babyandchildlab@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:babyandchildlab@st-andrews.ac.uk) or visit them on the bottom floor of the Psychology and Neuroscience building.

## SVS

SVS is the St Andrews Voluntary Service that helps assign students to local volunteering projects. There is a range of volunteering opportunities that allow you to work with animals, young children, the elderly, adults with additional needs etc. So, wherever your skills and interest lie there is something for you. Most availability for volunteering is at the beginning of the semester but if a certain project interests you, you can contact them directly. To get involved, you can make an account or sign up to their mailing service through their website. All the volunteering will count towards a Saltire Award which will recognise you for your volunteering. For additional information email: [svs@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:svs@st-andrews.ac.uk).

## **Families First**

Families First are one of the great opportunities to make a difference in our community! This is a non-profit organisation based in St Andrews that works with families and children in Fife to provide support and companionship. There are three different services they provide: one to one befriending, children's group work and family support. You can volunteer with one service or all three and the volunteering is every two weeks. The way to get involved is going to one of their volunteering information meetings. After these meeting, there will be an application form to complete and a few training sessions that are held weekly before you can start. To get more information phone: 01334 208086 or visit their website: [www.familiesfirststandrews.org.uk](http://www.familiesfirststandrews.org.uk)

## **LINK**

LINK is an East Fife and Levenmouth based befriending service that aims to support people with mental health issues who have become isolated in their community. It has both an adult and adolescent befriending service and volunteers are matched to service users. It is recommended that volunteers have a driving licence and access to a car, but public transport can be used, and volunteers will get reimbursed. The training is a 12-hour programme over several sessions and an evaluation is completed before you can start volunteering. The training covers a wide range of topics with boundaries and confidentiality being the core of the training. LINK encourages volunteers from all walks of life to sign up and for more information contact either Jane Maciver Tel: 07421471720 for the Adolescent Project, or Senga Smith Tel: 07926 923927 for the Adult Project. You can also check out their website: <http://www.linkbefriending.org.uk/>.

## **Girl Guides**

Want to learn a wide range of skills and be on the go whilst still getting experience? Then volunteer with the Girl Guides! The Girl Guides are an organisation that offers the chance for young women of all backgrounds to meet peers and do a variety of activities that help them build important life skills. There are 4 different girl guiding groups: Rainbows 5-7 years old, Brownies 7-10 years old, Guides, 10-14 years old and Rangers 14-18 years old. As a volunteer, you can get involved weekly or occasionally. To find out more or register as a volunteer visit their website: [www.girlguidingfife.org.uk](http://www.girlguidingfife.org.uk)

## **Cosmos Community Centre**

The Cosmos Community Centre is an organisation that provide facilities for people of all ages in and around St Andrews. They have a wide range of recreational activities such as football, dancing, sewing etc. If you are interested call: 01334 474140 or visit [Abbey Walk, St Andrews KY16 9LB](http://www.cosmoscommunitycentre.org.uk).

## **PUBLISH YOUR WORK**

Would you like to publish your writing? We are currently accepting contributions for our next issue. There are four sections (Features, Reviews, Digests, Controversial) that you can submit to, each with different formats and word lengths. If you are interested in conducting an interview (e.g. interviewing a lecturer in your department, or someone you did an internship with) and publishing it in MAZE, please get in touch with us. We are also accepting artworks to be published in the magazine and on our website, one artwork will also be featured on our ISSUE 2 cover page.

### **DEADLINE TO SUBMIT**

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