

ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER - ISSUE #2



HEAD OF DEPARTMENT'S FOREWORD

We have been in lockdown for nearly one hundred days as I write this. It has been a curious, varied, unsettling and challenging journey for organisations to manage the transition to digital and remote working. Many organisations feel intense pressure, perhaps most of all our National Health Service. Over the last few months, I have been fortunate to be able to offer support to a range of organisations, much of this on a voluntary basis, including our own college. I am using this brief foreword to share some of the insights I have gleaned.

Our department delivered two sessions for the NHS, one together with Kevin Teoh on wellbeing in times of crisis more generally, which we also repeated for staff here at Birkbeck. Another one was focused on individual resilience. Some insights from our participants surprised us. First, the NHS is probably better resourced now than for a long time in terms of staffing. Some individuals raised with us that they felt not busy enough, rather than too stretched. This made them feel guilty. Clapping for carers also got mixed reviews – “we would rather get paid properly and get on with our jobs”. This did not seem to make individuals feel any better or more supported.

I also did some sessions for [Barclays Eagle Labs](#) to support business founders. Founders emphasized the difficulty arising from the lack of government guidance on what the future would hold and the uncertainty around future

business prospects. We talked a lot about concentrating on what you can control, such as enhancing online and digital presence, and thinking of creative ways to network where human contact is limited.

A resounding theme across all organisations was the difficulty of combining caring and work duties and being fair to the ‘work needs’ of both parents. We talked about the importance of negotiation and compromise and also making sure that each can make the most out of short intense work burst, where two partners have to work in ‘shifts’. If you only have two hours to concentrate, try and devote this to one task, rather than switching, as getting into the work mode is a transition in itself.

Last but not least, the home working and isolation has brought to the forefront the need to keep physically fit and active. As some of you may know, I used to be a classical dancer and two years ago refreshed my instructor qualifications with [Sleek Technique](#), which is ballet based fitness. It has been my pleasure and joy to teach a short online class for all staff at Birkbeck to get us moving on Mondays, and a slightly longer one on Fridays for our OP students. Seeing familiar faces online and sharing physical presence and movement remotely has been a lovely way to connect.

Professor Almuth McDowall
Head of Department

Read more about our work below:

- [Managing our organisations and families out of the COVID-19 crisis](#)
- [Managing staff who are working at home](#)
- [Global Government Forum: Managing the shift to remote working](#)

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT BEI SEMINAR SERIES

Academics from the Department have been sharing their latest research with colleagues in the School of Business, Economics and Informatics (BEI) through the Summer BEI Seminar Series.

On Friday 12 June, Dr Rebecca Whiting presented her research on [digi-housekeeping](#) and the invisible work of flexibility. Dr Whiting called for digi-housekeeping tasks such as the upkeep of devices and connecting to VPNs to be recognised as labour by employers, since without these, flexible working isn't possible.

In July, Professor Almuth McDowall, Dr Kevin Teoh and Dr David Gamblin presented data outlining how parents and carers face difficulties crafting careers in the performing arts, among the hardest-hit sectors from the COVID-19 pandemic.

HEALTH EDUCATION FOR CLASSICAL MUSICIANS

Could compulsory health education in UK conservatoires improve the health and wellbeing of classical musicians? Dr Raluca Matei shares the findings of a recent study conducted with Jane Ginsborg, Juliet Goldbart, and Stephen Broad.



Despite rating job satisfaction very highly, many classical musicians also suffer for their art. In

the largest survey to date (Fishbein et al., 1988), 76% of players reported a medical problem severe enough to impair performance. More recent research shows that musicians experience hearing loss (O'Brien et al., 2014), visual problems (Beckers et al., 2016), and eating disorders (Kapsetaki and Easmon, 2017). There is a higher prevalence of insomnia and psychological distress among musicians than in the general population and they may be more likely to use psychotherapy and psychotropic drugs such as sedatives, antidepressants, hypnotics and/or medication for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Vaag et al., 2016a,b,c).

Our study sought to find out if we could empower musicians to improve their health through a conservatoire-based health education course. The course was delivered to first-year undergraduate music students at a UK music conservatoire, with a curriculum informed by findings of research on music performance anxiety (MPA) and performance-related musculo-skeletal disorders; the findings of evaluations of other courses designed to improve musicians' health; theories and models deriving from health psychology (Taylor, 2012); discussions with the Acting Head of Undergraduate Studies at the institution where some of the authors are based; and members of the Healthy Conservatoires Network. The course covered not only physical and mental health, but also effective strategies for practicing, memorizing and rehearsing, and life skills and behaviour-change tools inspired by health psychology.

Course evaluation

A mixed-methods approach to evaluation was adopted: quantitative analyses of data gathered at baseline and post-intervention, and between-

group data (intervention vs. controls); and qualitative, semi-structured interviews.

Reassuringly, respondents reported increased knowledge of the topics covered in the course, including the sound intensity levels associated with hearing loss and how to deal with health and safety issues associated with learning and playing a musical instrument. They also reported increased awareness of performance factors related to potential musculoskeletal injuries. The ratings of students who had taken the course and those who had not did not differ significantly, perhaps because the control group had had informal exposure to the other topics covered in the course, with the possible exception of life skills and behaviour change techniques.

Students who had taken the course also rated their ability to deal with relevant health and safety issues significantly higher than controls.

In contrast, the only desired secondary outcome to increase significantly from baseline to post-intervention was self-efficacy, which may or may not have been the result of the course.

From the topics covered in the course, it appears that managing MPA and behaviour change are of the most interest or relevance to students at this point in their studies.

Conclusions

In the absence of a national curriculum for health, all higher education institutions must develop their own approaches to health education, as do many university music departments and music conservatoires. The questions posed by Ralph Manchester in 2006 remain pertinent: “Who will develop this course? What topics will be included in the syllabus? Who will teach it? Will it be offered to freshmen or seniors, or can it be taken during

any year? Can one course meet the needs of performance majors, music education majors, and others? Should we develop some minimal national requirements?” (Manchester, 2006, pp. 95–96).

Further questions could be asked, such as: When can a course be considered successful? What are its desired outcomes? How should they be measured? Once the content and delivery of a course have been evaluated, how should they be adjusted, if necessary? To what extent should students’ requirements and feedback be taken into consideration, given the available evidence and the need, on occasion, to challenge their beliefs?

Although it has been argued for the last 25 years that health education for musicians should be evidence-based (Zaza, 1993), the declarations and recommendations fail to mention the importance of evidence-based *teaching*. There is now a wealth of research on musicians’ playing-related health problems, and their management, but unless this is disseminated effectively to senior managers and educators, instrumental and vocal tutors, and students, there is a risk that conservatoires will maintain traditional practices rather than responding systematically to the best evidence available.

The topic of how music students, too, can be convinced that health education is a vital part of their training remains largely unexplored. Framing the objectives of health education courses as “performance-enhancing” rather than “preventative” is likely to be more attractive to students.

- [Read the full study](#)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Our academics have been sharing their expertise with organisations, health practitioners and the public. Catch up on their guidance here.

- In the wake of the death of George Floyd, the Department has put together a [first-stop resource pack](#) to support individuals to understand institutional racism and trauma in the workplace.
- **Dr Raluca Matei's** project on 'What should musicians' health education sound like?', was Winner in the category 'PhD and Early Career Research' at the 2020 Birkbeck Public Engagement Awards.
- **Professor Gail Kinman** co-wrote the British Psychological Society's [guide to working from home during the coronavirus pandemic](#) and [guide to on dealing with trauma at home](#). Professor Kinman was also interviewed on BBC Radio4's All in the Mind programme about [starting new jobs during a pandemic](#). She was quoted in Healthy Magazine on the [mental health benefits of volunteering](#) and interviewed by Education Support on the [wellbeing of higher education staff during the pandemic](#).
- **Dr Jo Yarker** and **Professor Gail Kinman** contributed to the Society of Occupational Medicine [return to work toolkit](#) for occupational health professionals and small businesses. Dr Yarker also curated a [toolkit](#) for Mental Health at Work to support the transition back to work after lockdown.
- **Professor Almuth McDowall** and **Dr Kevin Teoh** presented webinars through the NHS Practitioner Health Programme on managing stress, anxiety, and resilience. The pair also presented a webinar for all Birkbeck staff entitled *Crisis or no crisis: A proactive approach to managing well-being and worklife balance*.
- **Dr Jo Yarker** presented on a Human Resource Management webinar led by Tiger Recruitment on managing mental health remotely. Dr Yarker also presented on a [webinar](#) hosted by the Society of Occupational Medicine, Vocational

Rehabilitation Association and BPS focusing on key practices and health, safety and psychological implications for return to work.

- **Dr Jo Yarker** and **Dr Rachel Lewis** wrote a post on ['Working Well from Home'](#) for We are the City. Yarker and Lewis were also part of the Expert Insights Q&A for Santander with HR professionals and business leaders working to manage the impact of the pandemic on their teams.
- **Dr Rachel Lewis** and **Professor Gail Kinman** were interviewed as part of an [Independent article](#) on 'I'm dragging myself to my desk every day': Why presenteeism is alive and well – even during a pandemic.
- **Dr Rachel Lewis** took part in a [webinar](#) for International SOS on Maintaining Your Wellbeing at Home. Dr Lewis also contributed to a [Huffington Post article](#) on maintaining work-life balance while working from home indefinitely.
- **Professor Gail Kinman** and **Dr Kevin Teoh** presented on a [webinar](#) entitled 'What can we do to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of clinicians on the frontline during COVID-19'.
- **Dr Caroline Kamau** wrote on a number of health-related issues in Psychology Today, including [Why You Need a Face Mask in the Coronavirus Pandemic](#), [Can 21 Minutes of Aerobic Exercise Boost Your Mood?](#), [Can Caffeine Induce Psychosis?](#) and [Is Nudge Theory the Right Approach to Coronavirus?](#) Dr Kamau was also quoted in the [Daily Mail](#), [BBC](#) and [The Week](#).
- **Professor Almuth McDowall** ran some sessions for Barclays Eagle Labs on how to recognise and cope with stress. Professor McDowall also contributed to an article to the Global Government Forum on [managing the shift to remote working](#).
- **Professor Alexandra Beauregard** discusses the implications of work and family care during crisis for frontline workers and parents of children with disabilities in a [blog post](#) for the British Sociological Association's Everyday Society.

BIRKBECK CONNECTIONS IN ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

The Department has launched a new initiative to bring staff, students, alumni and people with an interest in organizational psychology together to connect and share best practice.

Birkbeck Connections in Organizational Psychology was envisioned as a quarterly networking and discussion series, but while we wait for the opportunity to meet face-to-face, the Department has curated a short video interview series sharing recent research.

If you would like to stay up to date with Birkbeck Connections, please join our [LinkedIn group](#).



NEW STAFF APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS

Congratulations to the following staff members on their new positions:

- **Alexandra Beauregard**, promoted to Professor of Organizational Psychology
- **Nimali Udukalage**, appointed Team Leader

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

PROFESSOR ALEXANDRA BEAUREGARD

Alexandra Beauregard was promoted Professor of Organizational Psychology in June. We caught up with her about academic life in lockdown.



WHAT'S YOUR #BBKSTORY?

I joined Birkbeck in May 2018. Twenty years earlier, I had wanted to come here to do the MSc Organizational Psychology, but back then the programme wasn't offered full-time and as an international student, I wasn't eligible to study part-time. So I went down the road to LSE and did my MSc and PhD there. I sat in on some lectures at Birkbeck and loved the vibe – the students had jobs and life experience and the class discussions were just so vibrant and rich. I've had a real affection for Birkbeck ever since and when a position opened up in OP, it was too good an opportunity to pass up.

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

I'm currently redeveloping two modules for online or blended delivery in the autumn. I'm also learning more about decolonising the curriculum and trying to put those lessons into practice. It's an exciting time for teaching, but there is a lot happening very quickly and it's challenging to keep pace.

Research-wise, I'm working with international colleagues on studies of employee voice among domestic workers in Nigeria, workplace privilege and oppression among East Asian migrant women in the UK, and gendered work-life balance construction among Danish executives. With UK colleagues, I'm designing a study of co-worker perceptions of transgender individuals' entitlement to family-friendly practices and studying gendered images in

corporate annual reporting in the Middle East. I'm also an editor for the journal *Work, Employment and Society* and my expectation that the pandemic would reduce the number of submissions has proved erroneous!

YOU'RE ALSO ASSISTANT DEAN FOR INTERNATIONAL FOR THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND INFORMATICS. WHAT'S THAT LIKE?

Right now, it's mostly about connecting with international offer-holders and managing their concerns about coming to study in a different country during a global pandemic. Andrea Williams and Will Richards in BEI have been putting together all sorts of online events both for our continuing international students and for new applicants and I try to give the latter a feel for what studying at Birkbeck is like. Seeing how dedicated Andrea and Will are to supporting international students and applicants is both humbling and inspiring – they really go the extra mile. Once there is more certainty around what the future will look like, we can focus more on establishing new partnerships with HE institutions abroad.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO OUTSIDE OF BIRKBECK?

In the old days, it was travel, theatre, watching tennis and reading. A lot of that hasn't been possible since the pandemic, so instead I've been learning to cook Korean food at home and singing along to Hamilton on Disney+ with my two young daughters. I've also got a weekly TV date with a friend in Canada via Netflix Party and FaceTime. We watch shows about supernatural creatures in high school, and we eat trashy processed snacks with orange cheese powder. It keeps me sane.

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles

- Banks, A.P., **Gamblin, D.M.**, & Hutchinson, H. (2020). Training Fast and Frugal Heuristics in Military Decision Making. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*.
- **Beauregard, T. A.**, Adamson, M., Kunter, A., Miles, L., & Roper, I. (2020). Diversity in the work-life interface: Introduction to the Special Issue. Forthcoming in *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*. doi: 10.1108/EDI-04-2020-0097.
- **Beauregard, T. A.**, & Lup, D. (2020). New insights into the nexus of work and family care. *Work, Employment & Society*, 34(2), 147-154.
- Clements, A., Sharples, A. & **Kinman, G.** (2020). Identifying wellbeing challenges and solutions in the police service: A World Café approach. *The Police Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0032258X19898723>.
- **Gamblin, D.M.**, Tobutt, C., & Patton, R. (2020). Alcohol identification and brief advice in England's criminal justice system: a review of the evidence. *Journal of Substance Abuse*.
- **Kinman, G.** (2020) Presenteeism in healthcare professionals: causes, consequences and potential solutions. *Praxis Klinische Verhaltensmedizin und Rehabilitation*.
- **Kinman, G., Teoh, K., & Harriss, A.** (2020). Supporting the well-being of healthcare workers during and after COVID-19. *Occupational Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqaa096>
- **McDowall, A, Teoh, K, Stringer, M, Chatrakul Na Ayudhya, U, Beauregard, A, MacKenzie-Davey, K, Lewis, R, Yarker, J, Kamau, C** (2020) [Organisations, Race and Trauma](#). Discussion Paper. Department of Organizational Psychology, London, UK.
- Nagy, B., **Beauregard, T. A.**, Primecz, H., & Tienari, J. (2019). Introduction to the special section on leveraging cooperation for gender equality in management. *European*

Management Review. doi:
10.1111/emre.12380.

- Payne, N. & **Kinman, G.** (2020). Job demands, resources and work-related well-being in UK firefighters. Occupational Medicine
<https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqz167>.

Books, Chapters and Reports

- Clements, A. & **Kinman, G.** (2020) Stress and Wellbeing in Prison Officers In. R. J. Burke & S. Pignata (Eds.) Handbook of Research on Stress and Well-being in the Public Sector, Taylor and Francis.
- Grant, L. & **Kinman, G.** (2020). The Change Project: Building Organisational Resilience in Social Work Organisations. Research in Practice.
- **Kinman, G.**, Grant, L. & Sharples, A. (2020). Peer Coaching for Wellbeing and Personal Effectiveness. Care Knowledge Special Report.
- **Kinman, G.** & Wray, S. (2020) Wellbeing in academic employees in the UK – a benchmarking approach. In R. J. Burke & S. Pignata (Eds.) Handbook of Research on Stress and Well-being in the Public Sector, Elgar.
- **McDowall, A** & **Kinman, G.** (2020). Work-life Balance and Gender: Challenging Assumptions and Unravelling Complexity. In J. Hassard & L. Torres (Eds.) Aligning Perspectives in Gender Mainstreaming: Gender, Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Springer.
- Travaglino, G. A., & **Drury, L.** (2020). The secret power of criminal organizations: A social psychological approach.
- **Whiting, R.** Embracing research ethics: From cognitive walk-through to reflexive journey (In press) In K. Townsend, M. Saunders, R. Loudoun & E. Morrison (Eds) How to keep your doctorate on track: Insights from students' and supervisors' experiences, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- **Whiting, R** & Symon, G. (In press) Digi-Housekeeping: The invisible work of flexibility Work, Employment and Society.
- **Yarker, J., Lewis, R., McDowall, A., & Teoh, K.** (2020). Managing our wellbeing in

the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Technical Report. Birkbeck, University of London, London, UK.
<https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/31958/>

Conference Output

- **Professor Alexandra Beauregard** was an invited speaker at the University of Birmingham's Work Inclusivity Research Centre (WIRC) seminar on "Work Responsibilities and Care Commitments during the Covid-19 Pandemic – Towards a new division of labour?" in May 2020. Professor Beauregard was also an invited speaker on "Work-life balance during the Covid-19 pandemic" at the 1st CYGNA (Supporting Women in Academia Network) Global Virtual Meeting in May 2020.
- **Dr Kevin Teoh** was invited to speak on healthcare worker wellbeing: antecedents and interventions at the "Moral Injury and Psychological Wellbeing in Healthcare Special Interest Group Symposium" held at Barts & St. Thomas NHS Trust.

The Department of Organizational Psychology is part of Birkbeck's School of Business, Economics and Informatics.

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