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My shelfie... Michelle K. Ryan

Ryan, Michelle K.

Published in:
Psychologist

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2017

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Ryan, M. K. (2017). My shelfie... Michelle K. Ryan. *Psychologist*, 30, 82-82.
<https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-30/september-2017/my-shelfie-michelle-k-ryan>

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My shelfie... Michelle K. Ryan

(Professor of Social and Organisational Psychology, University of Exeter; and Professor of Diversity, University of Groningen)

Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory

John C. Turner, Michael Hogg, Penelope J. Oakes, Steve Reicher & Margaret Wetherell

I was lucky enough to have been taught by John Turner and Penny Oakes as an undergraduate at the Australian National University – I went on to work with John in my first research position. I was the first in my family to go to university, clueless about all that academia entailed, and I remember reading this book and thinking it was such a coincidence that one of the authors had the same name as my lecturer. Despite this rather embarrassing start, this book has become extremely influential for my work. With its focus on the fundamental importance of the groups to which we belong and the social context in which we are embedded, it provided me with a strong meta-theoretical overview that has guided how I approach psychology (and indeed how I approach politics and morality, the three are intertwined).

Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity

Judith Butler

I first read this book as an undergraduate philosophy student and it completely blew me away. As it says in the subtitle, this is a book that is all about subverting and problematising what many would see as one of the basic and essential aspects of humankind – our gender. It's a provocative text, and Butler's notions of gender performativity have always stayed with me. Many of the philosophy texts I read as a student have had a more lasting influence on me as a social psychologist than many a psychology text. I'm currently working with a colleague, Dr Thekla Morgenroth, on applying Butler's ideas in an experimental social psychology setting – very exciting!



Orlando

Virginia Woolf

There is clearly a strong gender theme here – even with the fiction that I read. I always loved reading as a kid, but I didn't grow up reading literature for pleasure. When I discovered reading 'proper books' in my late teens, this was one that really had a lasting impact. Woolf's notions of gender fluidity felt so contemporary and so destabilising that I couldn't quite believe it had been written in the 1920s. It's also one of the few books where the movie adaptation does it justice: Tilda Swinton was exactly who I pictured Orlando to be.

Psychology in Organizations

S. Alexander Haslam

Alex Haslam has been the most influential person in my academic career. He lectured me as an undergraduate; as a PhD student, my first teaching roles were on his courses; and he was the most inspiring mentor and sponsor any early-career researcher could have had. This is only one of his many influential books, but it is one that I go back to again and again. It is also a book that I lend out with incredible frequency – there must be dozens of bookshelves of former students and colleagues that have a copy of this book with my name on the first page.

Delusions of Gender: The Real Science Behind Sex Differences

Cordelia Fine

This really is such a superb book. It is a meticulously researched book that articulates very persuasively how social stereotypes and expectations can create (and reify) gender differences, even for those who think they are conducting objective scientific research. With a fantastically wry wit, Fine convinces us that popular and neuroscientific claims about gender differences can be greatly exaggerated, and terrifically damaging.

The World and Other Places

Jeanette Winterson

I couldn't possibly put together a list of books without including one by Jeanette Winterson – although it was incredibly tough to decide on only one. I chose her collection of short stories as I very much enjoy the short form – partly because I can always find time to read a short story (the same is not always the case with a novel) and because I enjoy being exposed to small narrative slices. My favourite story in this collection is 'The 24 Hour Dog'; it makes me cry (indeed howl with tears) every time I read it (I'm welling up just now even thinking of it!).

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