

Department of Psychology: RES Supervisor List (Autumn Term 2018)

Email your application to Dr Kevin Dent (kdent@essex.ac.uk, RES organiser).

Your email must include:

1. a one page CV in Word or PDF format attached to the email;
2. a list of any members of staff you would like to work with, in order of preference, with your preferred choice at the start of the list (you can list as many of the staff as you like from the list below);
3. FOR EACH MEMBER OF STAFF ON YOUR LIST OF PREFERENCES, attach a separate short letter (in Word or PDF format) in which you explain your interest in the research project and motivation for working with the researcher.

Please send your application as soon as possible and no later than **9:00am Friday 12th October (Week 2)**.



Nicholas Cooper

Future thinking and decision-making in adolescence

In everyday life we are often faced with a choice between competing options that differ both in objective value and availability in time. For example, to achieve healthy weight (delayed positive health outcome), I must resist eating a chocolate (small immediate pleasure). Adolescence is one crucial period when young people make important decisions that may have long-lasting impact on their adult life. Research suggests that imaging personally-relevant events or states that might occur in the future, which is called episodic prospection, may help us make better decisions. The benefits of engaging in episodic future thinking are stronger for individuals who usually are more prone to short-sighted behaviour. This highlights the potential importance of episodic prospection in supporting decision-making in adolescence, a period stereotypically perceived as characterized by risk-taking and short-sightedness. As a RES student you will have the opportunity to help me find out more about psychological and neural mechanisms that underlie future thinking and decision-making in adolescence. In addition to helping with EEG data collection, you will learn how to administer psychometric and behavioural assessments that are often used not only in research but also in clinical practice. This project is being run in collaboration with King's College London and the University of East London.



Rachel Cooper

My research interests are in person perception. I want to better understand how we recognise a person from their face or voice. Specifically, in what ways do experience seeing faces and social grouping of these faces contribute to person perception? By investigating these mechanisms we can shed light on various biases in face recognition including the own-race bias. I mainly use cognitive experiments and eye-tracking to investigate these questions. Typically, participants will be given a memory test for faces and various aspects of the faces will be manipulated. I also need to develop a set of videos and photos to use as stimuli in these experiments. These stimuli will allow further questions to be investigated about the role of voices in person perception, as well as differences between dynamic (closer to real life) and static faces.



Kevin Dent

I'm interested in how in such a busy world, people stay focused on what is relevant and avoid distraction from irrelevant objects and events. RES projects in the Autumn Term will focus on the relationships between memory and attention. In particular projects will explore, two issues: 1) how the history of what you were just doing, affects your ability to deploy attention now, and 2) when is it difficult to both hold things in memory and search for an object, and when is it easy to combine these two activities. Students will participate in aspects of study design, participant recruitment and testing, and data analysis.



Maria Laura Filippetti

The ability to intentionally act in the surrounding environment, to express emotions and desires, and to understand other people's behaviour relies on the primary ability to define one's body as belonging to ourselves and distinguished from others. I'm interested in understanding how human beings develop an integrated sense of self that is grounded to a coherent body representation, and how different processes interact together to maintain and updated self-awareness. My current projects explore 1) the development of body perception in infants, 2) the use of new techniques to study body awareness in children, and 3) the development of food responsiveness in infants. As a RES student, you would work with me on one of these topics and you will be involved in the recruitment and testing of participants, using behavioural or neural measures (e.g. NIRS, EEG and eye tracker). I strongly encourage students interested to apply for a DBS check as soon as possible.



Nicolas Geeraert

A global village. In a globalized world, people regularly have contact with other cultures. Intercultural contact is believed to have a diverse impact on such things as mental health, intergroup behavior, cultural awareness, and personal development. These effects can be both positive and negative. Immigrants, expatriates and international students are all examples of groups experiencing prolonged intercultural contact. By examining these groups we can learn a lot about the impact and outcomes of intercultural contact and what factors can enhance the positive outcomes and reduce the negative. Acculturation takes place within a wider context of families, friendship groups, neighborhood communities, schools, the work place, and at the societal level. We are currently investigating how acculturation takes places in families, comparing the levels of acculturation displayed by parents and their children. As a RES student you would contribute to an existing project on acculturation gap in families. To pursue the most benefits for the RES student and the project, I am looking for a student who is willing to involve in the project for two terms.



Helge Gillmeister

My research is about body image and how this shapes our sense of self and our visual perception of the human body in all its varieties. This term's RES project investigates the perception of physical disability (specifically, persons with missing limbs). The RES student would learn how to use eye-tracking equipment to measure attention to body parts, personality and attitude surveys, and the implicit-association test (IAT), a popular measure within social psychology.



Rick O'Gorman

Do we care more about family or friends? Do women find intelligent men more attractive at some times of the menstrual cycle? Do the eyes reveal insights into how people feel about taboos? Do people look more at men or women, older or younger (are older women 'invisible')? These are some of the questions that I have studied recently with assistance from a Research Experience Student (or two or three!). This coming term, my focus will turn to two main areas, 1) altruism toward family and friends, and 2) further work on who people look at. My general research interest is in studying human behaviour as a functionally adaptive system; that is, evolutionary psychology- the study of human behaviour and cognition from an evolutionary perspective. Which project is worked on depends on what I need to prioritise, and from discussion with RES applicants.



Gethin Hughes

Ongoing projects in my lab include investigating multisensory integration, time perception, sense of agency (the feeling of being in control of your actions and their outcomes), action understanding, and interoception (the perception of internal bodily states). Some experiments will include electroencephalography (EEG) data collection, while others will involve a combination of behavioural and physiological measures (electrocardiogram and skin conductance). I am looking for volunteers to help collect data for these studies.



Marie Juanchich

I am looking for students to help me with a project focusing on interpersonal relationships and the factors that help people to be more assertive. I would like to use the observation lab to record participants while interacting with a research assistant. The details of the project are top secret but I would be happy to tell you more about it in a meeting. Because of the nature of the project I would like to have at least a male and a female student helping me out.



Veronica Lamarche

My work stems from the big question "What makes some couples more resilient in the face of uncertainty compared to others?" I am currently focused on two lines of research: 1) What are the individual differences that predict relationship resilience in the face of uncertainty; and, 2) Do self-regulatory systems managing responses to uncertainty outside of the relationship influence relationship regulatory responses within the relationship.

I am looking for students to help me with a project investigating the factors that influence when we offer and when we withhold help from close others. We will be looking at how individual differences in traits associated with trust interact with situational demands for help. As a RES student, you will be helping me coordinate this project and collect data from friends and couples in a lab setting.



Keith May

Effects of cosmetics on face recognition and attractiveness

I am looking for students to collect data on two experiments: one looking at the effect of cosmetics on face recognition, and the other on the effects of lightening and darkening the face on attractiveness. Both of these experiments have been run as student projects, but I would like to collect more data before deciding whether to publish them. The Face recognition experiment requires you to recruit participants and test them in the lab; the other experiment is an online study in which the only work is recruiting participants. It would be possible for a single student to work on both projects.

Face recognition:

If someone is wearing cosmetics, does that make them easier or harder to recognise later? What about if we first see them with cosmetics, and later see them without (or vice-versa)? These questions will be addressed in this experiment.

Effects of lightening and darkening the face with makeup

Previous research has provided mixed evidence on the effects of skin tone on facial attractiveness. For male faces, darker faces have been rated as more attractive by white participants, but less attractive by black participants. For female faces, skin lightness seems to have little effect on attractiveness, but lighter skin has sometimes been found to be more attractive, particularly with black participants. Some of these apparent inter-racial differences in attractiveness judgement involve comparisons across studies that used different stimuli and methodology. The current study investigates the effect of skin lightness for each possible combination of sex (male/female) and ethnicity (black/white) of participants and faces.



Jonathan Rolison

Do you know how you would decide if faced with a real decision, such as whether to jump out of a plane on a skydive? An ability to anticipate how one would decide if faced with a decision is vital for planning our future decisions. Yet, the intention to decide (e.g., to jump from a plane on a first skydive) is hypothetical until one is faced with a consequential decision. A long tradition of behavioural research that uses self-report measures as a substitute for studying behavior directly rests on the assumption that people act as they say they would. In this project, you will help conduct a study to test whether people do as they say they will.



Gillian Sandstrom

I am interested in social relationships and how they contribute to our well-being. In particular, I study interactions with strangers and "weak ties" (i.e., acquaintances). Why do we seem so afraid to talk to strangers when all of our friends start out as strangers? Are there times when we are afraid to talk even to people that we do know well (e.g., they get diagnosed with an illness, something traumatic happens to them)? Why is it easy to talk to some people and hard to talk to others? Why do some relationships develop, and others dissipate (i.e., How/when does a stranger turn into a weak tie, and how/when do weak ties turn into strong ties?) What are the benefits of feeling connected to others?
