

Editorial

WELCOME to the first edition for 2010. It comprises a wide range of articles, providing practical advice relevant to many postgraduate students, summaries of both timely and thought provoking research and conference reviews.

We start with a paper considering the ethical issues associated with conducting research with vulnerable participant groups, in particular 'problem gamblers'. In this paper, Abby McCormack also reflects on the impact which conducting research with vulnerable groups might have on the researcher.

Julie Waumsley and Sarah Wood consider the benefits of becoming a member of the Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology and we have two very interesting conference reviews: Laurel Evans reviews the London Reasoning Workshop held last July and Sabine Quandt reviews the 19th Conference of the European Association of Psychology and the Law, held in Sorrento, Italy last September.

We have an account of the part-time PhD experience, provided by Sarah Wood, considering not only the trials and tribulations, but also the positive advantages associated

with this mode of study.

A timely review of the *Psychology of Recession* by Marc Douch and Antonio Castro also gives us food for thought in view of the current economic climate and Rosamond Watling considers 'The good, the bad and the boring' in terms of university lectures.

Alana James has some particularly useful advice, based on personal experience, for any postgraduates fortunate enough to be considering conducting research abroad, and finally Gareth Morris and Jenna Condie consider the issues surrounding the search for a professional identity, of relevance to all postgraduate students and early career researchers.

We hope that you enjoy this issue and would like to wish you all the very best for 2010.

Finally, I would like to thank the PsyPAG Quarterly team for their help and support in producing this issue, and also everyone who took the time to write and submit an article.

Lesley Jacobs

Lesley Jacobs, Charlotte McLeod,
Julie Port and Kyle Brown

Chair's Column

I'D like to start by saying a huge THANK YOU to the PsyPAG committee. The past year has been a very successful one for the committee, with an excellent annual conference in Cardiff, a range of brilliant workshops, over 30 conference bursaries being awarded, the inauguration of the PsyPAG Rising Researcher Award and the PGwT and PsyPAG Postgraduate Teaching Award and a host of other achievements. This is all down to the hard work and dedication of our committee who have worked harder than ever this year to support postgraduate psychologists.

Now, on behalf of the committee, I'd like to let you all know about some exciting developments and events that will be taking place over the next year.

First, we have our forthcoming PsyPAG Annual Conference – a collaborative event hosted by Sheffield University and Sheffield Hallam University. PsyPAG conferences are a great place to present your research, to meet other postgraduates and to take part in both academic and social events. Together with traditional poster and oral presentations, we will be running workshops and other practi-

cal sessions to enhance your learning and teaching skills. We also have talks by highly regarded keynote speakers, who will be announced on our website (see www.psyPag.co.uk/conference/). I really hope to see lots of you there.

The conference also hosts our Annual General Meeting (AGM), in which new members can be elected to our committee. Being a PsyPAG representative is a great way to meet other postgraduates, to get involved with the British Psychological Society and to gain valuable experience for your CV. I joined the PsyPAG committee at the 2007 AGM in London and have had a brilliant three years in my various roles. Sadly, I will be stepping down as PsyPAG Chair at this AGM, after two years at the helm. After a very closely fought election, I am pleased to announce my successor, Sarah Wood from Northumbria University. Sarah will officially take over as Chair at the annual conference and I am confident that she will do a fantastic job in the role and I wish her the very best of luck.

Tying in with our 25th anniversary celebrations in Sheffield, PsyPAG have recently launched the PsyPAG alumni. The alumni aims to bring together past members of PsyPAG, to keep them up to date with new PsyPAG initiatives and to hear what past members are up to now. If you were on the PsyPAG committee, or know anyone that was, please encourage them to sign up to our mailing list: <http://www.psyPag.co.uk/alumni.html>

Another important development from the PsyPAG committee is that we are pleased to have been awarded an increase in funding from the Society's Research Board, to fund a third round of our hugely successful bursary scheme. PsyPAG bursaries are available for the following:

- **International Conferences** – an award of up to £300 to help with the cost of attending an international conference.
- **Domestic Conferences** – an award of up to £100 to help with the cost of attending a UK conference.

- **PsyPAG Annual Conference Bursaries** – up to 10 awards a year annum for delegates wishing to present and attend the PsyPAG Annual Conference

I would like to encourage you all to apply for this scheme to support postgraduate attendance at academic conferences (<http://www.psyPag.co.uk/bursaries.html>). I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Research Board for their continued support.

PsyPAG will also be continuing our hugely successful workshop scheme in 2010. If you would like to apply for funding to run a workshop in your area of study, or would like to have a look at forthcoming PsyPAG-funded events, please see <http://www.psyPag.co.uk/workshops.html>

Finally, I would like to mention our forthcoming award schemes. PsyPAG currently run three awards:

- **Outstanding Masters Award:** an annual award that recognises outstanding research in a Masters-level (MSc, MA, MRes, and MPhil) research project. Submissions are invited for all areas of psychology. The aim is to provide recognition of the excellent research that is conducted at Masters level, which we feel is sometimes overlooked.
- **National Psychology Postgraduate Teaching Award:** PGwT and PsyPAG offer a joint teaching award to recognise a postgraduate psychology student who has made a significant impact through teaching.
- **PsyPAG Rising Researcher Award:** an annual award for outstanding early PhD research

Please have a look at our awards website and consider putting in an application: <http://www.psyPag.co.uk/awards.html>

Please get in touch if you have any comments or suggestions about what you think PsyPAG should be doing! Do not hesitate to contact me on chair@psyPag.co.uk

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Reflections on interviewing problem gamblers

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THIS paper will address ethical issues concerned with interviewing vulnerable populations and how discussing sensitive topics with problem gamblers also impacts on the researcher. The interviews were conducted as part of my PhD work. The study involved interviewing 15 internet gamblers; 14 offline gamblers (i.e. those using traditional gambling venues such as casinos, amusement arcades or betting shops); and 11 non gamblers, to discover the motivating factors for engaging in internet gambling behaviour, as well as inhibiting factors which prevent the use of internet gambling behaviour. Fourteen of the participants were identified as problem gamblers. This paper reports on my experiences while conducting interviews with these problem gamblers.

To some extent all research imposes on participants. However, conducting research on sensitive topics can be particularly difficult. Sensitive topics are particular issues which we wish to keep private. Examples include receipt of welfare, income, alcohol and drug use, criminal history, and some 'embarrassing' medical conditions (Marquis et al., 1986). Talking to gamblers about their addictions, and problems or consequences arising as a result of their gambling problem, is a very sensitive issue. Asking participants to talk about their gambling addiction can be difficult and upsetting for them. Feelings of shame, embarrassment and guilt are typical with problem gamblers (Lesieur, 1992). For males, talking to a female about their failures may be awkward and uncomfortable for them. The difficulty with my study was getting the participants to feel relaxed so that they would open up and tell their story.

Developing rapport and trust is an essential element to interviewing participants and I feel this was achieved. The participants often asked me questions about my own experience with gambling and these were answered directly without going into detail, which indicated to them that I was also willing to share personal information, thus helping to establish rapport and trust. A trusting researcher-participant relationship contributes not only to the therapeutic benefits of the interviews to the participants, but also to the richness of the data (Murray, 2003).

Allowing the participants to tell their story, and accepting them in a non-judgemental, non-blaming and non-threatening way, can be very therapeutic for the participants. Often it may be the first time they have recounted their story to someone. Perhaps it is slightly easier telling an outsider rather than someone close to you. One participant questioned why he was telling me his story when he doesn't speak to anyone else about it:

'I don't know why I came down here to talk to you, but I thought, well it's not going to hurt is it, you know what I mean, but I'll probably go back to work and think, fuck it, I feel better I'm never doing it again, that will be my motivation, three days later I'll probably do it again, you know what I mean.'

(GAM07 Male 34).

Establishing and maintaining a trusting participant-researcher relationship and giving the participants the opportunity to tell their story may have been therapeutic to them, which is evidenced by their willingness to share that part of their lives that had been kept secret for so long.

The problem gamblers talked freely and

although guiding questions had been prepared for the interviews, they were rarely initiated as the interviews progressed. Quite often the interview would appear to be at an end but when asked if they had anything further to add, the participants would continue talking and say something like 'I'd just like to mention...' At times it seemed that the participant could not tell the interviewer enough, quickly enough. By telling their stories the participants had taken the first step in making sense of their gambling problem.

The majority of the participants were happy to disclose personal information. For some this meant talking about criminal offences. Many problem gamblers turn to crime to fund their gambling habit (Thompson, Gazel & Rickman, 1997). Although, this was something that more than half of the problem gamblers had done, it was clear that one person felt uncomfortable talking about it because he felt 'ashamed'. However, some people were pleased to talk about it because it would help them to explain their situation and how things had become so bad. The following participant embezzled £267,000 from his work to fund his gambling problem:

'I started embezzling money from my work... I was questioned about it. I was asked about the rising costs and I quite believe I could have lied my way through it, of which I was becoming quite an accomplished liar at that point. My work performance was dropping and I was spending every spare minute on internet gambling, so anyway, when I was questioned about it I just owned up and said what I'd done and I've never gambled since'.

(INTG09 Male 53)

Another participant welcomed the opportunity to 'tell his story', and although he was not proud of what he had done he felt it explained how bad his situation had become:

'I have stolen from employers, I've been fired probably four or five times for theft from employers, once I took quite a lot and nearly

went to jail for it but my dad paid off the money so I ended up only getting community service

(INTG06 Male 34).

Another subject that came up quite frequently of which I was not expecting was the issue of suicide. I was completely underprepared for such information to be disclosed in the interview and perhaps having never encountered a problem gambler before I was a little naïve as to the true consequences problem gambling can have. Suicide, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts are common among problem gamblers, especially those who are depressed (Crockford & el-Guebaly, 1998). Financial debts and relationship difficulties have also been identified as additional risk factors for suicide among problem gamblers (Blaszczynski & Farrell, 1998). A quarter of the participants had either attempted suicide or had thought about it:

'You wouldn't believe the hell I went through... Thinking I was going to lose everything, so yes, I did get stressed I did get depression I did get everything that was going with it thinking, well... I even contemplated suicide'

(INTG02 Male).

Hearing such stories was very shocking and left me in a difficult position. The participants had chosen to disclose personal information and feelings with me, leaving me feeling powerless to help. Was this a cry for help? Did they want me to do something about their desperation? Obviously this placed me in a difficult situation as I was not trained to counsel people and left me wondering whether a couple of the participants may be at risk of suicide. A contact for additional help needs to be identified and provided following the interviews (Alty & Rodham, 1998) so that participants are able to seek professional help if they wish to. Such information was provided and I remained in regular contact with the participants to check they were well. Other than this there was not much more I could

do, although I felt I could be doing more.

There are many methodological and ethical concerns surrounding the protection of vulnerable research participants, but what about the impact on the researcher? Sensitive research can potentially impact on both the researcher and the participant. Researchers working with vulnerable populations should be aware that feelings of vulnerability may be reflected back to the researcher (Downey, Hamilton & Catterall, 2007). Davison (2004) commented that the potential to feel isolated, vulnerable and distressed does not magically disappear because we assume the role of researcher. A natural assumption is that power resides within the researcher's domain, implying that the researched are vulnerable participants who need protecting throughout the research process. However, the researcher is not always in the dominant role as perceived, but is susceptible to changing positions of vulnerability throughout the research process.

Hearing stories from vulnerable populations can be upsetting and stressful. The stories told by the problem gamblers were very harrowing as people reported marriage breakdowns, lack of contact with children, bankruptcy, loneliness and suicidal thoughts. It is also not uncommon for participants to become angry, leaving the researcher feeling vulnerable. It was clear that one of the problem gamblers had a lot of built up frustration and anger at not being able to quit his addiction. His language was quite aggressive and he swore a lot, although this was not directed at myself but towards the government for not doing enough to help problem gamblers, and at himself for not being able to stop.

Personally I don't think it's acceptable at all, and I do it but I think the government should do something about it because I think it's really bad. And it's getting worse. It's not just me. I'm just a single bloke, but you know, people are spending the giros, their benefits and not feeding the kids and stuff like that and it's everywhere. People don't see it, but it is, it's fucking everywhere'
(GAM07 Male 34).

He apologised for swearing ('sorry, I do swear a lot') but nevertheless his language and attitude was quite aggressive which can be intimidating for a researcher.

Conducting good research will involve some aspects of researcher vulnerability. There is always going to be researcher/participant interaction that cannot be avoided and each participant will be affected by the experience (positively or negatively). It is fundamental that the researcher adopts empathy towards what the participant says in order to gain the confidence of the participant and access to their stories (Downey, Hamilton & Catterall, 2007). With regards to gambling problems, many people simply cannot understand how a person can get themselves into so much debt through gambling and continue gambling even though it is affecting themselves and everyone around them. This was a common view expressed by the majority of the non gamblers interviewed:

I find it difficult to understand people that, where it becomes a habit and they risk everything on their gambling. For it to get as far as risking your house and stuff like that you know, it's difficult to understand.'
(NONG06 Female 53).

However, I obtained a greater appreciation of the participant's lives, the consequences their gambling addiction had, and their efforts to quit gambling. It is important to be careful to adopt a neutral attitude throughout the research process.

It is also important to be aware that it is difficult to predict in advance exactly how the interviews will impact on the researcher and what vulnerabilities will be encountered (Downey, Hamilton & Catterall, 2007). I was unprepared for the kinds of stories that participants would report back to me. It is also worth noting that some participants were reluctant to talk about illegal activities, criminal offences or shameful behaviour, while others welcomed the opportunity and found it quite therapeutic. It is therefore important to approach each interview differently and

to build trust by explaining what the project is about and why it is beneficial research to put the participant at ease and encourage them to talk more freely.

I felt the problem gamblers talked much more freely in the interviews and benefited from the interviews much more than the recreational gamblers and non-gamblers. Many of the problem gamblers commented afterwards 'thank you for listening to me' or 'thank you for understanding'. Researching

vulnerable populations can be viewed positively as it gives participants a 'voice' and allows them to tell their story, although the researcher should be aware that feelings of vulnerability may be reflected back to the researcher. As long as the researcher is well-prepared and establishes a trusting relationship then rich data can be achieved.

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Why join the Division of Sport & Exercise Psychology?

Julie Waumsley and Sarah Wood

THE Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology (DSEP) was officially accepted by a vote of British Psychological Society members at their 2004 Annual General Meeting, ten years after the formation of the Sport and Exercise Psychology Section, making it the Society's newest Division. Its mission statement is 'To research, develop and apply psychological principles, knowledge, models and methods in sport and exercise psychology in a scientific and ethical way in order to promote the development, well-being and effectiveness of individuals, groups, organisations and society.'

The strategic plan of the Division is in place, providing a set of objectives which will push the Division to further develop in both membership and skills. This plan is not a static document but a rolling, live piece of work, constantly under review as its objectives are met and revised to the next level. The aim of this article is to present the purpose of the DSEP in a clear and coherent way by breaking down the strategic plan into six main areas. This will promote the services offered by sport and exercise psychologists, not only with regard to elite sport but in the domains of recreational sport, exercise and health. Given that the Olympics and Paralympics are arriving in London in 2012 and, at the other end of the spectrum, the obesity figures in the United Kingdom are 'set to soar' (Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, 2007) the importance of the Division, its strategic plan and its member contributions to achieving this plan have never been more paramount.

The Division not only works in collaboration with other bodies such as the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences,

but also is a great contact for advice regarding becoming a sport and exercise psychologist (and the career implications of this) to prospective and existing students. Its function is also to spread the worth of sport and exercise psychology in terms of behaviour change that makes a difference to performance and participation outcomes. Furthermore, the DSEP is involved in an advisory role on governmental policy decisions with regard to sport and exercise.

The DSEP also communicates to a range of major sporting bodies, including the British Olympic Association, sports clubs and individual athletes, in order to increase their awareness of the psychological expertise on offer from the members of the Division. In addition, the Division is concerned with offering its psychological expertise in recreational exercise and health issues when working with local GPs, local gymnasias, and the government. What is paramount within this process is that the correct message is communicated in terms of the benefits of sport and exercise psychology. Many people are still confused about the nature of sport and exercise psychology, a domain that is scientifically based and grounded in empirical work. It aims to help individuals and teams to reach their own optimal levels of performance in sport and exercise, and as a result, solutions to questions about health and physical activity are often uncovered.

Student membership

The Division welcomes students with an interest in the discipline, providing networking opportunities, support for and recognition of their work. The annual HTA Whiting Undergraduate Dissertation Prize recognises

research which demonstrates a high level of scientific rigour, providing the winner with a cash prize and the opportunity to present their research at the Society annual conference. For postgraduate students there is an award for a PhD thesis that is regarded as exceptional, innovative and contributes to knowledge in the field. Again this is accompanied by a cash prize and the chance to disseminate the research. The DSEP has also supported the conference attendance of postgraduate students through the postgraduate bursary scheme. Furthermore, in recent years support has been provided for the PsyPAG Annual conference, illustrated by having dedicated discipline symposia and a committee member as a keynote speaker. *Sport & Exercise Psychology Review* includes dedicated student members' pages focusing on issues that are of interest to students, from training issues to tips on presenting at a first conference. Members of the DSEP receive a free copy of the review.

In addition, the DSEP runs a programme of workshops, some of which are in collaboration with BASES, with discounted rates for members. The workshops are useful to students who aspire to become Chartered through the Division. Students also have a voice on the DSEP committee through an active PsyPAG representative.

Strategic plan

The DSEP works under the auspices of six main roles: ethical issues, applied practice, research, communication, development and training, and management and leadership. Without necessarily detailing these in their entirety, it is pertinent to outline the importance of each role.

Ethics

Clearly ethical considerations are paramount and embedded in all research and applied practice. The DSEP seeks to develop, implement and maintain professional standards and ethical practice by contextualising the Society's generic professional practice and guidelines to sport and exercise psychol-

ogy. It also ensures that these guidelines are embedded in the accreditation criteria and disseminated to members. Society Chartered status and full membership of the Division is a prized achievement and necessarily monitored by strict ethical guidance.

Applied practice

Good applied practice belongs in a circular relationship of research and practice, each informing the other. The strategy for applied practice within the DSEP seeks to provide a link between research and evidence-based practice by reviewing research and disseminating information through publications, workshops and conferences. The importance of collaborating with other Society divisions and external organisations for dissemination of good and innovative practice is recognised as paramount for the continued development of this area. A database of individuals chartered in this area, detailing areas of expertise, both in research and applied practice, is available on the Society website.

The DSEP held its inaugural conference in December 2008 (the next one will take place in 2010) providing its members with an avenue to disseminate examples of applied practice and research.

Research

The DSEP recognises the importance of communicating new and existing psychological methods, concepts, models and theories and instruments in psychology to its members. It also seeks to proactively promote areas of research via workshops, symposia, journals, including the Division's own bi-annual publication, *Sport and Exercise Psychology Review*.

Communication

This key role will create maximum awareness of the unique strengths, skills and knowledge offered by its members. The Division has its own webpage on the Society website in order to be more easily available and is developing links with the press, government

and other media to spread the worth of sport and exercise psychology. There will be a continued presence at conferences and links are being explored with regard to media briefings on sport and exercise events and communications to parliament.

Development and training

The aim of this strategy is to develop and train the application of psychological skills, knowledge, practices and procedures through mechanisms identified in approved Society routes to support existing and training practitioners. Clear training routes have been laid down by the Training Committee and Board of Assessors in order for individuals to become full members of the DSEP (see Eubank, Niven & Cain, 2009, for a full review).

Management and leadership

All aspects of the strategic plan will be managed and reviewed as necessary by establishing representative committees, promoting equality of opportunity and diversity within the Division and managing members' monies properly in order to satisfy the mission statement. It is important that the DSEP takes the lead with the development of sport and exercise psychology as a discipline, as well as being the leading voice when pertinent issues are in the public domain. This is achieved through links to government and national sporting bodies.

Conclusion

The DSEP is a young and dynamic Division that operates within a culture where members are encouraged to lead and implement research and applied practice through innovation. It actively seeks to support members'

training needs, research and application of practice through being at the cutting edge of empirical work and in being actively involved with sporting bodies, the general public, GPs and government. Promotion of its members' skills and areas of expertise is considered key, all embedded within clear ethical guidelines. The message is clear: sport and exercise psychology is grounded in scientific research, delivered by experts in the domain, and can make a difference to people's lives. The DSEP will provide the backbone to continuing the professional progress of its members in the secure knowledge that its product is wholly worthwhile. If you are interested in becoming a member, find out how by accessing the DSEP we pages via the Member Networks link on the homepage of the Society website, www.bps.org.uk.

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Conference reviews

London Reasoning Workshop, 27–28 July, 2009, London, UK

Laurel Evans, Cardiff University

I WANTED to share my experience at the London Reasoning Workshop with you for one main reason: For those who are interested in reasoning and on a budget (as many postgraduates are), it is an excellent conference to attend. I will argue that, as conferences go, it is good value for money.

First of all, time, location, and price are all well suited for postgraduates. The conference is held each year in late July or August at Birkbeck College, University of London. This is both a good time of year, as the rush of term-time is over, and a good location, as London is about as central as one can get, both UK-wise and internationally. The conference is also about as inexpensive as a conference can be: Registration is free, and there are numerous hotels within walking distance that offer cheap and pleasant stays. The hotel I stayed in was £45 a night for a single room, and I may have paid even less in a hostel.

And still it is a strong conference to attend, allowing discourse with researchers of both moderate and staggering impact in their fields, as well as their younger, up-and-coming counterparts. Like many conferences, there are regular breaks for tea and coffee, and on the first night there is a wine reception which is typically followed by a group outing for dinner; thus, all in all, there is plenty of time for one-to-one discussion. In addition, although one can see a few distinct research camps, the topics were

broad enough (and appealing enough) to hold my interest as someone on the fringe of the field. Some examples from this year's conference include presentations by Jean-François Bonnefon (the rational toll and emotional benefit of believing in a 'just world'); Valerie Thompson (cognitive fluency and the 'feeling of rightness' one gets when one thinks one knows an answer to a deceptive reasoning problem); Jonathan Evans (on his well known dual process theories of reasoning¹); and Adam Harris (on determining when an argument is 'coherent'). These talks, and several others, were of high quality, although for many the attendee should be prepared for a very detailed approach that often involves symbolic logic.

All the reasons I have listed so far should be enough to convince you to attend, but I have one final reason to add: Its proximity and low financial demands make it the perfect conference to attend by oneself, meaning it is a great opportunity to build independence. In 2008, I happened to hear about the workshop just after planning a trip home to the US; I discovered that my flight was returning to London on the very day the conference began, so I decided to simply stay on and attend, even though my supervisor could not come. I had no talk prepared and no one to shelter me as I ventured into the room full of researchers (entirely jet-lagged from my flight, I might add), but I was

¹ If, when working simultaneously, it takes 5 machines 5 minutes to make 5 widgets, how many minutes does it take 100 machines to make 100 widgets? Do you have a 'feeling of rightness' about your answer? Most people say 100 with just such a feeling – but the true answer is 5.

enthusiastic and made some contacts, and I decided to return the following year. Last July, I attended again without any plans to present, which avoided the worrying and stress involved when giving a talk. It was again a very pleasant experience, one that allowed me to focus on meeting people, discussing, and forming questions (in relation to my own research as well as the presenters'). And, while being tucked under my supervisor's wing is generally a great way to get introductions, forging out on my own seemed to bring a different sort of reward, and I found that it's rare that people won't be friendly to a younger researcher on her own. Don't get me wrong; I do still attend conferences to present my work. But this one is short enough, cheap enough, and close enough that I can squeeze it in alongside others for something of a different take on the conference experience.

All that said, of course there were down sides to this conference when I attended, both in 2008 and 2009. It fell prey to my usual complaint about conferences, which is

that they are too intensive. By the end of the day, I may have heard nine or more talks, which is not conducive to thinking deeply about them. As well, the conference was billed as a workshop, which I had thought would mean there would be significant time for group discussion, either free or directed. But, in fact, it is a simple conference, with just the usual talks with breaks, and no discussion or even poster sessions. Finally, the conference is certainly on the small side, with just a single room in which everyone watches everyone else's talks, and the unfortunate side of a small-scale conference is that if you get stuck with a talk you aren't interested in, there's nowhere else to go.

Overall, however, I think that the London Reasoning Workshop is well worth the small fee for hotel and travel, and it provides a rare opportunity to attend a conference without the usual pressures of presenting.

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Grazie, Pinocchio! 19th Conference of the European Association of Psychology and Law, 2-5 September 2009, Sorrento, Italy

Sabine Quandt, University of Portsmouth

THE 19th European Association of Psychology and Law (EAPL) conference took place in Italy, the homeland of Pinocchio. Pinocchio is a forensically interesting case. His growing nose was a reliable indicator of his lies. So far the idea of objective cues that reliably differ between liars and truth-tellers could not be empirically supported (DePaulo et al., 2003), as behavioural cues show inter- as well as intra-individual variation. This makes detection of deception difficult. In my quest to improve the accu-

racy of veracity judgements, I presented one of my PhD studies at the conference. This study examined the relationship between children's strategies and behaviour when telling truths and lies.

The EAPL conferences provide a great forum for leading international researchers, as well as young researchers, and practitioners to exchange ideas and discuss various topics within forensic psychology. This year was no exception. The conference theme was 'Crime victims and the violation of

rights', and delegates presented papers on a range of topics: courts, decision making, detecting deception, forensic interviews, eyewitness, offenders, police investigation, victimisation... to name just a few. Furthermore, internationally renowned researchers presented exciting keynotes. For example, Professor Ray Bull talked about the change in interviewing practice of suspects by the police. He presented research that demonstrated how humanitarian interviewing styles are related to suspects' cooperation. Prof. David Farrington, who also received this year's EAPL Lifetime Contribution Award, talked about the development of violence, presenting longitudinal data from 400 males.

EAPL is also supporting the new generation of forensic psychologist. The Early Career Award honours outstanding young researchers. This year the award was presented to Dr Karl Ask, who received his PhD in 2008 and is currently holding two grants. One investigates the interaction of police and prosecutors with crime victims. The student society of the EAPL (EAPL-S) also organised various events throughout the conference that facilitated the networking of

students and postgrads. If you are interested in forensic psychology don't miss the next EAPL conference from 15–18 June 2010 in Gothenburg.

Meeting other researchers should be your main objective when attending a conference. While this might sound intimidating when attending your first conference, the coffee breaks and social events are great opportunities to introduce yourself to others and talk about their and your research. I'm currently writing up, so this conference enabled me to not only discuss my PhD research with leading researchers in my area, but also meet potential mentors and talk about post-doc opportunities in their departments. I would therefore like to thank PsyPAG for supporting my conference attendance.

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PSYPAG

Rising Researcher Award (PhD)

Following the success of last year's Rising Researcher award, PsyPAG would like to open nominations for the annual PhD award for outstanding early PhD research. Nominees must be current PhD students and be at least one year into their PhD (two years part time) studying at a UK institution. The aim of the award is to recognise excellent ongoing PhD work prior to final submission. The winner of the award will receive £250, along with free registration, travel and accommodation costs to attend the annual PsyPAG conference to be held in Sheffield (21–23rd July 2010). In addition, the winning applicant will be invited to give an oral presentation at the PsyPAG conference on their research and/or the reasons for winning the award; what they feel makes an outstanding researcher.

Nominations for the award can be made in one of the following ways:

- a) A 500 word statement from the PhD supervisor, along with a 250 word supporting statement from a fellow postgraduate student or a 250 word supporting self-statement.
- b) A 500 word statement from the PhD supervisor or a fellow postgraduate student, along with a 250 word supporting self-statement.
- c) A 500 word self-statement, along with a 250 word supporting statement from the PhD supervisor.

Criteria for nomination

The nomination and/or the supporting statements must include the researcher's:

- Specific contribution to the initial proposal and ongoing research;
- Originality of approach;
- Specific contribution to the long-term impact of the field, in terms of methodological rigour, theoretical contribution and/or practical applications;
- Personal characteristics or qualities which have enabled the researcher to overcome personal adversities or to persevere through any research difficulties (if any)

Please also list any publications and/or conference presentations (poster or oral) derived from research carried out during PhD studies as this may strengthen their nomination.

Deadline 26th March 2010 – Winner announced June 2010
Send completed applications to rreward@psypag.co.uk

The part-time PhD experience: A personal perspective

Sarah Wood, Northumbria University & Simon ????,
which university

BEING a PhD student can be a daunting and expensive experience at the best of times, but for part-time students sometimes it can seem all the harder. Indeed, Gatrell (2000) described a part-time PhD as 'Mission Impossible'! The enormity of the task often dawns when the part-time PhD student meets a fellow postgraduate for the first time, and they are asked, 'What year are you in then?' While the conventional full-time PhD process usually takes three to four years to complete (Phillips & Pugh, 2005), the part-time PhD student might find themselves convolutedly answering this question with: 'Well, I am part-way through my second year, so I suppose about nine months if I was doing it full-time.' Also, during their time as a part-time student, generally 5–6 years, they will see other students in the department start and finish their PhD – a potentially disheartening experience. There is other negative news for part-time PhD students, as their completion rates are well below those of their full-time colleagues (Corbyn, 2009). From the outset of their PhD they may find themselves making unnecessary and largely incompatible comparisons between their PhD experience and that of their full-time counterparts, sometimes losing focus of the part-time research experience and all its unique benefits. With more than half of the UK's doctoral students undertaking their higher degree part-time (Vitae, 2009), it is important to maintain perspective, and devoting time to consider this experience may prove fruitful. Hence, this article hopes to serve as a reminder, and to do so it uses excerpts from a conversation

between the first author – Sarah, a current part-time PhD student, and the second author – Simon, formerly a part-time PhD student and now completing his PhD full-time. 'Our personal reflections are just that, and while we have tried to frame them within a wider context, we simply wanted to share our differing, but largely convergent, experiences of the part-time PhD.'

The National Union of Students (2008) report that the overwhelming majority of students undertake paid work while at university. As such, many of us will have juggled work and study commitments. As the second author, Simon, states: 'I had worked 20+ hours per week during my full-time first degree, and picked up fairly regular shifts during my Masters, so the concept of embarking on a part-time PhD while also in paid employment did not seem entirely alien to me, or particularly daunting.' However, Phillips and Pugh (2005) believe that switching from everyday work to research work is the main problem for part-time students – both psychologically and because of time constraints. Accordingly, they suggest that, if possible, the part-time student should choose a research problem that is related to their employment, most likely suitable for those who are already on their chosen career path and are seeking to enhance their effectiveness in their job by gaining PhD-level knowledge. For those starting their graduate research careers this might not be possible, but it also de-emphasises the benefits to be gained from learning to juggle various commitments while completing the part-time PhD. Ultimately, if you can't dovetail your

research with your employment then a flexible job is the key. Simon was able to pick up many teaching hours in his first semester as a PhD student, but they alone would not have covered all of his expenses: 'Fortunately, I managed to parlay my previous experience of mental health nursing into a 'senior social support worker' position in the community, and was lucky to have a line manager who was happy to compromise when it came to scheduling my hours. However, in light of the importance of the duties attached to supporting individuals with autism, learning difficulties, and other such factors which classify people as 'vulnerable adults', the pay was not commensurate with the role. This seems to be a common problem for part-time PhD students, in that we are sometimes compelled to accept jobs that don't pay what we would hope for as graduates.' Of course, this can be compounded by the job opportunities, or lack thereof, characteristic of the city in which the student finds themselves, as well as the prevailing economic climate vis-à-vis the job market.

In contrast, Sarah was able to attain a Graduate Tutor position within her university. Her contract of employment requires that she be enrolled on a higher degree, and alongside a regular salary her fees are also covered: 'As well as the financial security this affords, if only on a fixed-term basis, I am in a work environment that obviously understands the challenges faced by PhD students. On the downside it does mean that I can't escape my supervisor, whose office is just across the corridor from mine!' A point of commonality between Sarah's and Simon's experience emerges here, reflected in the advice that Gatrell (2000) speaks of receiving when she was choosing a topic for her PhD – that it should be one that you are excited about and that will keep you going. While this is true for all PhD students, it is particularly true for part-time students. Sometimes other commitments – be these jobs, caregiver responsibilities, career-focused activities – have to come first, and you need a topic that draws you back to your PhD, some-

thing you are passionate about. For Sarah, this led to investigating football fans, for you it might be the effects of alcohol use on memory; whatever it may be, it must sustain you through those difficult moments. Indeed, despite his enthusiasm for his project, after long 'sleep-in' shifts in his role in the community, Simon sometimes found himself nodding off at his desk at the university, giving amusement to his office-mates, but making him aware that his PhD was starting to take a back seat to his work commitments. (It is worth noting that we would be remiss, having studied modules on exercise physiology and exercise psychology, not to emphasise the importance of cardiovascular fitness in the postgraduate experience, whether part- or full-time. Of course, increased stamina will make long working hours, when they are absolutely necessary, a more manageable demand. Further, the psychological benefits associated with exercise include an anxiolytic affect, a reduction in the intensity of depressive symptoms, and enhancement of self-esteem and general mood (Callaghan, 2004; Fox, 1999; Penedo & Dahn, 2005). Hence, the exercise and mental health/well-being literature implies that postgraduate researchers should make time to maintain a healthy level of fitness to protect against the risk of poor health stemming from long hours and the strain of competing role demands.)

Simon's attempts to combine teaching, external employment and research, while somewhat successful, ultimately convinced him to put everything into applications for full-time funding. This is something which Phillips and Pugh (2005) say is important for part-time PhD students to keep in mind, and that they should explore many possible avenues of financial support. Simon looked towards his own university: 'After narrowly missing out the previous year, and subsequently completing a year part-time, I was thankfully awarded a prestigious Aberystwyth Postgraduate Research Studentship (APRS), which would fully fund the remaining 2.5 years of a 'typical' three-year PhD. Imagine

my astonishment, joy and eventually pride, to learn that the university had offered to pay me to do my homework!’ Yet it wasn’t all smooth going for Simon: ‘I found the transition from part-time to full-time student to be a more delicate proposition than I could have anticipated. After a year in Aberystwyth I was suddenly no longer my own boss – my research became of financial interest to the institution itself, as opposed to just an academic interest of my supervisors and I, and it was an odd sensation. I couldn’t use the excuse of competing time demands for not hitting a deadline, something which I was guilty of employing as a valid and faithful self-handicap at times in the previous year. Indeed, I now had so much time available to me I found that some of my good habits didn’t transfer to my new circumstances. I was spending more time than ever reviewing literature and designing studies, but achieving disproportionately less than I expected.’ Because of these experiences Simon believes you should think about how you make the switch to full-time: ‘If, like me, you are fortunate enough to be granted funding, be it through the department, institution, or an external body, it is worth trying to initiate a phasing-in-and-out period, whereby the new situations cross-over for a brief while. This strategy may alleviate some of the dilly-dallying that could accompany the sudden shock of being a full-time student once more.’

Simon’s struggles in transitioning from part- to full-time are disclosed as a call for part-time doctoral students to make the most of the benefits offered by their circumstances, and to know that the grass isn’t always greener on the other side! If you can strike a balance between paid work, uncovering experiences directly relevant to your career aspirations, your research, and find time for yourself, you’ll graduate with qualities that the full-time student may not have developed. Interestingly, the British Academy’s *Graduate Studies Review* (2001) reported that recruitment onto PhDs is ‘becoming self-selective of those who can afford it’ (Bennett, 2001, p. 10). If you are a

Masters student reading this you might be thinking ahead to next year. We hope that if, like us, you forecast not being able to afford doctoral study, that you don’t let that dissuade you outright. If you begin the PhD part-time and prove yourself, like Simon did, to members of your department, they are bound to lend you their expertise in seeking out and applying for funding. This was the case for Simon, who definitively states that: ‘I am certain that the two references I secured for my APRS application greatly enhanced its chances.’

Advice offered to part-time students tends to centre on managing your time (Vitae, 2009; Phillips & Pugh, 2005), and as such we have to mention it. The main advice is to set aside certain days or chunks of time for your research, and make a commitment with yourself to stick to these. Sarah started off with all the best intentions of doing this but it is much easier said than done! ‘Most days I set aside I end up finding myself doing something for work. I have moved away from this and now try to keep periods when the students are away from university for my research; reading weeks, Christmas, Easter and summer. This way I get long stretches of time as opposed to the odd day here and there, and can make better progress. As with finding employment that will help support you while doing a PhD, the key is to be flexible and find an option that will suit you.’

Many of the benefits of completing PhD research part-time emanate from precisely this flexibility. For Sarah the benefits of doing a PhD part-time far out-weigh the negative: ‘Doing my PhD part-time has enabled me to develop other aspects of my career alongside my research. It also means that I don’t get tunnel vision when it comes to my research, getting the chance to see the bigger picture which can often pass you by as you spend hours staring at your PASW output. I have to be efficient with my use of time; otherwise both my work and PhD suffer. I have been able to undertake a PGCert in Academic and Professional Learning and I am able to continue with applied sport psy-

chology work with athletes. This is something that I find very rewarding and would miss it if it wasn't a part of my week. I also joined the PsyPAG committee; being part-time doesn't mean that you have to cut yourself off from all the opportunities available to full-time postgraduates. I hope that in the long run, while I might take longer to complete my PhD than my full-time colleagues, I will find myself with a strong base of skills for the future because I have thrown myself into all the challenges that have come my way.'

Similarly, Simon adds the following intangibles to the list of benefits to be derived

from part-time PhD study: 'I formed friendships outside of the department which have lasted; I gained invaluable experience teaching and marking on multiple modules, which earned me the trust of numerous module leaders; I worked with a fascinating group of mental health service users, and they taught me some interesting lessons about life, people, and psychology that will stay with me in my future career endeavours.'

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The psychology of recession: How does an economic downturn affect our behaviour, and what coping mechanisms do we employ to help us get through?

Marc Douch & Antonio Castro, Nottingham Trent University

WHILST every other G20 nation of developed countries has now moved back into periods of economic growth, the UK officially remained in recession from 23 January 2009 until January 2010. In this country the level of unemployment is currently 7.8 per cent, a further rise of 0.1 per cent on the previous three months (Office for National Statistics, November 2009). Money may not make us happy but poverty certainly doesn't; so how are people affected, how does their world change, and how do they cope during tough economic conditions? David Caplovitz (1981) and Dai Williams (1999) have looked at the US economy suffering from high inflation and recession in 1979, and the UK recession between 1990–1992, respectively. Referring to these authors' work, along with insight and data from other sources, this article will detail some of the main psychological challenges faced by a recession and point to a number of strategies that may be worth considering when dealing with these challenges.

In 2008, the UK experienced high food prices and record high oil prices (\$147 per barrel, July 2008) pushing up the cost of living and contributing to rising inflation. At its height in September 2008 the consumer price index (CPI), the government's preferred measure of inflation, was at 5.1 per cent while the target was supposed to be 2 per cent. The effect can be profound when inflation rises in any economy, but who is the hardest hit as a result of high inflation in a

recession and how do they manage? Caplovitz (1981) researched this topic by surveying almost 2,000 families in the United States in 1979, at a time when America's economy was suffering, and found that the effects of inflation are greatly disproportionate. Of the families surveyed, 59 per cent said that they had fallen behind rising prices but it was found that those who were less privileged in society were worse off. For example, 81 per cent of those who were earning under \$7,000 felt worse off financially, whereas only 38 per cent of those earning over \$20,000 felt worse off. A stable income gives us security; during harsh economic times, when this well-being disappears, it is usually the poor who bear the greatest psychological burden. Caplovitz (1981) also asked those he surveyed about how depressed they felt during this time and, again, found that generally those who were on low incomes and had low levels of education were the people most affected.

The psychological worry on the poor was shown to be different to those of the middle class. The poor had to worry about surviving in the present, for example by having to decide which teenager gets to stay in school and which has to go to work, whereas middle class family worries were more based upon the future; they could not save as much as they used to, were economising on their food budget (e.g., buying 'basics' rather than premium ranges) and putting off buying a house if they did not already own one.

The hope of rising social mobility among those on middle incomes had been held back by the recession and, although they do not suffer in the same way as the poor, they are still hit by inflation nonetheless. This evidence reinforces the point that most people are affected in an economic downturn; ultimately most of us feel the pinch, although not in the same way.

More recently and closer to home, Williams (1999) reviewed the psychological effects of the UK's last major economic recession, in 1990–1992. Although the main problems within the US and UK economies were different, it was found that whenever times get bad the psychological health of people can become severely affected. Williams called this 'recession fatigue', which he defined as:

'Recession fatigue appears to be a form of chronic psychological stress caused or exacerbated by an individual's economic circumstances, and severe and prolonged enough to degrade their personal effectiveness in work or non-work situations.'

Williams (1999, p. 19)

It is described as recession fatigue rather than stress fatigue because the causes of the stress are linked to the economic situation of the individual. Causes of recession fatigue had been due to unemployment caused by job losses, along with financial insecurities such as keeping up with mortgage payments. However, it was not only those out of work who were stressed; it appears that those who still have jobs also worry during a recession. Williams notes that the reported levels of stress within organisations were rising due to increasing worries about redundancy. During the recession, samples of career counselling clients, both those who were employed and those who were not, showed similar levels of physical and mental stress when tested on the Occupational Stress Indicator (Williams, 1999).

Caplovitz (1981) claimed that the recession causes a sudden disparity in the income-expenditure pattern of a family. They are

used to maintaining a certain standard of living and when it becomes substantially harder to do that then they find ways of trying to keep up with it. One solution is to raise income, through either taking a second job, working overtime, or, if one parent does not work, for that person to go out to get a job as well. However, if keeping one job in times of recession is difficult, finding a second job is undoubtedly even harder. Overall, 38 per cent of the families in Caplovitz's survey employed some form of additional income earning strategy. Another, more common strategy, employed by 50 per cent of respondents, was to cut back, or reduce their standard of living. This included cutting back on food, entertainment and clothes expenditures, with a third saying they were cutting back on holidays. Some 15 per cent said they were even cutting back on dental and medical care, showing how physical health can also suffer as a result of recession.

Along with the immediate effects of a recession, an economic downturn may also present long term social and emotional effects on a family. In 1992, Relate, a guidance service for married couples, reported over a 50 per cent rise in new cases. Divorce lawyers were 'struggling to keep up with the flood of broken marriages linked to financial crises' and marriages continued to fail even after the downturn due to debt and conflicting tensions that still lingered (Williams, 1999). Caplovitz (1981) also found that 33 per cent of the people he surveyed reported that their economic difficulties had only negative impacts on their marriage. A survey by the American Psychological Association in October 2008 revealed more women than men reported feeling stressed about money (83 per cent vs 78 per cent) and the economy (84 per cent vs 75 per cent). Their stress levels had also risen more sharply over six months than men's, providing further evidence indicating that divorce is likely to become more of an issue during a recession as a result of stress caused by an increasing financial burden. However, figures from the US Census Bureau have shown that in the

last 75 years the only time a sharp rise in divorces has been recorded was after World War Two but, as both Americans and British citizens now carry more debt than ever before, it is difficult to say with certainty whether or not the current recession could cause another spike in divorce rates.

In times like these, when money may become scarce and couples and families are struggling, we tend to forget the effect this has on children. It is a mistake to overlook the fact that, just because they do not have to worry about paying bills or putting food on the table, a recession does not impact on their lives. A reduction in the disposable income of a family can pose serious risks for child mental health. It is caused by negative changes in parental mental health, marital interaction and parenting quality, all of which can be affected by increased economic pressure (Solantaus, Leinonen & Punamaki, 2004).

So does this mean that money is needed or even essential to make us happy? Ahuvia (2008) cites 20 years of studies that show that once basic needs are met, increased income creates short-term pleasure but not any long-term impact on overall happiness. This research is useful in understanding how people cope with a fall in income during times of recession. It would appear that all stereotypes about money not buying happiness become redundant, even if only for the short to medium-term.

All of the strains that have been mentioned in this article can have serious long-term health implications for those affected by a recession. Chronic stress can affect basic mental functions such as memory and cognition (Vanlallie, 2002). It can also be a factor in the causes of heart disorders and even cancer (Williams, 1999). Again though, this is more commonly seen in those with low income or low status jobs. Trying to minimise the effects of a recession should be of the utmost importance, and some of the strategies that have been previously employed and found to be effective are likely to help lessen the burden.

In this regard, one of the coping strategies that has shown to be most psychologically rewarding is 'self-reliance'; that is, doing jobs yourself that you would have normally got other people to do for you, such as fixing your car or painting your own house. Discovering that you are more capable than you thought of being able to do things yourself increases your self-esteem and so in the immediate and long term you will be able to feel good knowing that you are more self-reliant than you thought. It will also help to curb household expenditure, lifting the financial burden. Caplovitz (1981) found this strategy to be more widely used and psychologically beneficial to the poor, whose sense of self-reliance is defined by realising that they do not need to rely on the help of others. In fact, other literature has shown that the ethics of self-reliance are popular among all groups of people, whether they are poor or wealthy. Most people would much rather get themselves out of stressful situations independently than seek help from others – for example, from the government (Sniderman & Brody, 1977).

There can be very dramatic psychological consequences as a result of living through an economic recession, which can have very serious, and potentially long lasting ramifications. This article has shown that the breakdown of one's marriage due to financial constraints (even though the link is more anecdotally than empirically supported). By making changes to our behaviour we can lessen the psychological impact and stand a better chance of ultimately pulling through. Self-reliance in particular is one of the best ways to overcome recession fatigue and decrease stress; you only have to spend a few minutes on the internet to find stories of many people creating their own opportunities after losing their jobs in the current economic climate. It is also worth noting that the self-reliance of individuals during the Great Depression of the 1930s has turned many little start-ups into household names such as Hewlett-Packard and Motorola, showing that self-reliance can mitigate the

effects of a recession in small and large ways. Sacrifices may have to be made in the short term in order to achieve this but in the long term it can solve much recession-invoked stress. Using information that has been gathered about the effects of previous recessions hopefully will become helpful advice to people who are struggling in the current economic climate.

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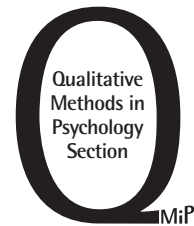
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Writing for publication: new qualitative researchers

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

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

Forthcoming event

Visual methods and psychology, April 2010

An event sponsored by the BPS Qualitative Methods in Psychology (QMIP) Section through its Seminar competition.

Seminar Convenor: Viv Brunsdan.

Venue: Division of Psychology, School of Social Sciences, Nottingham Trent University

Time: 9.00-4.00

Date: Friday 9 April 2010

Visual methods offer a range of benefits for psychological research; for example, they aid articulation; aid memory; provoke empathic understandings; facilitate creativity and metaphor production; and allow participants to lead the research interactions. Despite this they are rarely reported within the psychological literature. This seminar will introduce and promote the use of qualitative visual methods within psychology. Speakers will focus on four key areas of concern: the relationship between the verbal and the visual; ethical concerns in visual research; possibilities for innovative dissemination; and the challenges and benefits of teaching visual methods. Delegates are invited to bring posters relating to visual methods/research for viewing during lunch and coffee breaks. Please send abstracts in advance to vivienne.brunsdan@ntu.ac.uk There will be a prize awarded to the best research poster.

This event is free to attend but places are limited meaning that early booking is essential. Lunch and refreshments will be provided. There are a limited number of student travel bursaries available – when booking your place please indicate if you wish to apply for one of these.

Confirmed speakers:

Viv Brunsdan is head of the Emergency Services Research Unit at Nottingham Trent University. She has published on the benefits

of using visual methods in psychological research and on the possibilities of using phenomenological analysis on visual data. Viv will contextualise the day and explore the relationship between the visual and the textual.

Lucy Easthope is a tutor in Mass Fatalities at the University of Bath. She will be speaking on ethical issues in visual research, particularly in relation to photographic methods and issues of privacy and confidentiality. Lucy will draw from her own visual work into community and individual recovery processes following disaster.

Joe Robinson of CoatiXL is a professional artist specialising in socially relevant conceptual art and in communication graphics. Along with Jeff Goatcher, Joe will be speaking on the innovative dissemination possibilities offered by visual research. Joe and Jeff will draw on their collaborative work in a project which explored how artist interpretations of traditional qualitative data could be used to form the basis of new routes for knowledge transfer from the academy to the real world.

Jill Arnold will be speaking on the challenges and benefits of teaching visual methods. Jill is a senior lecturer in psychology at Nottingham Trent University. Her expertise in teaching was recognised in 2008 when she was awarded the BPS Award for Excellence in the Teaching of Psychology. Jill has used visual methods in her research into female identity in aging and has taught visual methods to undergraduate students.

■ The workshop is free but has a maximum of 50 places, which **MUST** be booked in advance with Vivienne.brunsdan@ntu.ac.uk.

Lectures: The good, the bad and the boring

Rosamond Watling, Goldsmiths College, University of London

WHAT makes a good lecture? As postgraduate teachers in psychology, none of us are very far removed from our own undergraduate days, when we found ourselves attending lectures on a regular basis. For me, the most memorable lectures were the ones that left me wanting to ask questions and learn more, the ones that struck a chord somewhere and motivated me to go to the library and read. Those that were least effective (and there were one or two) were those in which the lecturer would turn up, read through a series of PowerPoint slides in a bored monotone, and leave. It comes as no surprise to learn that agonisingly dull lectures leave students with gaps in their knowledge and indeed contribute negatively to a student's overall final grade. According to Pekrun et. al. (2002), positive emotions such as enjoyment of lectures predict high achievement whilst negative emotions such as boredom predict low achievement.

As a postgraduate student teaching psychology and, more recently, as a new lecturer I take a keen interest in pedagogical matters and often draw on the advice of more experienced colleagues when it comes to effective lecturing. It seems to me that there are four essential components to a good lecture: thorough preparation, a clear and varied structure, delivery of the material in an interesting and engaging way and, last but not least, an ability to put oneself in the students' shoes.

I'm sure I am not alone in feeling the need to be mentally prepared for any teaching session, whether it be a small tutorial or a lecture to a large group of students. A couple of hours spent thinking through the session in detail beforehand leaves me feeling in control and reasonably confident. Pre-

empting possible questions is also important, as is having a clearly defined plan of how the session is structured. I often write a few lines of short prompts for myself as reminders of my teaching plan, for instance 'stop here to ask if students have experienced this', 'slow down to explain this point', 'show video clip here'.

It has been said that, '[all too often,] lecturing is a process by which information is transferred from the notes of the lecturer to the notes of the students without touching the brain of either'. (modified from Sistik, 1986). After a lecture the more conscientious students will go home and write up their own lecture notes, supplemented with additional reading to reinforce their understanding of the topic. However, there will always be some who diligently take notes during a lecture, but ultimately have little understanding of the content. One way of minimising this is to make the lecture more interactive, and I have noticed since my own (not too distant) undergraduate days that the format of some lectures has changed from being a one-way transmission of information to being much more of an active two-way process, with students being invited to engage in discussions and activities. Varying the structure of a lecture session is important in retaining students' attention. Research into attention span has shown a general pattern in students' attention, with a decline in concentration after 20 minutes of a lecture (Johnstone & Percival, 1976; Mittendorf & Kalish, 1996). A useful plan when structuring lectures is to punctuate the session every 20 minutes or so with a different type of activity, for example a short video clip to illustrate a point, getting students to discuss a question or a problem with a neighbour for a couple of minutes, or having a brief ques-

tion and answer session.

Certainly a lecturer's enthusiasm for the subject plays a large part in making the lecture engaging and effective, and in generating further discussion. If you are bored by a topic, it is probably unreasonable to expect your audience to be interested in it, and the style of delivery is important to retaining students' attention. Reading from lecture notes or PowerPoint slides is excruciating for students to sit through, and achieves little in the way of learning or understanding. A lecture delivered in an enthusiastic and engaging way, on the other hand, will be one that is much easier to assimilate and can often spark interest in a topic, leaving students keen to learn more. I have learned much from observing good lecturers, and academic colleagues will often be willing to allow you to sit at the back of their lecture. It can also be very useful if a colleague is able to come to your class and give you feedback on your teaching, indeed peer observation is a requirement at many universities.

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I think it is always useful to put myself in the place of a student in my teaching sessions, and to see the topic from their point of understanding. I always try to illustrate abstract theoretical points with real-life examples, and this helps them to remain grounded and relate to concepts. One can often gauge from watching them whether students have understood a point, or whether they are confused and it can be useful to stop and say 'that last point didn't make any sense to you, did it?' If they agree it can be a valuable opportunity to discuss a point with them and aid their understanding.

I continue to be inspired by academic colleagues in their approaches to teaching and, even though I have been teaching for some years now, lecturing in psychology remains for me a steep, informative and, above all enjoyable learning curve.

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The PhD student's Rough Guide to doing research abroad

Alana James, Goldsmiths, University of London

WHEN my PhD supervisor told me I had the opportunity to spend a month in South Korea doing research I jumped at the chance. I mean, who wouldn't? Alana James, International Researcher, sounded much more glamorous than Alana, the PhD student in the cultured yet insalubrious New Cross, London. Luckily for me our research team was indeed granted the funding for a research partnership with a developmental psychology unit in Seoul, the capital of South Korea. My mission, accepted with glee and some trepidation, was to research bullying prevention work and use of peer support systems in Korean schools.

I'm afraid you're going to have to wait until the official publication for my findings, but what I would like to share just now are some tips for doing research abroad. My time in Korea was an amazing experience (I really didn't want to come back) but there were a few challenges along the way...

Tip One: Learn the lingo

As with any trip abroad, making sure you have a rudimentary grasp of the local lingo is a good start. However, as I'm sure you're aware, being a postgraduate sometimes doesn't leave much time for extracurricular activities such as preparing for a trip. For social networking websites that shall remain nameless (or should that be faceless), yes. For work related extras, not so much. In my case the weeks, months even, before the trip sped past in a blur of data collection. In the end I remembered to buy a travel guide (the cheapest available, but including a dictionary) the night before I left.

What the travel guide couldn't prepare me for was the difficulty of translating

research terms. For my research I interviewed key people working within the area of school bullying, such as teachers and researchers. I was greatly helped by a student who acted as my translator, who translated my questions into Korean and the participants' responses into English. I asked her to use the Korean term 'wang-ta' in place of the English term 'bullying', as previous research has shown that this is the most analogous. However, unlike English, the Korean language has different terms for different types of bullying behaviour; wang-ta has a greater emphasis on social exclusion, the most common type of bullying in Korea. I eventually realized that this meant some participants were not including other types of bullying, such as physical violence, in their answers. From this I learnt the importance of clearly defining the key concepts with the subject in each individual interview.

A related difficulty I found was that there was no obvious translation for 'peer support system' in Korean. Peer support systems are very popular in UK schools, where a school selects and trains a small number of students to support others. In Korea the term peer support wasn't in use so I needed to introduce the very concept of peer support to interviewees and ask what they thought about this.

In hindsight, I feel it would have been beneficial to give more thought to how well my interview questions would translate, and to have worked with my translator to adjust the phrasing in advance.

Tip Two: Acclimatise to the local culture

Anyone who had the unfortunate luck to be within a 10 metre radius of me in the weeks leading up to my departure will testify that I

was a bag of nerves. This was because: a) it had finally dawned on me that I would be living on my own in a different country, and b) there didn't seem to be any plan in place for when I arrived. My Dad called to say farewell the morning of my flight and was aghast to find I had no idea where I would be staying, never mind how to get there if nobody met me at the airport. I had visions of having to sleep on someone's floor, if not in the psychology lab. Needless to say no interviews had been arranged for my visit, despite vigorous e-mailing in advance of my trip.

When I arrived in Seoul, however, I was met at the airport and brilliant accommodation on campus had been arranged. Over the course of the month I found that finalising plans at the last minute was part of the Korean culture. When I did succeed in arranging interviews, I found to my dismay that I couldn't pin anyone down to a particular time, place or sometimes day. Arrangements that could have taken one or two e-mails took several e-mails, some phone calls, and a rushed and sweaty (it was very, very hot) journey to get to the somewhat secret location. I'm rather retentive about organising things as it is (this is an understatement) so it drove me mad! I eventually asked a Korean friend about it, and they explained that spontaneity is a central part of the Korean way of doing things. Once I knew this, it was much easier to relax and go with the flow.

I also found that this spontaneity could be a very positive force in Korean society. The people I interviewed referred to past cases of serious bullying, where the victimised students had committed suicide. These incidents had prompted large public outcry and had been driving forces for the government to put in place some anti-bullying legislation and promote anti-bullying work in schools.

Tip Three: Get receipts

It sounds obvious. If you're on a trip where your living expenses are covered by a grant, you need to get receipts. I knew this, I really

did, but often didn't do it. This was in part due to being so completely flustered when trying to pay in a different currency that I forgot. It was also because my grasp of the language was too poor to know how to ask for one. Towards the end of my trip I was much more composed and managed to do the simple act of pointing at the till to get a receipt. You'd think I would have thought of this earlier.

I was able to claim some of my expenses that I didn't have receipts for, but I know I probably left myself a little out of pocket. I really would stress the importance of remembering to get receipts when on this kind of trip, especially for PhD students.

Tip Four: Dress appropriately

Like getting receipts, I'm sure this sounds obvious. It really wasn't! I knew that as I was going to Korea in the springtime, it was going to be much hotter than in Britain. Therefore I packed some smart clothes, but also vest tops and strappy dresses. As you do. However, when I arrived I slowly noticed that no other women were wearing vest tops, or anything which left their arms bare, even when the heat was nearly unbearable. Upon asking, I discovered that this was because revealing the tops of your arms was considered unseemly.

I adjusted my dress accordingly, taking particular care when I went to meet participants. Sadly it wasn't until the final week of my visit that someone informed me that it was much more of a faux-pas to reveal any hint of breasts. So my smart, sleeved but oh so v-neck dress had actually been having the opposite effect than desired. I'll chalk that one up to you live, and you learn, then.

Tip Four: Be prepared for anything

We all know that anything can and will go wrong during your research project. Participants don't show up, SPSS and children both say 'no' at the worst moments... so really I should have known to be prepared at all times.

As I have said, in Korea things were often

arranged at the last minute. In practical terms this meant I needed to be ready to go and meet a participant at any moment. Sometimes I was, but sometimes I was still in bed.

Needing to be prepared for anything was also true during the actual interviews. Things often got lost in translation between myself, my translator and the interviewee, leading to some very funny moments where we all had our wires crossed. There are some interviews that still have me in hysterics when I play them back. I found that in interviews where a translator was needed it was especially important to sometimes stop and take a moment to really think about what had been said and what I still needed to find out.

Translation problems were the source of a lot of confusion, so you really need to be on the ball. One of the interviews I conducted had been arranged by the professor in charge of the research team I was visiting, and my translator liaised with the participant for me by phone. From what I had been told, we were going to meet somebody in charge of a health centre where they did some work supporting victims of bullying. When we arrived I was surprised to find that the address was for a very business-like tower

building, much unlike health centres I had been to in the UK. My translator checked the address with security and we went up to the imposing reception desk to announce our arrival. This was where it all became clear. There was a sign in English at the desk: Ministry for Health and Welfare. I was really interviewing someone at the government ministry who dealt with child and youth safety. This was a brilliant opportunity for my research, but I had to quickly re-think all my questions in the elevator!

To summarise my experience of doing research abroad, I would say that nothing should be taken for granted. Every part of the research process, from choosing what to wear, arranging to meet participants and carrying out the research, was complicated by the differences in language and culture. That said, I would urge anyone to jump at the opportunity to work in a foreign country, and to visit Korea. It was an unforgettable experience, because of both what went wrong and right, and I am confident that it has improved my skills as a researcher.

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Who am I? Reflections on the search for a professional identity

Gareth Morris & Jenna Condie, University of Salford

WHO am I? Surely a question we all ask ourselves on a personal and professional note. Perhaps to a certain extent this is an unanswerable enquiry, but such an important question raises some central issues to us as postgraduate students, and as early career researchers. This article aims to address key issues of professional identity where our identities are in a formative stage and the work undertaken in these early years will provide a significant influence in shaping our careers. Finally, we invite you, the reader, to consider both personal and contemporary professional issues which are constructing and reconstructing your identity as a postgraduate student and beyond.

What is identity? – A recap

Identity is our ‘essential, continuous self, the internal, subjective concept of oneself as an individual’ (Reber 1995). The concept of identity can be divided further into more specific areas of investigation, such as gender role identity, racial identity, class and place identity. This article will focus on issues of professional identity, although, it will become evident that our professional identity is not necessarily distinct or separate from the multiplicity of identities that we all hold.

The theoretical background of professional identity

Professional identity has been defined as an individual’s self-definition as a member of a profession and within that, their professional roles and responsibilities (Ibarra, 1999). While social identity theories have commonly been concerned with the role of self-

conception in group membership and group processes (Hogg, 2006), an alternative perspective has viewed identity formation as a process of social learning. Learning occurs when an individual is an active participant in the both the practices of its social communities and in constructing its identities in relation to these communities (Wenger 1998).

Wenger characterised identity in several different ways but for the purposes of this article we will concentrate on just one of these. This characteristic is identity as a nexus of multimembership, i.e. we define who we are by the way we reconcile our various forms of membership into our individual identity.

What does research tell us?

A review of the literature reveals that the health, social care and teaching professions have benefited and grown from identity research (Beijaard et al., 2000; Fagermoen, 1997; Goldblatt, et al., 2009; Hewitt, 2009; Mackey, 2007; Öhlen & Segesten, 1998). For example, Hewitt (2009) discusses the need to develop a more values-based approach to nursing practice to redress the dominance of evidence-based practice which has devalued the interpersonal aspects of their practice – there needs to be greater emphasis on the development of a moral identity. For example, in practice, those receiving care may need more than medication as there are other aspects of well-being that may need attention and can only be imparted by another person able to connect with them in a congruent emotional and supportive manner. In social work, Goldblatt (2009) found that female practitioners who worked with women subject to intimate partner violence

would experience a blurring of their personal and professional lives which would influence and question gender role identities in their own personal relationships, and thus reshape the meaning of the workers relationship with their partner. What underlies Hewitt's and Goldblatt's arguments is that personal and professional identities are intimately bound up with each other and this reflects Wenger's view that part of what characterises our identity is negotiating our 'nexus of multimembership'.

Nystrom (2009) drew on Wenger's theory to examine the dynamics of personal and professional identity among graduates experiencing the transition to working life. She concluded that there are three sequential forms of professional identity, beginning with an individual focus and developing into a more integrated way of reasoning about one's profession. The first of these, 'non-differentiated identity' occurs when the individual views their personal and professional circumstances as largely overlapping, for example, senior students view their role as a student as reflecting their situation, norms and values. The second, 'compartmentalised identity', reflects a separation where professional development takes priority over other spheres of life. This is typical for graduates who have been working for 18 months and are concentrating on their professional practice. Lastly, 'integrated identity' is negotiated by early career professionals who express security and confidence in their professional roles. Integration between the different spheres becomes necessary for balancing professional roles with the rest of their lives and seeing how each sphere relates to the larger picture.

A study of academic identities similarly revealed identity formation as a dynamic process, and furthermore, elaborated on a nexus of multimembership within the professional identity itself (James, undated). James found that while academics identified themselves as participants or non-participants within their disciplinary communities, they also viewed maintenance of teaching

and research activity and membership of their professional body of significant importance. However, areas where an identity struggle existed were revealed through higher education structural reforms and imposed external agendas which gave rise to 'professional' academic identities.

For postgraduate students, numerous studies have highlighted the dilemmas and situations which may impact upon professional identity. Harland and Plangger's (2004) research focused on the postgraduate as 'chameleon', in relation to studying for a doctorate with the often accompanying teaching responsibilities of lectures, seminars and lab classes. In his doctoral thesis Stanley (2004) took a discursive approach to postgraduate education, exploring the ways in which psychology and social science postgraduates negotiate the interactional, self-presentational, and ideological dilemmas at play, and the different power relations present throughout their doctorates.

Why is professional identity important to us?

Professional identity is important to many of us now because what we do early on in our career could have a major bearing on our future opportunities, how we are perceived by ourselves and by others, and our contributions to our colleagues and to our discipline. Without an identity how would we describe ourselves and our work to others? What world view do we take? Undertaking studies at doctoral level offers flexibility and choice in the perspectives we take and how we position the focus of our research. A great amount of time is spent developing an expertise in that area so where in our discipline will we choose to focus that attention?

A professional identity can also be problematic, to be seen as an expert in one area can lead to 'pigeon-holing'. Although Gareth's PhD may focus on homelessness that does not mean he is not interested in many other things. Similarly, Jenna's research is currently focusing on experiences of living with vibration and noise from

railways, but she is interested in other things too and certainly doesn't want to become known as the train woman! Furthermore, there may be restrictions to our freedom of enquiry, particularly for sponsored research or because of supervisor interests.

Where does personal identity fit into this?

A reoccurring theme emerging through this article is the interplay and relationship between our professional and personal selves. Professional identity and personal identity have been discussed in places as distinct from each other in one respect, yet these intertwine and overlap (Nystrom, 2009). As psychologists and social scientists, how does what we study impact upon our personal selves? Qualitative research, by its nature considers the researcher as an integral part of the research process. Rew et al., (1993) have commented on what personal qualities are important for qualitative researchers to possess. These include appropriateness, authenticity, credibility, intuitiveness, receptivity, reciprocity, and sensitivity. Additionally, within their grounded theory approach Strauss and Corbin (1998) consider the self as an instrument in the collection and analysis of data stating grounded theory researchers 'become completely absorbed in the work' which is not always in the foreground of the researcher life but 'is never gone' (p.6). Also within some ethnographical approaches, when the researcher actively takes a membership role within the social group they are exploring (Angrosino & de Pérez, 2000) the identities of the researcher as perceived by 'others' become a central consideration (Blackwood, 1995).

Another issue relevant to how our professional identity impacts upon our personal identity is the contemporary ways in which we promote and disseminate our research. More and more common is the need for an online profile attached to your institution, research groups, networks and research projects. This is perhaps a reflection of the changing face of the university, as universi-

ties strive towards a more corporate framework, whilst also being a sign of the times with the popularity of social media, online identities and communication. From a marketing and communications perspective Lair et al. (2005) reflect on this phenomenon as the personal branding movement, where 'people and their careers are marketed as brands complete with promises of performance, specialised designs, and tag lines for success' (p. 308). Lairs et al., (2005) discuss the emergence of the personal branding movement within the broader complex communicative and cultural context of contemporary society, which increasingly demands new and innovative communication strategies to ensure organisations stand out from the crowd. However, some ethical concerns are voiced with regards to personal branding in terms of the effects on identity:

'Although the individual is being told that he or she is the center and urged to formulate and reformulate a distinctive identity, there is little talk of internal spiritual or emotional growth and even less questioning of the system that supposedly requires the branding of self and career' (Lairs et al., 2005, p. 335).

Both authors of this article are postgraduate students at the University of Salford, where online media profiles, blogging and social media skills have made the agenda for postgraduate training. In relation to blogging, Ewins (2005) highlights the numerous advantages of online presence in the exchange of ideas within disciplines, wider fields, academia and beyond. Furthermore, blogs have recently been considered pedagogically as an effective communication strategy, promoting interactive and intercreative engagement with students (Duffy & Bruns, 2009). However media profiles and online blogs are perhaps not everybody's cup of tea. As online communication, engagement and promotion is increasingly unavoidable, what issues and even dilemmas do such situations raise for the academic in terms of the distinctions between professional and personal life and also public or private iden-

tities? As relatively new phenomena, there is a limited amount of scholarly research exploring online professional identities within academia. However, Ewins (2005) notes that blogging can impact on the academic in ways that are unexpected, blurring the division between professional and personal selves through the self-reflection blogging evokes.

Contemporary professional issues

Another contemporary issue for psychologists in relation to professional identity is statutory regulation. It remains to be seen at the moment how this may alter the way we position ourselves in relation to others, perhaps other than being able to distinguish ourselves from those who are not regulated. Does this mean anything to us now or will it in the future? Maybe we will be too concerned with our day jobs wondering where we fit into our institutions, our professional bodies and our disciplinary communities with their sometimes contradictory imperatives. For example, the current government plan to ensure future research funding is directed towards inquiries which show their real world relevance and not simply 'blue-sky

thinking' – a move which critics are suggesting will restrict academic freedom (Curtis 2009) and significantly influence where we focus our research questions. Inevitably, the changing nature of universities to become more business-oriented and financially accountable means that to prosper in the academic world could result in adding the title 'businessman' or 'businesswoman' to our long repertoire of dynamic, interrelated professional identities.

We hope that this article has raised issues which resonate with the readers of this quarterly and provides a little food for thought as we negotiate our paths into the professional fields of our discipline.

The authors of this article are two University of Salford PhD students with dynamic, multilayered professional identities. Gareth Morris is in his first year part-time and considers his research and interests within the community psychology sub-discipline. Jenna Condie is in her second year full-time and considers herself to be an environmental psychologist.

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