

# Editorial

**W**ELCOME to the 73rd edition of the PsyPAG quarterly. I am pleased to act as lead editor in quick succession to my lead of the previous edition. Hopefully, this is the last you will see of me as I hope to pave the way for Lesley Jacobs and new quarterly editors Charlotte McLeod and Julie Port. I would like to thank each of them for their help with this edition.

Before noting the contents of this issue, I would like to say how well I believe PsyPAG is progressing as an organisation, with an increased number of ways to help the post-graduate community. A number of these are covered in the chair's column, so I will not go into detail, but this should be an exciting year for the organisation. This is not to say we are not looking for ways to improve; if you have any ideas, please let us know – the committee is always open to your suggestions.

Laura Crane opens this edition with a report detailing some of the plans we hope to implement over the next year. This is followed by an article by former committee member Agnieszka Lech, outlining her perspective on how to give a good presentation. The next articles are two of three conference reviews in this edition, provided by Stuart Flint and I. We attended the 6th Wales Institute of Sport, Health and Exercise Science Conference and the Division of Health Psychology Annual Conference respectively.

Next, book reviews by Charlotte McLeod (*Psychology of Self Regulation*) and Cherie Armour (*SPSS for Psychologists*) are placed either side of an article by John Radford, who provides an interesting examination of our use of the English language and how it should be applied when writing articles. The final conference review, by Alana James,

takes a look at her first international conference experience when she attended the 14th European Conference on Developmental Psychology.

This is followed by a short piece by Stephen Gibson, a Member Network Editor Representative for the BPS, stressing how each of us can be writing more articles both to hone our skills and provide interesting information for readers. I would like to emphasise this point. When compiling this issue, I found little in terms of research articles (although notably more conference reviews, reflecting summer conference attendance). Accordingly, I have written the penultimate article about the placebo effect, an area that has always particularly interested me but one that I have had to put to one side during my PhD research. I encourage each of you reading this to submit more articles of all types (such as informative, review or research based), not only as practice for submitting more important articles, but also to pique the interest of other researchers. This is something I hope my article does.

On a lighter note, we end with a piece by Caroline Bettenay, former PsyPAG treasurer, about her PhD experience. I would like to thank Caroline for all the work she did at PsyPAG and wish her all the best in the future.

**Kyle Brown**

*on behalf of the PsyPAG Quarterly  
editing team 2009/2010*

Kyle Brown, Lesley Jacobs,  
Charlotte McLeod & Julie Port

# Chair's Column

**I**F YOU READ my last column, you will be aware that PsyPAG recently hosted a hugely successful annual conference at the University of Cardiff. This was an extremely well attended event, which featured an excellent array of keynote talks, workshops, social events and postgraduate presentations. One of the great things about the conference was the number of former committee members who attended; some as interested delegates, some as presenters, and some as keynote speakers. As a result, PsyPAG has recently formed the 'PsyPAG Alumni' – an organisation for former PsyPAG committee members. We are trying to contact ex-PsyPAGgers and need your help! Do you know anyone who had a position on the committee? Perhaps your supervisor or other members of your department are former PsyPAG committee members? If so, please let us know – we would love to contact them and find out how their career has progressed since then. Please see <http://www.psyag.co.uk/alumni.html> for more details.

The formation of the PsyPAG Alumni also coincides with PsyPAG's 25th anniversary conference. I am pleased to announce that this will be held in Sheffield from Wednesday 21–Friday 23 July 2010. This is a collaborative event, hosted by the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University, and I wish the 2010 conference team the best of luck in organising it. PsyPAG really hopes that the 2010 conference will be bigger, and better, than ever before, and we really hope to see lots of you there. The PsyPAG conference is a fantastic place to present your work and offers a chance to meet other postgraduates and to attend brilliant workshops and training courses. Watch this space for more info about this event.

Another exciting development regards the PsyPAG bursary scheme, which has been reinstated after a period of inactivity. This

scheme provides postgraduates with the opportunity to apply for funding to attend international or domestic conferences. Specifically, we offer up to £100 towards the cost of a domestic conference and up to £300 towards attendance at an international conference. Currently, PsyPAG offers two rounds of bursaries per year and the number of applicants for these awards has been phenomenal. Applications have been of an exceptionally high quality and I would like to congratulate each recipient of these awards (a full list of successful applicants is posted on the PsyPAG website). Due to the popularity of this scheme, PsyPAG is pleased to announce the introduction of a third round of bursaries a year. Hopefully this will enable even more postgraduates to benefit from PsyPAG funding and we hope many of you will apply. Please see <http://www.psyag.co.uk/bursaries.html> for more details.

To complement the bursary scheme, PsyPAG has recently developed a workshop funding scheme to enable postgraduates to organise a workshop in any area of psychology. Over the past few years, PsyPAG has hosted some hugely successful workshops, including the Maths and Stats workshop at Nottingham Trent University, the Neuropsychology workshop at the University of Reading and the Cognitive Psychology workshop at the University of Lancaster. We hope that the introduction of this bursary scheme will broaden the range of workshops that PsyPAG offers and that these events will be a fantastic place for postgraduates to present their work. If you are interested in applying for workshop funding, would like further details about this scheme, or would like to hear about workshops that we are currently organising, please see <http://www.psyag.co.uk/workshops.html>.

Before I sign off, I would like to invite you to get in touch with comments or suggestions about anything that you think PsyPAG

should be doing to support postgraduate psychologists. Our committee is the largest it has ever been and we are in a fantastic position to make a difference to the psychology postgraduate community. A full list of PsyPAG committee members and their contact details are at the back of this issue and we would love to hear from you.

In addition, I would like to say a big thank you to each member of the PsyPAG

committee – the past year has been a very exciting one and this is all down to the hard work and dedication of the committee. I hope we can continue this into 2010, so we can provide further support and resources to psychology postgraduates.

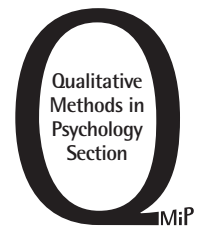
**Laura Crane**  
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## Writing for publication: new qualitative researchers

A workshop sponsored by the  
BPS Qualitative Methods in Psychology (QMIP) Section

York St John University  
24th May 2010

**Workshop leaders:** Jennifer Clegg (University of Nottingham)  
and the QMiP Newsletter editorial board



The aim of this workshop is to explore routes to publication for new qualitative researchers. The workshop will assume that participants have little experience of publishing. Through the workshop, we shall explore types of publication with an emphasis on those where new researchers are likely to be successful. Participants will conclude the workshop by developing a plan for a short article for submission to the *QMIP Newsletter*.

The workshop is intended for postgraduate students and early career researchers. Attendance is free.

*For more information, please see:*  
[www.bps.org.uk/qmip/qmip\\_home.cfm](http://www.bps.org.uk/qmip/qmip_home.cfm)

**To book your place, please e-mail  
Stephen Gibson ([s.gibson@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:s.gibson@yorks.ac.uk))**

# Presentation SOS

Agnieszka Lech, Univeristy of Kent

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SOME TIME AGO, I had a chance to observe a young (probably just ‘rising’ researcher) presenting in front of maybe less than 10 people. She seemed fine when she walked to the designated space, but after that point it was just a disaster.

It might be a bit unfair to call it a disaster, as it might have been her first-ever presentation, but nevertheless it could have been much better. Firstly, the speaker hid herself behind the rostrum and there was almost no interaction with the audience whatsoever. She spent the entire time reading from her notes, which she herself must have found confusing, which probably stressed her even more. The voice was trembling and you almost felt sorry for her instead of concentrating on her very interesting research findings. She finished a 20-minute presentation in less than 10 minutes.

Some of you will probably recognise yourself in the above picture from the early beginnings, some may have improved, and some may remain in denial.

Like many other PhD students I had a chance to train and to be trained and I believe that like many of us, I already have a good idea of what is involved in preparing a good presentation, and what makes it a good one. Sometimes I have been sitting waiting impatiently for the beginning of a talk because the title sounded so interesting, but then found I could barely grasp any idea of what was said and I was ready to fall asleep. On the other hand, I have attended some talks that had a big notification of ‘boring’ in the title and found I did not know where the time went. I’m quite sure, we all share similar experiences.

I won’t be able to teach you all the tricks of a very good or even a good presentation, but I hope that after reading this short arti-

cle, you will be able to address and ameliorate some of the things you are already working on.

Sometimes, it is worth starting by stressing the most obvious things. I would say that there are four main things that one needs to consider when preparing a presentation – Presentation, Preparation, Speaker and Audience. They all are interrelated and a change in one leads to a change in others. I want to look at each of them separately and briefly discuss a potential manner in which you can deal with them.

## **Presentation**

I don’t want to discuss here the choice of the designs of your slides, but it is worth considering that someone needs to be able to see/read them, very often from a long distance. Therefore, it’s probably wise to use designs with a white background and a darker font. Obviously, the choice, as long as it is readable, does not matter all that much. However, the amount of information you provide on each slide does matter. Too much information makes a slide unclear and is distracting because the audience will try to read the information while trying to listen to you. I believe that putting bullet points on, which you elaborate during your talk, is much more effective. Quotations are a bit of a different story; obviously you can’t take bullet points from them. If you must include a long quotation, there are two approaches you can take: either give the audience some time to read it or read it to the audience yourself. I guess either way is good.

It is a good practice to provide graphs to visually support your talk. When it comes to the use of emoticons (the .gif files), as long as it is balanced and does not fully shift the audience’s attention from what you are pre-

senting, then it is ok. I believe that the same applies to PowerPoint animations and transition of slides or bullet points on the slides. Too much is not good, so try to keep the balance right.

Probably one of the most important things you need to consider while creating your presentation is timing, and things that potentially can influence it. My biggest mistakes with my very first presentations were connected, to a degree, with time management. When practicing at home, a talk would take around 45 minutes, leaving 15 minutes for questions, which was perfect for what I was preparing. Unfortunately, quite unconsciously during the actual presentation I started talking so fast, presumably due to the stress which I didn't take into consideration while practising, that I have finished everything within 15 minutes. And as you can imagine, that is not good.

### **Preparation**

The previous comments lead to another important matter which needs consideration in preparing good talks. It is probably the most important part of the entire process. You might have a bad presentation and still make a great impression on everyone. However, preparation requires not only practising your presentation and knowing what you are talking about but also knowing where and when you should be.

It is also beneficial to know the room settings because this will tell you whether you need to use a microphone, where the audience is sitting, whether they all can see the slides, etc. Obviously, when you are going to conferences it is impossible to know all that in advance, but it does not hurt to check those things if/when you have the possibility.

### **Speaker**

The speaker – meaning you – also has an important role to play. As mentioned previously, I do believe in good preparation. It does not mean that you should spend hours and hours (unless that is what works for you) to fully prepare for your five minutes. I sim-

ply suggest that you should know your presentation in enough detail so that you can present it without notes. I know that some students have notes with them as a kind of stress-relieving tool but in my perception it can be sometimes seen as unprofessional. One of the worse things that can happen, and I have witnessed it a few times, is an error in your notes (it might happen due to stress) which means that at some point you are reading notes irrelevant to your current slides. Reading also has another implication, especially if you are holding your notes, because if your hands are shaking it makes it visible.

No matter how nervous you are you do not want your audience to fall asleep. Therefore, I do recommend you to practice your voice, its variations and expressions. This simply means that if you are excited about something do not be afraid to show your enthusiasm (to a considerable degree). Treat yourself almost as if you are an actor, almost a showman or a salesman who is there to 'sell' your own research's results. And above all, try to maintain eye contact with your audience.

### **Audience**

I would say that the general rule is to KEEP IT SIMPLE, or at least as simple as possible. I do realise that sometimes it's hard to decide what should be in and what you can leave out from your talk. What you need to consider when preparing your presentation is that conference talks are a bit like standing in front of a group of students when you teach. You must be prepared to have in your class students from different backgrounds and with differing levels of knowledge. Obviously, it does differ depending on the scope of the conference. Therefore, if you are going to the BPS annual conference you could expect more variety in the crowd than if you are taking part in a Society section conference, such as for the Cognitive Section or other. Your audience and their potential knowledge in your research area should shape the angle of your presentation, sug-

gesting which information you should explain in more/less details.

A completely different issue is audience dynamic. You might think about asking some questions or even giving some tasks to your audience, and in general I would support such methods. It does make your presentation a bit more interactive and vivid, the only thing is you might get a very 'dead' audience and in such case you need to be prepared to continue without their input. Personally, I've found rhetorical questions to be a good technique: they make the audience think (or at least I hope so), and I'm not fully depending on the audience to move forward with my presentation. (If you decide to use the questions, please keep the balance – we don't want 15–20 minutes of rhetorical questions).

Finally, for some PhD students the real nightmare lies in the questions at the end of the talk and not in the presentation itself. In such a case probably the most important thing that you need is to try to convince yourself that the audience knows less than you do about your subject. You are the big fish in your specific topic and they came to learn from you... and not to destroy you. Even when you have a more experienced and more knowledgeable person in the audience, usually they are making helpful comments rather than asking horrible questions. Beside, there is no requirement for you to know everything. Phrases such as 'that's very interesting I must look into this in more detail', 'this particular area is not part of the current research' and so on are very useful and helpful answers to really difficult ques-

tions. Obviously, you can always offer an informal chat after your presentation – who knows, you might find a potential research collaborator. There are also situations when a person's question tends to change into a monologue and after first five minutes you are lost. The best advice here is to ask them to repeat the question.

Unfortunately, you might find some members of the audience would just love to prove you wrong. From one side it is a good thing because it does very often lead to a rather good discussion, but it might be very demanding on you. However, this leads us back to the preparation part, which is another reason why you should know your own study, your results and different possible explanations and limitations of your research.

I hope that some of the above points will be useful for you. I would like to stress that you must take into consideration your individuality and preferred working style while reading this or any similar advice. I know that some people can do great presentations with minimum preparation, they are never (or least never seem to be) stressed about it and it looks like everything comes so naturally to them. Whether you are one of them or not, I think that you should always consider two rules – KEEP IT SIMPLE and BE PREPARED. That should do the trick.

Good luck.

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## Conference Review

# Sixth Wales Institute of Sport, Health and Exercise Science Conference

Aberystwyth University, 3rd July 2009

Stuart Flint, Aberystwyth University

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**T**HERE was a great deal of psychology on show at the Sixth Wales Institute of Sport, Health and Exercise Sciences (WISHES) conference at Aberystwyth University in July 2009. The conference was held at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, which proved an excellent venue.

At this annual conference academics of all levels and professionals from across Wales are invited to attend and present their work. Like others, this conference provides a great opportunity not only to gain knowledge of scientific research, but also to network and develop academic relationships with others in the field from across the country in a stimulating environment. The conference provides postgraduates with excellent opportunity to present research for the first time.

Although it is typically aimed at those with a sport and exercise background, this year there was a strong psychological presence at the conference. The influence of psychology in sport and exercise situations has become increasingly valued and this was alluded to in the keynote speakers' presentations. For example, psychology played a key role with the athletes who competed in the Beijing Olympics, not only during the games but also prior to attending the event in terms of the preparation, which was deemed essential to the success of the Great Britain team.

Some of the psychological research examined different health issues such as obesity, breast cancer and rheumatoid arthritis. Other research, which has implications

across a number of psychological areas, examined topics such as body image, stress, parental support and career transitions. One of the papers I found particularly interesting examined the potential relationships between muscle dysmorphia, which is the perceptions that one is not muscular enough, and appearance schema processing, body image disturbance, and activating events. The authors found positive correlations between muscle dysmorphia with disturbed body image, negative body image emotions and appearance schema activation. This is particularly important due to the potential effects of muscle dysmorphia, demonstrating that those with the condition may suffer in similar ways to those with other psychological issues such as eating disorders, in which there is a preoccupation with one's body. This is a growing area of research, which requires further study due to the potential application with current societal pressures, where certain body types appear to be valued more than others that are stigmatised.

The conference also allowed the opportunity to present some of my own research, which is very topical and entails investigating the perceptions of obesity and those who suffer from the condition. Through the use of explicit measurement, it was demonstrated that a number of variables, including age and sex, affect the perceptions of obesity. For example, it was established that males reported more negative attitudes about obese persons and associated more negative

characteristics with obesity than females. It was also found that that all participants (regardless of gender) had negative attitudes about obesity on an implicit level. This is of importance as findings may indicate certain types of behaviour that would be directed towards those suffering from the condition, which is extremely valuable due to the scale of the problem.

Another paper of interest was a systematic review of the psychological adjustment resulting from career transitions in sport. The authors reviewed 101 studies from a variety of sports, paying attention to three particular variables: sample characteristics, research designs; and correlates of the quality of athletes' career transition. The review demonstrated the importance of psychological adjustment in factors relating to career transitions such as self-identity and personal development, and the resources available whilst experiencing career transitions such as social support and coping strategies. The findings of this study provided support for existing models of career transitions in sport.

Furthermore, the findings are not only applicable in sport, but across all walks of life where a transition is made regarding a career.

In summary, the conference provided an excellent opportunity for all those attending to gain something. Feedback was very positive and the organisers deserve recognition for their efforts in making the event such as success, through the inspiring and motivating environment created. The conference has been going from strength to strength each year, attracting researchers of a high calibre such as Professor Greg Whyte whose many might recognise through his TV appearances both as a leader in his field and for his recent work which includes leading a group of celebrities (including Cheryl Cole) up Mount Kilimanjaro for Comic Relief and his assistance in guiding *Little Britain* star David Walliams in his inspirational swim across the English Channel in 2006 for Sport Relief.

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Conference Review

# Division of Health Psychology annual conference 2009

September 9-11, Aston University, Birmingham

Kyle Brown, Sheffield Hallam University

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**T**HE joint Division of Health Psychology (DHP)/European Health Psychology Society conference last year was my first (non-PsyPAG) conference, and gave this year's DHP conference something to live up to!

Not only did I get to put faces to a number of names I had frequently read about, I really enjoyed the talks. I also enjoyed the location in Bath (my first visit there). I must admit that my expectations were lower this year, considering this conference would not be on the same scale as last year's combined effort of two societies. Also, the fact that its location was in Birmingham, a place I have been to numerous times (being born in a town very close by), helped contribute to these reduced expectations.

The first aspect of the conference that significantly (I struggle to use that word now without some sort of statistical evidence close by...) changed these perceptions was its organisation. All the rooms were in close proximity to each other and relatively close to the accommodation and easy to find, and there was sufficient time for travel between sessions. Also the social events were well organised, especially in light of their considerable distance from the conference venue and the accommodation. This made the experience appreciably less stressful. One aspect the organisers could have improved on were the size of two particular rooms: the wine reception/poster room was a little cramped, especially when the majority of delegates congregated there. Additionally, it was

acknowledged that the breakfast cafeteria was notably small.

The scientific programme was generally quite good. In terms of the keynotes, Professor Mike West (Aston University) kicked off the conference with a talk emphasising how health psychology has a noteworthy role in the workplace, especially considering how much money is lost through lack of productivity (in the NHS, for example) as a consequence of problems such as simple illness and lack of team cohesion. Professor West argued that if we work on increasing this productivity, it could have a significant impact of the NHS. I think that his continuation of this argument did limit his talk a little; what started out as a good application of health psychology turned into ideas about how positive psychology can be applied to these situations. This is not to discredit positive psychology (which I believe has important links and application to health psychology) or Professor West, it just seemed that the latter part of the talk was more ideas based and not backed up by empirical research in the same logical manner as the first half of the talk. Later in the same day, Professor Jonathan Smith (Birkbeck, University College London) gave the second keynote speech, about the application of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to health psychology. Being a strong advocator of statistics and stricter experimental methodology to health psychology, I had already set my brain to 'sceptical' before Professor Smith spoke. I have to admit that the

talk was very interesting and informative, even to someone like myself who has had little prior experience with the technique. The talk involved explanation of the technique, examples and tips of good uses of IPA and an analysis of studies that have applied the technique well and why this is so. The keynote speaker on the second day was Professor Karina Davidson (Columbia University) who had travelled across the Atlantic for the conference. She explained how our conceptualisations of depression can have marked impact in its effects on heart disease. As part of a research team of doctors, statisticians and sociologists her research has quite a marked impact on those with heart problems and it was interesting to see how her research applied in this setting.

The final (and possibly my favourite) keynote speaker was Professor Ronan O'Carroll (University of Stirling) who gave a talk about the psychological aspects of liver disease and its treatment. He began by saying that one of the major causes of liver disease is not alcohol (which immediately made me feel better about my hangover and could be a factor in why I liked him) and is in fact largely affected by obesity and a number of other common causes. One of the good aspects of his talk was how he covered so much ground; information was included about the psychological/cognitive impairments in those with liver disease and spanned to applying psychology to help increase treatment adherence in those with liver disease who fail to do so. Additionally, he covered the (what should be) increasingly relevant topic of being a living liver donor: It is possible to donate part of one's liver to others with both parties in question surviving. Despite this, many UK recipients refuse a liver from their loved ones due to the danger it poses. Conversely, in Canada, a number of people have received a liver from a living donor over the past eight years and it was quite interesting to explore why this inter-country difference is present.

With regards to talks and posters by other delegates, there was a range of the good and

not so good, as I would expect from any conference. There was a particularly good symposium on dietary behaviour and I quite enjoyed the talks on 'risky business', but this may have been partly due to it being particularly relevant to my area. As a final note on talks, it was good to see more variation this year: although the last year's talks were of good quality, a rather large number of them were about the same subject matter.

On the social side of things, I found the conference to have a friendly atmosphere. Most people were easily approachable and I found myself having in-depth conversations (both about our research and whatever else came to mind after several glasses of wine) with other postgraduates, clinicians, academics and members of the DHP committee. This opportunity to socialise was enhanced by the social events, each of which I thoroughly enjoyed: For the semi-organised meal, we made our way through Birmingham to Broad Street, a brightly lit strip with numerous bars and restaurants. I cannot comment on the quality of food, as a colleague and I snuck away to watch the England match... justifying our actions with the phrase 'eating is cheating'. However, we did meet up with the rest of the crowd later on. The conference meal was particularly memorable, taking place at Birmingham Council House. The food was good (especially the dessert, which is my Achilles heel), the setting was good and it had a great atmosphere. There was even a disco adjacent to the banquet hall, although the cheesy music was not quite to my taste, but certainly got everyone having fun. (Even I started dancing when my request for a bit of Lionel Richie and Stevie Wonder was granted...)

Overall, I found the conference enjoyable and also quite beneficial to me as a postgraduate student. I learned new aspects of health psychology that I would usually stray away from, met some people that I would love to work with in the future (hint, hint) and got some great feedback on my project, which I really needed to help reignite the original spark that has been waning after two years of PhD work.

Book review

# Psychology of self regulation, cognitive affective and motivational processes

Psychology Press: Taylor & Francis Group,  
East Sussex; £40 in shops, £36 online

Charlotte McLeod, University of Bath

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**T**HIS book is edited by Joseph P Forgas (University of New South Wales), Roy Baumeister (Florida State University) and Dianne Tice (Princeton University). Baumeister and Tice are prominent social psychologists with an active interest within the field of self regulation. The book is based on material discussed at the 11th Sydney Symposium of Social Psychology in 2008. The symposium is a yearly event where delegates are invited to discuss and present work that is within a particular remit of social psychology.

The aim of the 2008 symposium was to encourage debate and discussion with other leading researchers examining self regulation in order to develop and elaborate upon important research ideas. This collaboration aimed to review the theories of self regulatory processes, to integrate the various research traditions and explore the recent developments in the field. The key objective of the book is to provide an informative, scholarly and readable overview of these recent advances discussed at Sydney. The language used is clear and concise and the terms are defined, thus making the book a pleasant read.

The book has an introduction and is split into four themed sections: (1) the role that motivational processes play in self regulation; (2) the role that self regulatory strategies play in goal orientated behaviour; (3) research on the role of affective and cogni-

tive processes in self regulation; and (4) analysis of the social and interpersonal functions of self regulation. Each of these sections contains several articles, organised in a non-linear fashion so each article can be read in isolation, or in any particular order.

The introduction provides a concise overview of self regulation to orientate the reader. This provides a short but comprehensive grounding that is required prior to further discussion on self regulation. This introduction includes the following: (1) A short rationale for why self regulation is important to study. This refers to the benefits of successful self regulation and the practical relevance for self regulation in everyday social life. (2) The historical context. The philosophical roots of self regulation theory are acknowledged. This historical context is then brought into the modern day by considering self regulation from a psychological perspective. (3) Self control theories and Carver and Scheier's cybernetics model are described. These models underpin or compliment all the other self regulation theories which are discussed in the following chapters. There is no mention of stage theories of self regulation and these are not included. (4) Some attributes of self regulation theory are described, such as the conscious or unconscious nature of self regulation, types of self regulation and components required for self regulation.

The articles found in this book vary on

their focus. Articles either focus on elaborating particular models or emphasise novel applications of specific self regulation models. For instance, the first article explores Baumeister's model of self control. There is a lot of detail on the theory, such as ego depletion, self control strength and conservation. The article does apply the model to eating and interpersonal relationships; however, these applications are well established as is the model itself. This is in contrast to other articles that explore Higgins theory of Self Regulatory Fit in reference to sport performance and to interpersonal relationships. Here Higgins theory is defined, however the focus is on the novel application. Higgins Fit model has been extensively examined in terms of cognition, motivation and affect but not extensively within the fields of sport and interpersonal relationships. It is important to note, that not all the models discussed in this book are described with the same detail as Baumeister's model. Therefore the beginner may struggle to understand those models that are not given the same amount of attention. In addition the background material is brief, which provides a good standing for those who are acquainted with

self regulation theory, but it may not be enough for those who are new to the area. There is a risk that newcomer to the field may not gain an in depth understanding of the issues raised. Therefore these readers may need further sources of information to grasp some of the concepts, their implications or models.

In summary, the book is an interesting addition to the bookshelf, it provides a large scope in terms of the models discussed and possible applications. The articles are clearly written and concise. The book would be of interest to researchers wanting to keep ahead regarding the different applications of cybernetic and self control models. This book is not suited for those who haven't come across self regulation theory before, or those who want to know about stage models of self regulation.

A final note: the price of the book does not reflect its size. For a student the cost is a little high.

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# English as she is wrote

John Radford, University of East London

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**B**ROWNIE POINTS if you know the source of the title. A postgrad was kind enough to say that he liked my writing (thank you, Kristian), and he raised the question of how one can learn to write. I don't claim to be an expert on learning to write, but here are some thoughts.

I remember my schooldays mostly with repugnance, but we were taught some basics of writing. We did parsing (grammatical use of parts of speech), analysis (sentence construction) and précis (reducing a passage to a specified length), and I have found these all useful, especially the last. Scholarly papers nearly always require an abstract, while editors often want something to be shorter, or occasionally longer. Radio and TV may demand you sum up your research in exactly 43 seconds, or even in a one sentence sound-bite.

There are rather obviously three major interrelated components in any writing: tools, content, and style. By tools I mean grammar, vocabulary and usage. One of the problems is to know when you need help with these. Many blunders are made unwittingly, and unless you are pretty sure of yourself it is advisable to have an authority to hand. Textbooks of grammar often seem to give a lot about formal structure, and not enough practical usage. They are perhaps most useful if English is not your first language. Two that appear to me clear and reliable are *A Practical English Grammar* by AJ Thomas and AV Martinet (4th edn., OUP 1986), and *English Grammar for Dummies* by LT Ward and G Woods (UK edn., Wiley 2007). On the other hand, for vocabulary, including spelling, a dictionary is essential. I like the Oxford English series; the massive main work is usually available online in universities, and the Concise version is handy

for frequent use. Words are very often used loosely and it is wise to check the exact meaning (are you certain of 'infamous', 'nemesis', 'careen', or 'smattering', all frequently misused?). Besides, English spelling is a mess, with innumerable idiosyncrasies, and there is often no alternative to looking up and learning. Besides a dictionary, a thesaurus is invaluable to find additional or more precise words, and again I like the senior work, *Roget*, originally 1852, 150th anniversary edition 2002 (published by Penguin, but note, this is not *The Penguin Thesaurus*.) I use both that and the *Concise OED* regularly. Usage is a combination of grammar, vocabulary and custom. English is a very flexible language, which is fine, but by the same token it can get sloppy, even meaningless (you can, apparently, live in a ground-floor loft, and have serious fun watching your favourite artist alone in concert). The granddaddies here are HW and FG Fowler: *The King's English*, 1906, and *Modern English Usage*, 1926, by HW alone after his brother's death in World War I, and revised by RW Burchfield in 2004 (OUP), though some purists insist on the original. Two other classics are Ernest Gowers' *The Complete Plain Words*, 1954, (revised by S Greenbaum and J Whitcut, 1986, Penguin), and Eric Partridge's *Usage and Abusage: A Guide to Good English*, repr. Norton 1997. However, probably no two people who fancy they have some command of English will agree on everything, thus I often consult Fowler, in particular, but I don't always accept what I find. Also, we must accept that language changes, and I mention below some criteria for accepting or rejecting changes.

Content influences the way we need to write; for example, a novel is obviously different from a technical manual. Academic

journals generally have their own rules which have to be followed even if one does not like them, as do, more annoyingly in my experience, many book publishers. But there are at least two aspects that are always relevant: meaning and structure. It is very difficult to write well unless one is clear in one's own mind about what one wishes to convey. Of course, it is very often helpful to clarify thoughts by writing them down, perhaps several times with variations, but normally this should not be a final version, though it sometimes is. I have on occasion found that only when something was in print did I realise clearly what I was trying to say. A good technique is trying to explain what you mean to someone else, even an imaginary someone. A recent study found that children with imaginary friends had better narrative skills, presumably because they talk to them. (I once made a hash of explaining cricket to a Norwegian colleague, and have since tried to work out how I should have done it, but the occasion has not arisen again. Try it.) Working out a good structure usually involves identifying the various units, topics, etc., and trying them out in different orders, in one's head or on paper, or both. Word processors make this easier in some ways, by copying and pasting, but in some ways harder, because one has no view of the whole, and because successive versions are lost (unless you save them, of course). PG Wodehouse wrote on a manual typewriter, but he did so on a continuous roll of paper, which he could cut into suitable chunks and pin on the wall. I have not heard of anyone else doing this, but it gave him a view of the whole piece. I have sometimes found it useful to plan, then write, then reduce it once again to a plan, to see if it flows logically and meaningfully. It is useful to ask yourself whether each paragraph carries the argument forward, or is merely what you thought of next. It is also useful, if possible, to put the work away for a time, then re-read it.

Style is a personal thing, but again there are two important aspects: purpose and criteria. The general purpose of most writing is

communication, but what is communicated varies. In academic and professional writing it is most often information, though it may also be persuasion, or interest and enthusiasm, or all of these. Nevertheless, the criteria for writing that communicates effectively are much the same. They include particularly, clarity, economy, accuracy and appropriateness. These are generally the ideals, (apart from those one suspects of deliberately writing to confuse, such as civil servants and French sociologists). Remember, too, that those not in your profession may not understand technical words you take for granted, something which also applies to students, especially those new to the subject. There are also some variations; for example in a persuasive report, it may be necessary to repeat arguments in different ways, or to use, sparingly, longer words than are strictly necessary for meaning, to add weight and gravitas. When Abraham Lincoln gave his famous address at Gettysburg, there was another speaker too. A local paper praised the latter's verbose oratory, while dismissing Lincoln's speech as lightweight, unsuitable to the solemn occasion. Lincoln's simple directness has won, though he did start with the biblical-sounding 'Four-score and seven years ago...' rather than the mundane 'eighty-seven years ago...'. The criteria of clarity, accuracy and so on are also a basis for accepting or rejecting changes in language. For example, using 'went' or 'was like' instead of 'said' is not just vulgar, it debases the language by confusing the meanings of words.

Good writing is a skill, and we know a good deal about how skills are acquired. Simply, they require instruction, practice, feedback, and preferably reward. These are probably most effective from a teacher, ideally on an individual basis; good teaching in my view is and always will be labour intensive. But a friend can, if willing, give useful feedback. Many an author thanks a partner as 'my best friend and severest critic' or the like. I have mentioned some books on particular aspects of writing. Here I will add what I think the best general guide I have

seen, *Business Writing: A Guide to Doing It Well*, by Sidney Callis (second edition, 2008, Management Books 2000 Ltd.). Despite the specific title, this deals very fully and clearly with what I have mentioned briefly, and a lot more. I should say that the author is a friend of mine, but we only met because I reviewed the first edition. In addition to instructional books, I would urge exploration of the immense range and variety of English. Here are just four examples, in case you don't already know them, not to imitate but to compare: *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens; *Concerning the Eccentricities of Cardinal Pirelli* by Ronald Firbank; *The Tale of Mr Tod* by Beatrix Potter; and *The Code of the Woosters* by PG Wodehouse. All are quite short. They are wildly different, but every one is a superb use of the language, with not a word out of place or unnecessary.

Learning, too, is labour intensive: we all know about the ten thousand hours that are so often necessary to master a skill. But all

psychologists have to write a great deal, and if teaching they additionally have to assess the writing of others. Communication is basic to the job, and deserves at least as much attention as other professional skills. It is a common cry of both employers and educationists that young people don't know how to write. I have found, alas, that even academic colleagues are not always sufficiently knowledgeable to be able to remedy this. Finally, I have compiled, under the title *A Little Book of Boobs*, a set of 20 short quizzes, each of 12 'spot the mistake'; items, mostly from the Press, followed by corrections or comments. It is unpublished but I can let anyone interested have it by e-mail (j.k.radford@btinternet.com). Hours of fun for young and old.

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# Doctoral ad

# SPSS for Psychologists

Nicola Brace, Richard Kemp and Rosemary Snelgar,  
Palgrave Macmillan

Cherie Armour, University of Ulster, Magee Campus

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**T**HE MAJORITY, if not all, undergraduate students who undertake a degree in psychology will come into contact with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Many undergraduates and postgraduates alike appear terrified of statistics. However, thanks to introductory statistics books these fears are quickly alleviated. The process is expedited when introductory texts provide examples of how to use the relevant statistical software tools alongside an explanation of the statistics.

*SPSS for Psychologists* is an introductory text which does all of the above, and its 13 chapters will undoubtedly be of great assistance to undergraduates and postgraduates alike.

The first chapter is particularly beneficial for a novice, as it includes an overview of the many basic statistical concepts. This allows the reader to become familiar with statistical terminology without feeling as if they are required to learn a second language. The chapter helps familiarise the reader with the look of the SPSS program by clearly illustrating the windows as they will appear on the computer screen. This section also provides details on the functions of the multiple buttons within the SPSS toolbar, thus a time consuming trial and error practice session can be avoided.

The book aims to be an introductory source and it succeeds in providing a good foundation of statistical analysis. In addition, it includes advanced statistical functions which would appeal to the experienced user. So, in essence, the book grows with the

reader. Chapters 2–4 focus on getting started and cover tasks such as creating a data file and conducting descriptive statistics, how to report your findings using graphical representations, and how to manage the data (splitting files, selecting cases, recoding, etc.).

Chapters 5–8 begin by easing the reader into the world of statistical analysis. Cleverly, the complexities of the statistical test in question increases as the chapter numbers increase. We could say that they are positively correlated (a topic covered in chapter 6!). By chapter 8 the reader is introduced to Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and begins to become familiar with statistical tests which deal with more complex experimental designs.

While the initial chapters focus on getting started and basic statistical techniques, and as such are useful for undergraduates, it is chapters 9–13 that are of real benefit for postgraduate students. They cover topics such as Multiple Regression, Logistic Regression and Factor Analysis. Each chapter first describes the background information pertaining to the statistical test discussed. Sub-headings such as ‘An example’, ‘What does [the statistical test in question] do?’, ‘When should I use [the statistical test in question]’ are helpful and common throughout. Then detailed instructions and illustrations of how to conduct the particular test follow. Finally, readers are given suggestions on how to report the results.

An additional feature found within this book is that of ‘tip’ boxes which are found

on many pages. These assist the reader when they are attempting to use the SPSS software on their own data.

Chapter 13 provides another example of how this text grows with the reader. It explains the SPSS syntax function which is often only implemented by experienced users. It gives examples of syntax commands and again uses illustrations of what the software looks like on the screen. Again, like the previous chapters, there are boxed descriptions of the functions of the buttons found on the syntax toolbar. Chapter 13 concludes with some useful information relating to the printing of output, data files and syntax files. There is also a description on how to export the SPSS output to various file formats which

allow the reader to understand how to send information to others who do not have the SPSS software (this was new to me!). The text is complemented with a 15-page glossary of terms, an appendix (where the example datasets are illustrated), and an index.

Overall I would recommend the book to anyone who is doing research which involves statistical analysis. The text is clear and easy to understand, and also highly informative and I can confidently say it is one which I will be frequently referring too in the foreseeable future.

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## Conference Review

# XIVth European Conference on Developmental Psychology

Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania,  
17–24 August 2009

Alana James, Goldsmiths, University of London

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**T**HE XIVth European Conference on Developmental Psychology (ECDP) was my first international conference, in fact the first non-PsyPAG conference of my PhD. Having previously only presented in front of very supportive postgraduates I was unsure how other academics would respond – would they feel the love?

First things first, I'd like to get something clear. It is okay to wear jeans at a conference? Or footless tights for that matter? I just want to get that out of the way as it's something I've been wondering for a long time. I was gratified to find that it is indeed your academic, rather than personal, presentation that counts.

Something else I'd like to reveal is that even if you think you are a terrible presenter, chances are there will be someone who is worse than you. The speakers at the ECDP varied from postgraduates like myself to distinguished keynote speakers such as Professor Dan Olweus, the founder of school bullying research, with many 'grades' in between. Something that did surprise me was that the length of professional career didn't appear to be related to public speaking ability (I say appear, I don't have any statistics to back me up). There were some truly excellent speakers, such as Professor Nathan Fox, the opening keynote, who gave an inspiring talk on an early intervention project in Bucharest. However, there were also some not so good speakers. The take-home

message was realising that just because you're a postgraduate doesn't mean your talk can't be as good as, or better than, the more established researchers.

Okay, enough about my revelations, what was the conference like? Basically if you're doing research in developmental psychology, this is where it's at. Delegates attended from around the world, including Europe, Japan and America and the conference stretched out over a full week. As well as the main conference there were a number of pre- and post-workshops on topics including methodological issues for longitudinal data collection and cyber-bullying. Keynote speakers were broadcast on a live video feed from the main lecture theatre to all computers in the building, ensuring that everyone could see the talks even if they were effectively 'sold out'. Notable amongst these speakers were Professor Paul Harris and Dr Elena Hoicka, the winners of the William Thierry Preyer Award for Excellence in Research on Human Development and the George Butterworth Young Scientist Award respectively.

Although the topics of the keynotes spanned the breadth of developmental psychology, there was a strong focus on bullying research across the conference. This was fantastic for me as I'm researching peer support in schools, which is often used as an anti-bullying intervention. In fact I often felt pulled in two directions by simultaneous

symposia on bullying. One of my personal highlights was Professor Christina Salmivalli's presentation on school-based interventions, which dared to point out that the efficacy of such programmes appears to be decreasing over the years, according to the published studies. Rather than being disheartening it was refreshing to hear someone taking stock of an issue and giving an honest, objective outlook with suggestions for future directions.

However, I do appreciate that for others the amount of bullying research may have been in abundance. By the end of the week a common response when meeting a new person was 'Oh not another bullying researcher' (actually said out loud). With the announcement that the next biennial ECDP will be held in Bergen, Norway, the heartland of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, alarm bells are ringing that this emphasis may well re-occur. Bully for me, of course.

It was particularly useful for me to get feedback on my own research from the multitude of other researchers in the field. When the call for conference papers first went out, my office mate suggested that we arrange a symposium on peer support. Our supervisor supported us in inviting other researchers to present, and in finding a discussant for the session, and this went ahead very successfully. I feel that this really helped us to get the maximum out of the conference; providing the opportunity to learn from and network with some of the big names in our area.

I was also fortunate to be staying in an apartment in the centre of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, with three other PhD students from my research unit. This worked out much cheaper than staying in one of the

recommended hotels, and we were still able to take the free buses to and from the conference venue. The conference was well organised, but it was difficult not to assess everything in terms of whether we were getting value for our conference fees. For example, lunches were expensive with only one option per day, particularly rough for vegetarians who were given the same meal, simply sans meat or fish.

The conference dinner was held in the atmospheric hall of the Museum of Applied Arts, in the centre of Vilnius. As well as some gorgeous food an evening of entertainment was laid on, in the form of traditional Lithuanian folk music and dancing. I would have happily paid an extra charge for my supervisor to be one of the academics prised from their chair and forced to dance, sometimes blindfolded, but alas it was not to be.

As well as providing opportunities for professional development the conference oddly felt like a mini-break from the PhD. A chance to think about my research, whilst not being under pressure to actually do any research. Each to their own, but I made the decision not to go to any sessions which weren't directly relevant to my work. My horizons may not have been broadened, but it meant I had some time out to recharge or be a tourist. Vilnius has a very beautiful old town with a number of attractions that can be taken in within a day or two.

Overall I would most definitely recommend the ECDP for postgraduate developmental psychologists. I returned glowing with a renewed enthusiasm for research and with shiny academic aspirations. The question is, how long will it last...

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# Writing for the Society's Member Network publications

Stephen Gibson, York St John University

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**A**S MANY READERS will be aware, the Society's member networks represent a range of different interest groups across the breadth of UK psychology. Divisions are organised around the various professional areas of psychology (e.g. forensic psychology, occupational psychology, sport & exercise psychology, etc.), Sections are organised around a variety of different areas of academic psychology (e.g. history and philosophy of psychology, social psychology, developmental psychology), and Branches represent members according to geographical location (e.g. North East England, Wessex, London and Home Counties). There are also various Special Groups and Support Groups (the full list of member networks can be found at [http://www.bps.org.uk/networks/networks\\_home.cfm](http://www.bps.org.uk/networks/networks_home.cfm)).

Many of the member networks publish newsletters and periodicals that explicitly welcome contributions from postgraduate students, and these outlets can be a great way of honing your writing skills and crystallising your thoughts during the long and often arduous journey through your doctorate. As well as writing about your own research you might want to consider submitting a book review or writing about a conference or other event you've attended. The precise requirements for each publication vary, and more details are available by following the links at the URL above.

If you are interested in having a look at recent issues of any of the member network publications they are available from the BPS online shop (<http://www.bpsshop.org.uk/>). These are generally free of charge to members of the relevant network, and can be purchased for a small fee by non-members.

Whatever your area of interest in psychology, there is likely to be a member network publication that covers it, and there's no better way to begin contributing to the member networks than to consider writing for one of their publications.

Dr Stephen Gibson is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at York St John University. He is on the editorial board of the publications of the Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section and the Social Psychology Section, and is Member Network Editor Representative on the Society's Publications and Communications Board.

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*Editor's note:* If you are thinking of writing for any Society publication, a style guide can be downloaded in PDF format from [http://www.bps.org.uk/publications/submission-guidelines/submission-guidelines\\_home.cfm](http://www.bps.org.uk/publications/submission-guidelines/submission-guidelines_home.cfm).

# Giving 'the powerful placebo' even more power: The robustness of the placebo effect and why I believe it is a useful phenomenon

Kyle Brown, Sheffield Hallam University

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**T**HIS article is largely derived from research conducted for my undergraduate dissertation examining the placebo effect. Unfortunately, I will not present my experiment and findings because a) the challenges to the literature which I highlighted are now being addressed; and b) I sadly do not have the time to cut a 15,000-plus word document to around 2,000 words. Suffice to say, I had a lot of fun studying the placebo effect.

My study involved the manipulation of people's reaction times to a cognitive task by giving them just a vitamin and a little bit of verbal instruction. Feel free to e-mail me if you want to find out more about the study. However, the focus of this article is to explain the reality of placebo effect and discuss how useful this phenomenon is. I find it particularly irritating when articles use placebos purely as a control group in comparison to the drug they are testing, as this implicitly assumes that the placebo has no effect at all. As my research suggests, this is far from the truth. After reading this article, I hope you will agree...

A societal conception of a placebo may be an inactive pill given to a person who does not really have an illness; or the illness is thought to be psychosomatic in nature or 'all in the head'. Even some researchers equate giving a placebo to patients as doing nothing at all (Ernst & Resch, 1995). One might define a placebo as 'an inactive substance given to a patient usually to compare its effects with those of a real drug, but some-

times given for the psychological benefit gained by the patient through believing that he or she is receiving treatment'. (*Collins Dictionary*, 1999) Such a definition implies placebos do nothing in comparison with 'real drugs' and are given to placate (or please) the patient purely for their psychological welfare.

However, placebos have been found to be very effective in curing illness: Henry Beecher's (1955) paper *The Powerful Placebo* spearheaded a wealth of studies, all of which would categorically disagree with the notion that placebos do nothing. Beecher found that 35 per cent of patients with a variety of disorders could be treated with a placebo alone. Sadly, Beecher's pioneering work has been conceptually criticised (Kienle, 1995; Kienle & Kiene, 1997) and some studies (the most cited by far being Hrobjartsson & Gotzsche, 2001) have argued that the placebo effect may not actually exist. However, Hrobjartsson and Gotzsche have themselves received scrutiny by a number of researchers (e.g. Ader, 2001; Greene et al., 2001; Kirsch & Scoboria, 2001) and more recent studies have addressed the flaws highlighted by Kienle and Kiene and still yield an even larger placebo effect, whereby 70 per cent of the participants were successfully treated with a placebo alone. Placebo effects have been demonstrated across a number of domains, including pain reduction (e.g. Petrovic et al., 2002; Amanzio et al., 2001; Benedetti et al., 2003) and increasing motor movement in Parkinson's disease (Benedetti

et al., 2005, 2003; Colloca & Benedetti, 2005). Furthermore, placebo effects have also been found in non-clinical populations such as decaffeinated coffee having marked effects on arousal (Flaten et al., 2003; Flaten & Blumenthal, 1999) and in marketing (i.e. placebo expectancies increasing the efficacy of a product: Shiv et al., 2005; Irmak et al., 2005).

More evidence for the existence of the placebo effect comes from the fact that placebos robustly exert certain characteristics, such as how the size of a pill can alter the effectiveness of a placebo (Moerman, 2002; Pacheo-Lopez et al., 2006). Furthermore, placebos mimic the dose-response relationship of active drugs (Blackwell et al., 1972; de Craen et al., 1999): that is increasing the number (i.e. taking two tablets instead of one) results in a larger placebo effect. Likewise the mode of administration influences the effect, such that capsules are more effective than pills (Hussain & Ahad, 1970), injections are more effective still (de Craen et al., 2000) and surgery has the most powerful placebo effect (Johnson, 1994; Moseley et al., 2002). Inert treatments can also produce undesirable effects, either in addition to desirable effects (a placebo side effect: e.g. Ross & Olsen, 1981; Shapiro et al., 1974) or on their own (a nocebo effect: e.g. Kennedy, 1961; Hahn, 1997). Nocebo effects are distinct from placebo side effects in that people expect an undesirable outcome in the former and expect a desirable outcome, but experience negative effects in the latter. The placebo effect can occur in animals as well as humans (Hernstein, 1962; Ader, 1985; Fields & Price, 1997) and brand names have also been found to enhance the placebo effect (Braithwaite & Cooper, 1981). Finally, placebos (and active drugs) are generally more effective at eliciting certain responses when they are a specific colour: red, yellow and orange pills are seen to be stimulating, whereas blue and green ones are often portrayed as tranquillising (Shapira et al., 1970; de Craen et al., 1996). It is important to note that these findings not

only provide additional evidence for the placebo effect, they are important because they have application to active treatments and therapies. For example, would you believe in the efficacy of a red paracetamol pill from a sachet relative to a white pill from a white container with prescription information on the side?

At this point, given the amount of information provided about the placebo effect in action, it may be of importance to describe theory on how the placebo effect actually works. Regrettably, a full review of placebo theories is vastly beyond the scope of this article and thus only an overview is included here. Original placebo theories pertained to the common view that people of a certain personality type would be more likely to respond to a placebo, such as someone who is highly suggestible (Bailer, 2001). This however, is not the case as most placebo personality research has produced non-significant results (Brody, 2000; Shapiro & Morris, 1978). Other studies that have applied a placebo 'wash-out' or 'run-in' (e.g. Lepisart, 1995) in which supposed 'placebo responders' are screened from by use of a preliminary study (i.e. those who initially respond to a placebo are excluded from the study). These studies still demonstrated placebo effects after the 'responders' were excluded; suggesting people may respond to placebos in different situations. Motivation and/or desire have both been implicated in the placebo effect, insofar that the desire to experience a positive outcome results in a placebo effect (Jensen & Karoly, 1991). This seems plausible but has very little empirical support and motivational perspectives cannot account for negative placebo effects (Stewart-Williams, 2004). Despite these drawbacks, the role of desire still has applications, particularly in terms of interacting with another prominent theory of the placebo effect: the role of expectancy (see Price, Finiss & Benedetti, 2008). Expectancy theory is one of the prevailing theoretical explanations of the placebo effect which quite simply posits that 'a placebo produces

an effect because the recipient expects it to'. (Stewart-Williams & Podd, 2004, p.328) Expectancy theory receives support from a number of studies (e.g. Geers et al., 2005; Fratello et al., 2005). Furthermore, research that has implicated physiological processes into the expectancy framework (de la Fuente-Fernandez et al., 2004, 2001; de la Fuente-Fernandez & Stoessl, 2002) stresses dopaminergic and brain-reward pathway activation as biological processes behind expectancy. The predominant theoretical antagonist to expectancy theory is the application of classical conditioning (Hernstein, 1962; Wickramasekera, 1980) in relation to the placebo effect. In this theory, active medication is the unconditioned stimulus (US) that results in the unconditioned response (UR) of recovering from illness. The conditioned stimuli (CS) refers to the method/techniques used to administer the active medication. The medical treatments that people experience during their lives constitute the conditioning trials, in which the methods/techniques of administration are paired with the active ingredients. The placebo effect is the resulting conditioned response (CR). This approach also has support from physiological studies (Bermudez-Rattoni, 2004; Berman & Dubai, 2001), and it has been implicated in both placebo induced immunosuppression (e.g. Ader & Cohen, 1975, 1982, 1991) and endogenous opioid induced analgesia (see Price, Finiss & Benedetti, 2008). As specified, a full review of each theory is beyond the scope of this article, but there has been suggestion that classical conditioning and expectancy may not be mutually exclusive (see Stewart-Williams & Podd, 2004). Moreover, it may be that many of the factors implicated in placebo theories interact (see Price, Finiss & Benedetti, 2008 for a review). Although this (placebo theory) section is slightly tangential with regards to explaining the importance of the placebo effect, the mechanisms behind the effect are obviously important for continuing research into the effect and the links to underlying physiology provide more evi-

dence for the legitimacy of the phenomenon. Notably, there are some additional issues that require consideration, both in terms of researching the placebo effect and the clinical implications. I will explain these before summarising the article and what I believe we can get out of the placebo effect.

Firstly and most importantly, it is conceptually wrong to attribute any change following placebo administration to a placebo effect. There are a number of changes unrelated to the placebo itself that can result in the change that is often perceived as a placebo effect (see Kienle & Kiene, 2001) but should actually be distinguished as a placebo response (i.e. any change that occurs after the administration of the placebo: Kirsch & Sapirstein, 1999). The most cited examples (e.g. Stewart-Williams, 2004; Geers et al., 2005) of this include Spontaneous Remission (the natural/ spontaneous improvement of a disease that is irrespective of therapeutic intervention), natural fluctuation in symptoms (which often occurs in chronic illness) and regression to the mean, which is best summarised by the following: 'People often tend to seek medical help at the point where their illness is at or nearing its peak, because they leave it for a while in the hope that it will cure itself.' (Forshaw, 2002, p.174). Knowledge of the placebo response is important because it is possible that some placebo and medical research findings could be attributed to such effects. One way to differentiate between the two from a research perspective is to always compare placebo groups against a group that does not receive a placebo (a no-placebo control: which would be subject to natural fluctuations).

As noted earlier, placebo effects have been demonstrated in both a clinical (i.e. pain and Parkinson's disease) and experimental (i.e. caffeine and brand labelling) manner. Essentially this can be reduced to whether we study the effect in the sick or the healthy. The argument for studying the placebo effect in the sick is fairly obvious, whereas Flaten and Blumenthal (1999) stress

experimental paradigms as limited because placebos should restore normal function in the ill as opposed to affect functioning in the healthy. Conversely, it could be argued that undesirable placebo effects (nocebos) do just that, they affect functioning in healthy individuals, producing what may be construed as illness. Also, the fact that some of the best placebo effects have involved healthy participants in non-clinical, experimental settings (Stewart-Williams, 2004) in spite of the lack of contextual factors, means there is much more to the phenomenon. One could also argue that many view health not just in terms of whether one is ill, but a complete state of well-being (World Health Organisation, 1948).

Following on from this, another pertinent question is whether research should assess the effect of placebos on subjective (i.e. perception of alertness/arousal) or objective (i.e. heart rate) aspects of phenomena. The possibility of deception and self-deception cannot be ruled out when measuring subjective variables, whereas they are unlikely to have an effect on objective, involuntary physiological variables (Harrington, 1997). Conversely, many aspects of illness are subjective (e.g. chronic pain, which does not seem to have an underlying physiological cause, but yields very strong placebo effects). Also, it has been argued that the majority of placebo effects found are only subjective (Hrobjartsson & Gotzsche, 2001). It would seem that the most effective way is to corroborate subjective reports with objective measures whenever possible (Stewart-Williams, 2004).

Finally, we must always remember that placebos will always be culture bound: they cannot exist inside a cultural vacuum. (Helman, 2001) Contextual factors can be viewed as anything that surrounds the patient under treatment, such as doctors, nurses, syringes and machines (DiBlasi et al., 2002). Such factors play a large role in the placebo response, that is, it may contribute to a placebo effect even if a placebo is not administered. Evidence for this comes from the

finding that a diagnosis (without any treatment) can actually produce a desirable effect in patients (Thomas, 1994). Also, the comparison of open v hidden treatments (mentioned earlier) provide evidence for the beneficial role of patient doctor interaction.

Western medicine in general is another example of context: The increased belief in the efficacy of prescribed medicines has a substantial placebo effect and may be best described by the term 'chemical comforters' (Claridge, 1970). This factor would explain a number of the aforementioned placebo characteristics mentioned earlier such as the dose-response relationship, effects of brand name etc. In fact, the notion that we have preconceived notions about the efficacy of a pill just by its colour, must mean we have deep cultural schema regarding medication.

I hope this has been an interesting insight into the nature of the placebo effect. I would like to summarise this article by expressing some of the ideas I believe we should take from these findings. Firstly, the reality of the placebo effect is supported by numerous studies in a range of health domains (and even extends as far as affecting cognition), whilst showing characteristics that are often exhibited with 'active medication' (such as the dose-response relationship found for drugs). Therefore, researchers should not only exercise caution when holding randomised controlled drug trials with a what they believe is an inert treatment, but they should also acknowledge the role that experiences and expectancies can possibly have on our well established treatments. It is also of importance to note that these effects occur in the healthy as well as the sick (i.e. the stimulatory effects of decaffeinated coffee), such that in all instances where we attempt to affect bodily function with a substance, we should be attempting to enhance the efficacy of that product by enhancing expectancies. I use the term enhance the efficacy because I am not attesting all treatments to be based solely on the placebo effect, just that expectancies and cognitions play a significant role in many treatments.

Furthermore, the placebo effect is a likely contributing factor for a number of complementary and alternative treatments (such as homeopathy and aromatherapy) that work for a number of people, but fail to work for others. I would argue that this particular effect is enhanced by the cultural effects mentioned: Eastern cultures have much more belief in such therapies, whereas Western cultures have a stronger belief in so-called chemical comforters.

Finally, the research mentioned regarding the physiology (in terms of expectancies and conditioning) of the placebo effect is only the tip of the iceberg. Recent research is examining ever increasing physiological links to the placebo effect, including the role of endogenous opioids in pain and the neuroendocrine system in immune responses (see Price, Finiss & Benedetti, 2008 for an

overview and also Enck, Benedetti & Scedlowski, 2008). One cannot discredit the placebo effect in light of these findings. Also, recent research (Van Deventer, 2008) has hinted at the possibility of meta-placebo effects: placebo effects without deceiving the patient. This is of utmost importance as one of the pertinent issues regarding the placebo effect is deception of the patient. I would like to conclude with a quote by Shapiro & Shapiro (1997, p.29), that sums up the potential importance of this subject:

‘If everything were known about the aetiology of the placebo effect, the terms placebo and placebo effect would disappear and be replaced by a hugely powerful psychotherapy.’

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# The law of unintended consequences.... and PhDs

Caroline Bettenay

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*Editor's Note:* Caroline Bettenay is the previous treasurer and developmental section representative of PsyPAG. Her PhD involved the cross-examination of children with intellectual difficulties and was supervised by Professor Lucy Henry at London South Bank University.

Caroline made a hugely significant contribution to the PsyPAG committee, largely through her role of treasurer, which involved a complete transformation of a rather disorganised set of accounts to a somewhat more sophisticated and professional system. Caroline was also instrumental in setting up the PsyPAG awards scheme, which has resulted in three types of award so far: The Rising Researcher Award, the Postgraduate Teaching Award and the PsyPAG workshop scheme. These are particularly important because we, as a committee, aim to provide as much as possible for the postgraduate community.

Not only was Caroline an asset in terms of the committee in general, she also was helpful for many on a personal level as a great friend. Here are just a few of the comments I received about her:

*'a great friend with great integrity whose opinion I always valued'*

*'an approachable and important person to discuss ideas'*

*'Caroline's generosity was a very admirable factor. She had a great calming effect on people and was so great with me at times when I felt burdened by things.'*

*'generally wonderful!'*

I personally think the last comment is a good way to summarise the general consensus regarding Caroline. I would also like to say on behalf of the PsyPAG committee that it has been a pleasure knowing and working with her. We wish you all the best with your future career and I'm sure we will no doubt bump into you and get to catch up!

**Kyle Brown**

**I** DIDN'T intend to take a PhD. PhDs were for scary, clever people. It just so happened that the sociologists at my university had some money, so knowing that sociologists never give money to psychologists, I applied just to be a thorn in their side. A few weeks later it was done – I was suddenly a PhD student expected to work 35 hours a week for a scholarship... hmm, how did that happen?

Discussions of the law of unintended consequences usually surround the negative unforeseen outcomes of a person's actions. However, being a glass half full type of a person, I offer here an alternate view: occasion-

ally there are unforeseen serendipitous consequences of decisions!

I didn't ever intend to work with children, especially not vulnerable children – having two kids of my own is quite challenging; I cry at Petit Filou adverts so am not exactly renowned for being robust. Yet here I am, deep into research into children with disabilities and assessing their performance in court under cross-examination... hmm.

I certainly didn't intend to become one of those committee types. But the previous treasurer said there would be plenty of others to volunteer at the AGM and thus persuaded me to volunteer strictly just to make

up the numbers – and here I am just about to finish two years as PsyPAG Treasurer and Developmental Section Representative.

Through my research I've met children whose home lives are so chaotic they go to school sick rather than stay at home. I've seen children struggle with remembering simple instructions, and had to adapt my questions accordingly. I've been put firmly in my place by tots who see I don't really have a 'proper' job. I've been hugged by kids of all ages, and laughed with them, and generally had a brilliant and humbling experience with them. Dedicated teachers, enthusiastic legal trainees, and sympathetic supervisors have all further enriched my research experience.

Through my committee roles I've been able to visit other universities, meet fantastically clever and talented people, stay in some interesting places, and speak at various con-

ferences; and recently I discovered that FBI agents are really not very good at murder mystery evenings! Confidence gained from sitting on the PsyPAG committees meant I was able to put myself forward to be on my university research ethics committee – something I would never have dreamed of doing three years ago.

And this diverse, fulfilling experience is all as a consequence of deciding to give a group of sociologists an extra application to read out of spite!

And do you know what? I've loved every minute of it all. As I prepare to stand down as treasurer, I urge you to go on, get that application in, for whatever it is you are thinking of applying for... you never know where it will lead you!

### **Correspondence**

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# Dates for the Diary

Dates	Venue	Event	Contact
1 December 2009	London	An introduction to working with the media	conferences@bps.org.uk
8 December 2009	London	London Lectures 2009	conferences@bps.org.uk
12-13 January 2010	Brighton	Postgraduate Occupational Psychology Annual Conference	<a href="http://www.bps.org.uk/pop2010/">www.bps.org.uk/pop2010/</a>
13-15 January	Brighton	The Division of Occupational Psychology Annual Conference	<a href="http://www.bps.org.uk/dop2010/">www.bps.org.uk/dop2010/</a>
8-12 March	South East	Child Clinical Neuropsychology Course	conferences@bps.org.uk
14-16 April	Stratford Upon Avon	The BPS Annual Conference 2010	<a href="http://www.bps.org.uk/ac2010/">www.bps.org.uk/ac2010/</a>
21-23 July	Sheffield	The 25th PsyPAG Annual Conference	<a href="http://www.psypag.co.uk/conference/">www.psypag.co.uk/conference/</a>

# PsyPAG Committee 2009/10

1.1.1 Position	1.1.2 Currently Held By:	1.1.3 Due for re-election
<b>Core Committee Members</b>		
Chair chair@psypag.co.uk	Laura Crane L.Crane@gold.ac.uk	2010
Treasurer	Josie Booth josephine.n.booth@strath.ac.uk	2011
Vice Chair vicechair@psypag.co.uk	Alana James Psp01aj@gold.ac.uk	2011
Communications Officer webmaster@psypag.co.uk	Sue Jamison-Powell S.Jamison-Powell@shu.ac.uk	2010
Information Officer info@psypag.co.uk	John Hyland johnmhyland@gmail.com	2010
Quarterly Editors quarterly@psypag.co.uk	Kyle Brown k.g.brown@shu.ac.uk	2010
	Lesley Jacobs l.jacobs06@leeds.ac.uk	2010
	Charlotte McLeod cm267@bath.ac.uk	2011
	Julie Port julie.port@gmail.com	2011
<b>Division Representatives</b>		
Division of Clinical Psychology	Barry Orr b.orr@shef.ac.uk	2011
Division of Counselling Psychology	Katie Webb webbk50@cardiff.ac.uk	Co-opted 2010
Division of Educational and Child Psychology	Alana James Psp01aj@gold.ac.uk	2010
Scottish Division of Educational Psychology	Josie Booth josephine.n.booth@strath.ac.uk	position under review
Division for Teachers and Researchers in Psychology	Fiona Essig f.essig@herts.ac.uk	2011
Division of Forensic Psychology	Emma Alleyne eka7@kent.ac.uk	2011
Division of Health Psychology	Kyle Brown k.g.brown@shu.ac.uk	2011

Division of Neuropsychology	Lindsay Cooper l.h.k.cooper@lboro.ac.uk	2010
Division of Occupational Psychology	Helen Watts h.watts@worc.ac.uk	2010
Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology	Sarah Wood sarah.wood@unn.ac.uk	2010
Section Representatives		
Cognitive Psychology Section	Catherine Malone c.malone1@lancaster.ac.uk	2010
Consciousness and Experiential Psychology Section	Rebecca Semmens-Wheeler r.semmens-wheeler@sussex.ac.uk	2011
Developmental Psychology Section	Alana James psp01aj@gold.ac.uk	2011
History and Philosophy of Psychology Section	Barry Orr b.orr@shef.ac.uk	2011
Psychology of Sexualities Section	Andrew Clements andrew.clements@beds.ac.uk	2011
Mathematical, Statistical and Computing Section	Elisa Carrus psp01ec@gold.ac.uk	2011
Psychobiology Section	Robin Kramer psp837@bangor.ac.uk	To be Co-opted
Psychology of Education Section	Keith Schofield k.schofield@hud.ac.uk	2011
Psychology of Women Section	Helen Owton howton1@chi.ac.uk	2011
Psychotherapy Section	Michelle Haslam m.l.haslam@lboro.ac.uk	2011
Qualitative Methods Section	Jenna Condie J.Condie@pgr.salford.ac.uk	2011
Social Psychology Section	Charlotte McLeod cm267@bath.ac.uk	2011
Transpersonal Psychology Section		
Coaching Psychology	Lisa Mayberry L.Mayberry@dundee.ac.uk	2011
Branch Representatives		
North East of England Branch	Keith Schofield k.schofield@hud.ac.uk	2011
North West of England Branch	Jenna Condie J.Condie@pgr.salford.ac.uk	2011

Northern Ireland Branch	John Hyland johnmhyland@gmail.com	2011
Scottish Branch	Vacant	
South West of England Branch	Elizabeth Gabe-Thomas elizabeth.gabe-thomas@plymouth.ac.uk	2010
Welsh Branch	Tracey Brandwood brandwoodta@cardiff.ac.uk	2010
Wessex Branch	Georgina Dodd g.f.dodd@reading.ac.uk	2011
West Midlands Branch	Dean Wilkinson Dean.Wilkinson@students.bcu.ac.uk	2011
London and Home Counties Branch	Fiona Essig f.essig@herts.ac.uk	2011
<b>Board Representatives</b>		
Membership and Professional Training Board	Erica Cook erica.cook@live.co.uk	2011
Publications and Communications Board	Elizabeth Freeman e.freeman@yorks.ac.uk	2011
Ethics	Helen Watts h.watts@worc.ac.uk	2010
Research Board (chair +1 other)	Laura Crane (L.Crane@gold.ac.uk) Vacant	2010
<b>Other Committees</b>		
Conference standing committee	Stuart Flint swf07@aber.ac.uk	2011
International rep	Carla Meijen C.Meijen@staffs.ac.uk	2011
Learning and teaching support network	Elizabeth Freeman e.freeman@yorks.ac.uk	2011
National Postgraduate Committee	Vacant	
Undergraduate Liaison Officer	Helen Owton howton1@chi.ac.uk	2011