

Editorial

Charlotte McLeod

HELLO AND WELCOME to the 75th edition of the *PsyPAG Quarterly*. I would firstly like to thank everyone who applied for our conference bursaries during the Winter round. We received more applications in this round than we have ever received before. The PsyPAG bursary system allocates approximately £1500 a year to post-graduates, to help with the financial costs incurred when visiting either domestic or international conferences. The deadline for the next round is the 10 June. So if you are expecting to go to a conference and are having difficulties finding funding to cover the cost, please visit: www.psympag.co.uk/bursaries.html and fill in the application form.

Further to the success of our bursary scheme, this year we have seen the successful developments of various other schemes. Firstly, we recently created the Outstanding Masters Thesis Award. After receiving many applications for this Award, the Awards Subcommittee have unanimously decided on a winner. I would like to congratulate Sarah Garner from Lancaster University, who has been successful in her application. Congratulations Sarah, we look forward to meeting you at the 25th PsyPAG Annual Conference at Sheffield University on 21–23 July 2010. In conjunction with the PGwT, PsyPAG have sponsored another award: the National Psychology Postgraduate Teaching Award 2010. We are pleased to announce that Mandy Yilmaz from the University of Dundee is the winner this year. Additionally, we are currently assessing applications for the new PsyPAG Rising Researcher Award; the winner will be announced shortly. The committee have also been occupied with other activities related to the newly-formed PsyPAG Alumni group. We encourage anyone who has been on the committee to

join. Ex-members of the committee can join by navigating to the following website: www.psympag.co.uk/alumni.html. The aim of the Alumni group is to bring old and new members together, it's a great way for ex-committee members to keep in touch and to continue to support postgraduates.

In terms of internal committee developments, we have a new Chair, who will be formerly assigned this position at the next AGM. I would like to congratulate Sarah Wood from Lancaster University who will be our new Chair. We wish Sarah all the best in her new role throughout the next academic year, and we look forward to working alongside her in the future. However, with the addition of Sarah as Chair, this does mean we are losing Laura Crane, who has been on the committee since July 2007 and been our Chair since July 2008. Laura has done an amazing job, she has brought such enthusiasm and friendliness to the role, that it seems hard to imagine that anyone could replace her. Nevertheless, I am sure Sarah is up to the job and will fulfil this role well. In addition, we are also losing two other core committee members, John Hyland and Sue Jamieson-Powell. John has been an efficient and friendly Information Officer; Sue has also been exceptional in her role as Communications Officer. She has done wonders for the website and made communication between committee members so much easier. Both will be missed tremendously, we wish you well on your post-PhD endeavours.

In this edition of *The Quarterly* we have a collection of articles that address a wide variety of topics. Our first article has been written by Andrew Thomas who was the winner of the Best Oral Presentation Prize at the PsyPAG 2009 Annual Conference. Andrew has written an intriguing piece related to his research, which is exploring

the mating strategies of humans. This work is partly informed by strategies that animals use when attempting to acquire a mating partner. Following this we have another interesting article from Robin Kramer, who is investigating the relationship between movement, perceptions of health and voting preferences. This article uncovers relationships between how we assess movement and the implications of this inference. This is an informative piece, which can be appreciated by everyone, not just researchers specific to this area. The content of the next article assesses the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies conference (ISTSS). This review will be of interest to any readers who are involved in stress research and are thinking of attending the ISTSS conference next year. Following this, we have an article that is useful for everyone as it is a review of the book *The Elements of Style*. This book gives advice on how to write in a clear and concise manner, something that many PhD students will find valuable. The next contribution discusses gangs in the UK and how a psychological approach can add to the current approaches examining this phenomenon. This is followed by a review of the Consciousness and Experiential Section Annual Conference. Barry's discussion article explores why we should study the history of psychology and what we can learn from the past. This gives insights into why it is important to look back as well as forward. Neurolinguistic students will find the next piece appealing. This is an investigation of SMS shortcut processing using the masked priming paradigm. There is a review of another British Psychological Society-affiliated conference; this article reviews the

Education Section conference in Preston last year. If you are interested in attending conferences this year and you are not sure how to get the best out of them, the next article is relevant for you. This gives useful hints and tips on how to prepare and get the most out of conference attendance. The penultimate article considers the construct of commitment. If you have had concerns about limitations of psychological constructs, you will be able to relate to this article. This well-written piece by Andrew identifies and discusses conceptual limitations and how these limitations informed his PhD. Last, and by no means least, is a piece discussing the controversial topic of pole dancing. Specifically this article argues that pole dancing may have psychological as well as physical benefits, but this form of dance itself suffers from being associated with vice.

As you can see, we have a varied and interesting edition for our readers, we hope you enjoy reading this as much as we have enjoyed editing it! Indeed, I would like to thank the editorial team for doing a fantastic job. It can be difficult juggling so many different responsibilities, but I feel we have reviewed and assembled a fantastic edition. We also invite our readers to continue to submit these interesting articles to *The Quarterly*. Finally I would like to add that we look forward to meeting you at the 2010 PsyPAG conference this summer.

Charlotte McLeod

On behalf of *The Quarterly* Editorial Team
2009–2010, Kyle Brown, Lesley Jacobs &
Julie Port.

Chair's Column

Laura Crane

AFTER three fantastic years on the PsyPAG committee, including two years as Chair, it is with great sadness that I am leaving the committee at the forthcoming PsyPAG conference in Sheffield, having recently completed my postgraduate studies. I would, therefore, like to reflect on my time on the committee and to thank all those that have helped and supported me during this time.

The past two years have been a very exciting time for the committee. We have hosted two hugely successful conferences at Manchester University (2008) and Cardiff University (2009) and look forward to our 25th Annual Conference in Sheffield this year (see www.psyag.co.uk/conference/ for further details). We have also staged a number of postgraduate workshops, including a Neuropsychology workshop at Reading University, a Qualitative workshop at Salford University and a Statistics workshop at Strathclyde University. See our website, www.psyag.co.uk/workshops.html for details on forthcoming events or to host your own postgraduate workshop.

PsyPAG have also been proud to reinstate our bursary system, to provide support for postgraduates to attend both domestic and international conferences. This scheme has been hugely successful and we have recently introduced a third round of bursaries so that we can fund even more postgraduate students (www.psyag.co.uk/bursaries.html).

We have also introduced a number of new award schemes, to recognise the achievement of postgraduate students. These include our Rising Researcher Award, our Postgraduate Teaching Award (delivered jointly with the Postgraduates who Teach network) and the Outstanding Masters Thesis Award. Three very worthy winners were chosen in the inaugural round of awards and we look forward to

running these schemes in 2010 (see www.psyag.co.uk/awards.html for more details).

The PsyPAG committee is currently larger than it has ever been and I am confident that the future committee will continue working hard to support and recognise the achievements of postgraduate students.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many people that have supported me, both personally and professionally, over the past two years. First, I would like to thank my predecessor, David Moore, for encouraging me to run for Chair of the committee and for always offering advice and guidance when needed. I would also like to thank my fantastic administrative committee, including Caroline Bettenay, Josie Booth, John Hyland, Alana James, Sue Jamison-Powell and Laura McGrath. Whether they were developing new ideas or schemes to support postgraduates, or offering to host a conference/workshop, or single-handedly organising the bursary scheme, or taking on some of my workload while I was busy finishing my PhD, they have been nothing short of incredible. I truly believe that the successes of the PsyPAG committee over the past two years have been largely due to their hard work and dedication. I honestly cannot thank them enough and I wish them the best of luck with their PhDs. Special thanks also go to Naomi Andrew, for taking me under her wing when I first joined *The Quarterly* editorial team, and to Kyle Brown, for taking on pretty much every committee position on offer and for putting in so much hard work during my time on the committee. I would also like to thank the various people that have sat on the PsyPAG committee over the past two years and who have worked so hard in making PsyPAG a success.

It is also with great pleasure that I can announce my successor – Sarah Wood from Northumbria University. Sarah has been a much valued member of our committee for some time now, especially in her roles as Sports and Exercise representative and Chair of the Awards sub-committee. I am confident that PsyPAG will progress onto bigger and better things under her leadership and I truly hope she enjoys her time as Chair as much as I have.

Finally, I would like to encourage anyone reading this column to consider joining the PsyPAG committee at the AGM in Sheffield this year. Sitting on the PsyPAG committee has been invaluable in boosting my CV, in developing my skills base and in meeting fellow postgraduate students. I have also benefited enormously from the support of my fellow committee members during the ups and downs of my PhD. My time on the committee has truly been one of the highlights of my postgraduate studies and I wish the future committee every success.

For the last time.

Laura Crane



Variability of human mating strategies: Can animal studies lead us down the path to promiscuity?

Andrew. G. Thomas

HOW CAN the study of animal mating strategies benefit psychologists researching human mating behaviour? This article briefly discusses some of the evolutionary biological literature surrounding animal mating strategies and reflects on how comparable studies could account for the large amount of variance in human behaviour. Pilot results from our lab are also discussed as well as ongoing research.

Homo sapiens vary quite substantially in their mating behaviour. Some show life-long bonds ('until death do us part'), while others prefer a string of 'no strings attached' liaisons. We are capable of polygyny (males having many female partners), polyandry (females having many male partners), adultery, strict monogamy and everything in between. Some of these behaviours are associated with greater risks than others; infidelity is still the most common predictor of divorce while promiscuity increases the chance of contracting STDs (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2005; Hughes et al., 2001). Thus, accounting for the variance in human mating behaviour is not only inherently interesting, but may have health and relationship well-being applications as well.

As psychologists we are often trained to avoid the 'anthropomorphic bias' – that is, attributing human-like characteristics and motives to animals. Unfortunately, too much concern for avoiding such bias can have knock on effects, such as reluctance to associate human behaviour with that of other animals altogether. Evolutionary psychology partially overcomes this by recognising the phylogenetic relationships between our

species and others as well as the shared selection pressures which led to many of our adaptive physical and psychological mechanisms. This article discusses how mating strategy research is currently approached in non-human animals and how a comparative perspective may guide us in designing studies which better account for the variance in human mating behaviours.

Types of mating strategy

Before looking at what factors change non-human animal mating behaviour, we need to understand how such behaviours are classified. Traditionally specific mating behaviours are aggregated under the term of 'mating strategies'. These are sets of adaptive mating behaviours which maximise fitness by guiding mating effort (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). In the animal kingdom an array of mating strategies can be seen in many species, primarily in the sex with most variance in fitness (normally males). For example, male *Panorpa* (scorpionflies) have three distinct mating strategies: offering the female a dead anthropod, offering her a nutritious saliva ball, and if all else fails, attempting to copulate against her will (Thornhill, 1981). Toads such as *Bufo woodhousii* (Woodhouse's toad) take two forms: large males which attract females through calling, and smaller satellite males which try to intercept these attracted females (Leary et al., 2005). Male gray squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) also show a similar strategy, with dominant males actively pursuing females and satellite males mating with those who break away from this pursuit (Koprowski, 1993). Relatedly, some scholars suggest that

humans as well have two distinct strategies: short-term and long-term mating (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

In some animals, different mating strategies are made apparent not just through behavioural but physical differences as well. As such, Shuster (2008) further separated mating strategies into three distinct classifications: Mendelian, developmental and behavioural. Mendelian strategies are decided purely by the principals of Mendelian genetics. That is, mating strategies are pre-determined by the presence of a specific gene even in a variable environment. Though rare, some species appear to have strategies set in such a manner (e.g. the marine isopod *Paracerceis sculpta*, see Shuster, 2008). Developmental strategies are not determined directly by genes, but by environmental events that set an individual on one of several possible 'developmental trajectories'. In some species, such as the aforementioned Woodhouse's toad, this becomes an irreversible change, dictating physical appearance (large vs. small) and mating strategy tendencies (calling vs. satellite) for life (Leary et al., 2005). Lastly, behavioural strategies are, much like developmental strategies, the product of the environmental interactions but are shorter-term in nature. That is, it is possible for behavioural strategies to rapidly adjust to changing environmental circumstances.

Behavioural plasticity

For psychologists it is behavioural strategies (and to a lesser extent developmental strategies) that are of key interest. While undoubtedly an individuals' genotype may predispose them to adopt a specific mating strategy with a greater likelihood, it is the circumstances which cause individuals to change between strategies that we find of greater empirical interest and consider more likely to have practical implications.

In animals, there is a vast array of environmental factors found which lead to behavioural-based mating strategy change. Thornhill conducted experiments showing

that male scorpion flies will switch their mating strategy depending on the availability of resources. Specifically, those males who showed forced copulation in one scenario changed their strategy to that of salivary offering when more dominant males were removed from the environment (Thornhill, 1981). Likewise in Green Treefrogs (*Hyla cinerea*), the removal or introduction of dominant male calls can change the strategy of surrounding males, causing them to switch to satellite or calling behaviours respectively (Perrill, Gerhardt & Daniel, 1982). Predator presence and operational sex ratio can also affect strategy choice, causing males in species such as *Poecilia reticulata* (the Trinidadian guppy) to switch from displaying to females to sneaking copulations and vice versa (Jirotkul, 1999; Godin, 1995). These studies all follow a similar methodology: a within-subjects design measuring mating strategy choice while manipulating environmental variables.

Given the vast amount of cross-species evidence showing that mating strategies vary with environment in animals, the evolutionary biological literature might have us expect that humans vary in the same way. However, compared to other animals, research adopting comparable within-subjects designs are scarce, though indirect evidence does exist. We know, for example, that testosterone levels are associated with male mating effort and may drop when a man becomes a father (Gray et al., 2002); that individuals engage in mating strategies that are more likely to 'pay-off' given their attractiveness (Simpson et al., 1999); and that in hunter-gatherer societies with low male-to-female ratios, men spend more mating and less time parenting (Marlowe, 1999). However, these are all between-subject designs where static snapshots of an individuals' mating strategy are taken and then associated with factors in the mating environment. They do not take into account change over time and simply imply that certain experiences could lead to mating strategy variation.

Our current research

This is something we are starting to rectify in our lab through the development of both experimental and longitudinal paradigms. These aim to follow in the footsteps of the evolutionary biological literature by using within-subject designs. One of our small pilot studies ($N=192$; Thomas, 2009) revealed that, even in the course of a single week, mating strategies varied for a sub-set of individuals; their scores changed from their week 1 measure by between 0.5 and 1 standard deviations. This is a large change given that the measure used (the Socio-sexual Orientation Inventory, 1991) has been shown to have a test-retest correlation coefficient of $r=.94$ over two weeks. By looking at the types of relationship events that this sub-sample of individuals experienced during the week we have been able to identify several events (or factors) of interest which can now be controlled for in larger-scale longitudinal studies.

The kind of events we're interested in include changes to relationship status, social status, amount of networking, relationship satisfaction, contact with ex-partners, opposite-sex receptivity, and new sexual experiences (Table 1). For example, one male in our sample indicated that he had received a job promotion that week (an increase in status) and, despite being married, showed an increase in his willingness to engage in uncommitted sex. Likewise, one female who decided to start trying to conceive with her partner during that week showed a marked decrease in this same willingness. Although lists of such items form only a qualitative starting point, we hope that a developed checklist of experiences will allow us to account for mating strategy changes over month-long periods using a within-subject longitudinal paradigm.

Table 1: Experiences which may cause a change in promiscuity as reported by those showing substantial change in mating strategy following a one week test-retest.

Sex	Decrease Promiscuity	Increase Promiscuity
Both sexes	Relationship ends or is ending Rejection from a love interest Spent quality time with partner	Passionate experience with a new individual
Males	Ashamed of own promiscuous behaviour Discovered someone's feelings for you	Frustrations with partner Relationship ends or is ending Asked to make too much of a commitment Questioning relationship satisfaction An increase in status
Females	Started a new relationship Partner showing loving behaviour Passionate experience with a new individual Asked out on a date Started trying for a baby Feeling guilty about being approached	Increased social networking Ex-partner pursuing Lack of quality time together Ex-partner argument reconciliation Increase in approach rate Cruel behaviour from males (ex and current partner) Partner is away from home

One step closer:

Experimental manipulation

The beauty of evolutionary biological experiments on mating strategy choice is that they use experimental paradigms, allowing for tighter control of environmental factors. Studies of various bird species (some of which have mating habits remarkably comparable to humans) show that manipulation of characteristics such as physical attractiveness (Qvarnström, 1997) and testosterone levels (McGothlin, Jawor & Ketterson, 2007; Van Roo, 2004) leads to shifts in mating effort. That is, males made to look more attractive, or given injections of testosterone, spend less time engaging in parental behaviours and instead seek mating opportunities with females other than their primary partner. We wonder whether such an effect would also occur in human males.

It would, of course, be unethical to manipulate physical attractiveness in humans. However, as a highly social species it's clear we derive our opinion of self-attractiveness from those around us. As such, there exists the potential to use 'false-feedback' to manipulate a person's view of their own attractiveness. Our lab is currently utilising such a paradigm to see if a change in mating strategy can be artificially induced.

Ultimately, the aim of our research is to account for as much variance in human mating behaviours as possible. To do so will allow individuals to better understand the sometimes hidden evolutionary drives which guide our behaviour and use this to their advantage. As Buss (1994) noted, 'Acknowledging the full complexity of our mating strategies may violate our socialised conceptions of matrimonial bliss. But simultaneously the knowledge gives us greater power to design our own mating destiny' (p.96).

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REGISTRATION

Details of conference registration fees will be advertised shortly via our conference website. PhD students who are making a first author presentation are invited to apply for a bursary to cover their conference registration fees.

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Symposium

A symposium will be a set of 5 talks (or 4 talks plus a discussant) on a related topic. Each talk will be 15 minutes long with 5 minutes for questions. Symposia will be scheduled in parallel sessions throughout the conference. A symposium chair should submit all symposium abstracts in one package. If you would be prepared to hold your symposium as a poster workshop should the programme not have space for it in the parallel oral sessions, you can select the poster workshop option as a second choice presentation format.

Poster workshop

Poster Workshops consist of 4-8 regular posters that are organized around specific themes. Poster workshops are assembled in one of two ways:

1. A group of researchers can propose a thematic poster workshop. A poster workshop moderator should submit all poster abstracts in one package.
2. The Programme Committee may assemble a group of abstracts that share a common theme and assign them to a poster workshop. In this case, the moderator for the poster workshop session will be selected by the Programme Committee. Posters will be displayed for half a day, and poster sessions will be allotted 90 minutes in the programme with no other sessions in parallel.

Oral presentation

Talks will be 15 minutes long with 5 minutes for questions. Talks will be scheduled in parallel sessions throughout the conference. If you would be prepared to present your research as a poster should the programme not have space for your talk, you can select the poster presentation option as a second choice presentation format.

Poster presentation

Posters will be displayed for half a day, and poster sessions will be allotted 90 minutes in the programme with no other sessions in parallel. Poster presenters are expected to attend their posters during the 90 minute sessions.

Looking healthy may win you elections

Robin Kramer & Dr Robert Ward

TOWARDS the end of 2008, Rob Ward (my supervisor), Isabel Arend (a post-doc in our lab) and I were discussing the upcoming US presidential election. Our thoughts revolved around movement, as we were in the process of receiving a new motion capture suite. My PhD is based on evolutionary psychology, specifically focusing on the signalling of information from our faces and how we walk. Therefore, it was not a huge leap of the imagination for us to begin wondering how political candidates move, and how this might affect our perceptions of them. If their movement changes our opinions then this could ultimately affect who we vote for. For full details of the experiments and results described below, see Kramer, Arend and Ward (2010).

A growing body of research (for a review, see Blake & Shiffrar, 2007) has demonstrated that we can accurately perceive information about a person from their motion alone. By creating videos where various locations (e.g. knees, elbows, wrists, etc.) are represented by dots but all other information is removed (known as *point-light walkers*, originally produced by Johansson, 1973), researchers have shown that we can tell a person's sex (Kozlowski & Cutting, 1977), age (Montepare & Zebrowitz-McArthur, 1988), identity (Cutting & Kozlowski, 1977), emotion (Dittrich, Troscianko, Lea, & Morgan, 1996) and mood (Michalak et al., 2009). Receivers of these signals are then able to use this information for their own benefit, for instance, adapting their behaviour to produce more positive interactions with the signaller.

Political scientists are well aware of the effects of motion on how people perceive politicians. For instance, Streeck (2008) demonstrated that hand gestures can facilitate the processing of speech. Gestures can

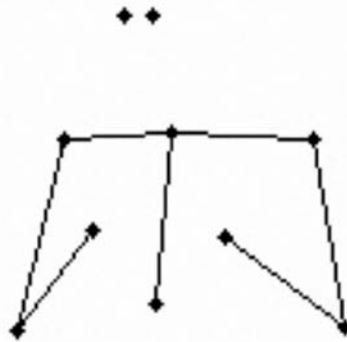
also have an effect on both audience perceptions and on the persuasiveness of the message conveyed (Maricchiolo et al., 2009). In addition, and importantly in election results, researchers have found that how we perceive a politician simply from a photograph of their face can influence and predict who we subsequently vote for (Little et al., 2007; Todorov et al., 2005). Furthermore, this effect can be found in children (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009). The association of candidates' faces with perceptions of leadership, competence, and intelligence were the best predictors of voting outcomes (Todorov et al., 2005). Therefore, we decided to expand this research by investigating whether candidates' motion alone could affect perceptions of various physical and social traits which, in turn, might produce systematic preferences in voting.

Experiment 1: Barack Obama and John McCain

After realising it was unlikely that presidential candidates would agree to travel to the UK so that we could cover them in markers and film them speaking, we decided instead to use YouTube videos to produce our motion stimuli. We found a video of the two candidates during their second presidential debate (7 October 2008), and from this, we took two seven-second clips. Both clips were filmed from the same angle and distance, and showed each man making similar movements, and shown from the waist upwards. These videos were then converted into stick-figure displays using custom Matlab software, where 10 landmarks were identified manually for each frame (see Figure 1).

Thirty-five (21 females) Bangor University volunteers took part in the ratings. Each person was told that the videos were of two men giving a public talk. Both videos played

Figure 1. A single frame from the Obama video.
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side-by-side on a computer screen, looping back and forth continuously, while participants rated each figure on physical and cognitive traits: attractiveness, trustworthiness, caring, dominance, leadership, anxiety, depression, physical health (from 1 to 6), and age (in years). Participants then indicated which figure they would vote for president. Other questions were then asked to assess their knowledge of politics, their recognition of the stimuli, etc.

All participants reported that they were unaware of the identities of the stimuli while carrying out the ratings. Results demonstrated that there was some overall agreement in terms of perceptions of the two candidates: the Obama figure was rated as more trustworthy and dominant, while the McCain figure was rated as more anxious. However, our main focus was on whether perceptions of social traits could be used to predict subsequent voting. Logistic regression analyses were used to investigate how each trait contributed to vote choice. Although most factors correlated with vote, analyses demonstrated that physical health was the single best predictor, and that the addition of a second factor produced no significant advantage. Figure 2 illustrates how the two groups of voters differed in their ratings of health for the two candidates.

Further analyses confirmed that participants were not voting simply based on how

they remembered rating the two videos, and that it was also unlikely that participants recognised the candidates from motion and then voted on that basis.

Experiment 2: David Cameron and Gordon Brown

In order to replicate and generalise our findings, we used a different pair of politicians so that we could confirm that our results were not restricted to specific stimuli. This time, we found a video clip of David Cameron and Gordon Brown, taken from a House of Commons debate (28 November 2007). As before, we created stick figure videos using the same process, this time of nine seconds in length.

The procedure was identical to Experiment 1, this time with 38 (26 females) Bangor University undergraduate students who took part for course credits. After the ratings, participants were asked to vote for a prime minister rather than president.

Again, participants answered that they were unaware of the stick figure identities at the time of rating. Analyses demonstrated that the Brown figure was rated as more depressed and anxious, while the Cameron figure was rated as more attractive and younger. Again, logistic regression analyses revealed that physical health alone was the best predictor of vote choice, and that no second factor additions were significant.

Figure 2: Breakdown of health ratings for the two politician videos (McCain–Obama) as a function of vote choice. ** were significantly different at an uncorrected alpha level of .01; *** at .001. (Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Taylor & Francis Ltd.)

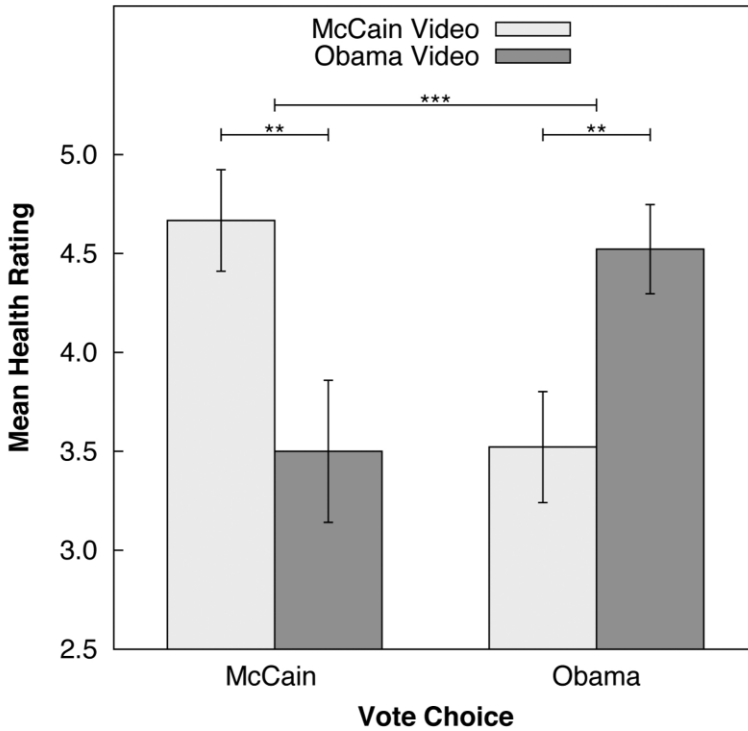


Figure 3 illustrates how voting and candidate health ratings related to each other.

As before, recognition of the candidates and memory of ratings were ruled out as likely explanations for these results.

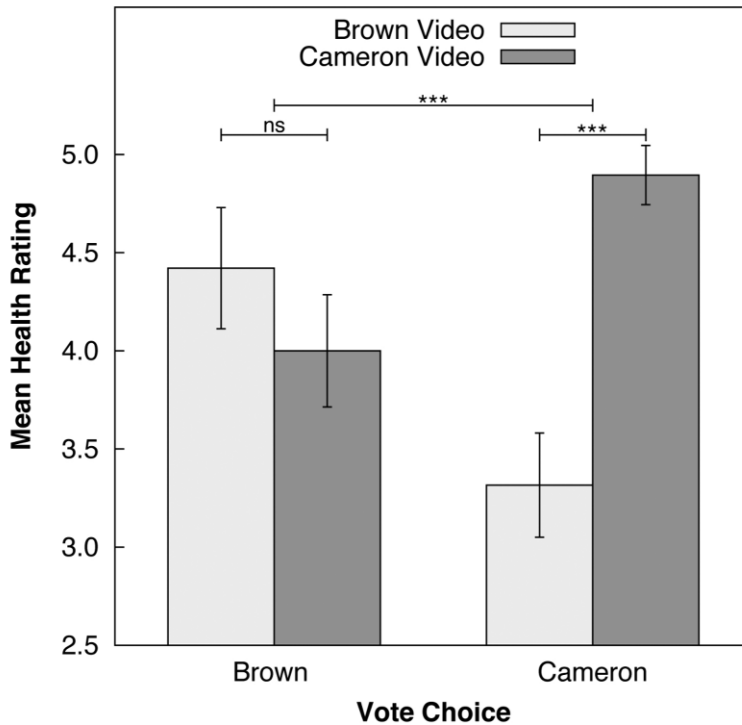
General discussion

These results demonstrate that motion produced by political candidates can lead to systematic vote preferences. In particular, perceived health is a strong predictor of vote choice, more so than the other traits explored in the present research. The important issue to note here is that there are individual differences in these perceptions, which subsequently influence voting. As such, there was no general agreement as to which candidates appeared healthier, or indeed which should be elected. Results show that at an individual level, people's

perceptions of health predicted who they would vote for, even though there was disagreement between participants as to who appeared healthier. One explanation for the differences in perceptions of health may be that there are several signals of health from body motion but these are dissociated to some extent in our stimuli. Alternatively, it may be that individuals rate various aspects of motion as signals of health differently. In order to investigate how accurate these perceptions are, we would need to use actors of known health in future work.

While previous research has often used point light displays, we chose to show stick figures of our candidates. Primarily, this related to issues of clarity. Due to the poses and minimal movements of the politicians, it was sometimes hard to interpret the stimuli when points alone were visible. Although the

Figure 3: Breakdown of health ratings for the two politician videos (Brown-Cameron) as a function of vote choice. *** were significantly different at an uncorrected alpha level of .001. (Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Taylor & Francis Ltd.)



sticks provide no additional information about the men (given all they did was join together dots that were already visible), they do allow certain aspects of morphology to be more readily computed by viewers. However, surface and contour information was still absent, forcing raters to rely predominantly on motion, rather than appearance, information. The effect of morphology on ratings of health remains a question for future research. Due to how the stimuli were created, the movies viewed by participants contained unavoidable noise and jitter. However, this did not prevent people from obtaining and reporting information such that their ratings accurately modelled their voting. The low quality of the stimuli would certainly prevent viewers from accurately perceiving traits such as health from the motion, and we might expect that with

higher quality stimuli, the perception and influence of traits would be even stronger.

Interestingly, our findings demonstrating the importance of perceived health from motion differ with previous research involving static images of the face. Perceived competence, a combined factor incorporating competence, intelligence, and leadership, proved the most influential when voting from photographs (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Todorov et al., 2005). However, in our research, leadership was not as predictive of vote as health, and provided no improvement to a model based on health alone. In addition, attractiveness was also less important than we might have expected, given previous research demonstrating how positive traits can be indiscriminately attributed to those judged as attractive (Dion, Berscheid & Walster, 1972).

So why might people be influenced so strongly by perceptions of health in particular? Clearly, health is relevant in a social context, allowing us to identify fit mates and powerful friends. Body motion, perhaps even more than appearance, may provide us with a useful indicator of health and therefore influence our judgments regarding people we meet. In relation to present day politics, coverage provided by the media allows us the opportunity to view the motion of candidates almost as easily as their static images. As such, the appearance of health from the movement of politicians is more relevant now than it ever has been.

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Given the general appeal of this subject matter, I have approached my university's press officer and we are currently working on a press release so that we might eventually reach a wider audience than just those who read scientific journals. This process is ongoing and I'm hopeful that we will be able to generate some interest for this work at about the same time as the upcoming General Election.

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Division of Forensic Psychology Postgraduate Workshop

Tuesday June 22nd 2010

9:30am – 5:00pm

This workshop is designed for postgraduate students attending the DFP conference who would like to learn more about what to expect in the field of forensic psychology as they progress through their studies. The aim of the workshop is to prepare the postgraduates for a career as a forensic psychology researcher.

The sessions include:

- **How to get published** – Dr. Joachim Stoeber (University of Kent, Chief Editor of Anxiety, Stress, & Coping)
- **Your viva: What to expect** – Dr. Karen Douglas and Dr. Robbie Sutton (University of Kent)
- **Building a postdoctoral career: Funding opportunities** – Jacqueline Aldridge (University of Kent, Research Funding Officer)

The student rate to attend this workshop is £42 (includes lunch and refreshments), and the extra night accommodation rate is £26/night.

Spaces can be reserved upon conference registration. Priority will be given on a first come, first serve basis.

For more information, please visit the website:

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/psychology/conferences/dfp2010/>

If you have any queries about the workshop, contact Emma Alleyne at eka7@kent.ac.uk.

The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS)

Cherie Armour

The Westin Peachtree Plaza, Atlanta, Georgia. 5–7 November 2009.

THE International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) is an international multidisciplinary organisation that is concerned with trauma in terms of occurrence, consequences, prevention, and treatment. The Society is an advocate of the field of traumatic stress and promotes the transfer of knowledge regarding stress and trauma. The society's broad interest in many issues relating to trauma was reflected in the diverse background of delegates attending this conference. The international audience comprised of psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, social workers, and many other mental health professionals.

This year's conference which was also the 25th silver anniversary of the ISTSS organisation was titled 'Traumatic Stress Disorders: Toward *DSM-V* and *ICD-10*'. The main aim of the conference was to discuss the direction of trauma research in light of the proposed 2012 release of the *DSM-V*.

The conference was located in Atlanta Georgia, within a centrally-located hotel (The Westin Peachtree Plaza) close to a number of local amenities and tourist attractions, including multiple restaurants and the World of Coca Cola. It was held over three days, however, optional pre-meeting institutes were held on the day prior to the commencement of the conference.

In general I would describe this conference as welcoming, informative, and engaging. The conference organisers encouraged veterans of the conference circuit to welcome new attendees by implementing a ribbon system. The ribbon system involved

delegates attaching a coloured ribbon to their name badge and the colour of the ribbon reflected the number of years they had attended the conference. The first-time attendees, such as myself, were supplied with a blue ribbon. The registration packs contained a request for delegates to ensure that all blue ribbon wearers were made to feel welcome. Indeed, I was approached on several occasions and despite the fact that I was attending the conference alone, I had company for every lunch and evening meal. Therefore, this system was very successful in enabling new attendees to meet fellow delegates. As with most conferences, there were a number of social networking events, including an awards ceremony, an anniversary celebration, a meet-and-greet cash bar, special interest group meetings, a student luncheon, and a daily poster session.

The conference was highly informative and engaging with the presentation of cutting edge material. In particular, Darrel Regier presented a keynote speech entitled 'Redesigning PTSD with Empirical Data: Implications for *DSM-V*'. He stated that the main aim of the *DSM-V* task force is to ensure that the fifth edition of the *DSM* is the 'most valid and clinically useful diagnostic classification system to date'. In line with the conference aims, he focused on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) but also discussed common comorbid disorders such as Depression, Anxiety, and Substance Abuse. The shortcomings of the fourth edition of the *DSM* (*DSM-IV*) were highlighted,

in particular the issues of high comorbidities and the resultant non specific treatment approaches. He advocated that a huge concern is that the current *DSM-IV* is starting to hinder research progress and that such must be addressed by the *DSM-V* task force.

Another intriguing cutting edge presentation came in the form of a panel discussion. The session was entitled 'Considering PTSD for the *DSM-V*'. The chair was Matthew Freidman and the panellists were Chris Brewin, Terence Keane, Dean Kilpatrick, Paula Schnurr, and Patricia Resnick. During the conference there were whispers that the panel were going to reveal details about the new proposed criteria for PTSD within the *DSM-V*. Much of my own research has been concerned with the latent structure of PTSD and the fact that the current *DSM-IV*'s three factor conceptualisation is not supported in the empirical literature. Indeed, the empirical support favours two four factor PTSD models. The whispers were true and the panellists revealed some interesting insights with regards to the new proposed criteria. Namely, they proposed that the A2 (the subjective feelings of fear, helplessness, or horror in light of a traumatic experience) criteria may be removed completely as it has no predictive utility with regards to PTSD. They also acknowledged that the three factor PTSD model currently employed by the *DSM-IV* does not hold up within the literature and so the new criteria will be based within a four-factor model. Surprisingly, however, this new four-factor model was not one of the two models which are empirically supported within the literature. Likewise, the panellists stated that this new four-factor structure will be comprised of 20 PTSD symptoms rather than the current 17. This was surprising again as there is a growing body of research which suggests that PTSD is comprised of specific and non-specific items and that the non-specific items may be better

removed from the *DSM-V*'s criteria. Needless to say these proposals sparked a lot of intense debate between the panellists and the audience. One main criticism that was identified, suggested that the new criteria are not empirically derived. This presentation was very engaging as the implications for a revision of the criteria are vast and there is much controversy and debate on this subject. For example, many of the PTSD diagnostic measures are directly mapped onto the 17 items and so would become invalid. Likewise, there is also the possibility that a shift in the diagnostic criteria will result in people's diagnostic status changing. What will happen to those who have been previously diagnosed with PTSD but no longer receive a diagnosis based on the new criteria? Are clinicians to stop treating these individuals?

In conclusion, I found all aspects of the conference excellent and I will endeavour to be attending next year's ISTSS conference despite the lengthy travel requirements. For anyone who is interested in attending the 26th Annual Conference, it will be held on 4-6 November 2010, with Pre-Meeting Institutes on 3 November 2010. It will be located at the Le Centre Sheraton Montreal Hotel, in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Abstracts will be accepted between 1 February and 16 March 2010. Further details and the call for proposals can be located at www.istss.org/.

I would also like to acknowledge the fact that I am an international conference travel bursary recipient. Therefore, I would like to thank all those involved in PsyPAG and all those who make these bursaries a possibility.

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Book Review

Elisa Carrus

The Elements of Style (4th ed.)

William Strunk Jr. & Ewlyn Brooks White

London: Pearson Education (1999). ISBN: 0-205-30902-X

AFTER reading a passage in the foreword of this book, ‘writing is hard, even for authors who do it all the time’, I (again) started thinking about the importance of practicing my writing, especially in the face of the amount of writing we have to do as PhD students. That practice is important may sound obvious, but in my daily routine as a PhD student, I am often too preoccupied with the planning, the data analysis, the results, the deadlines, that when something needs to be written down I can’t wait to get it over and done with. Writing, however, plays such a big part of our work and I easily forget how much practice needs to be put into it. As PhD students, we have to be able to tell a story, a convincing story. When I think of it that way, writing can be rewarding, even considering all the polishing involved. It was after reading *The Elements of Style* that I couldn’t resist the temptation to share all my excitement about writing and write something for *The Quarterly* (I can’t promise my writing style will be as advised in the book, but I’ll definitely do my best).

The history of the book is quite interesting. William Strunk Jr. was an English professor at Cornell University, and he wrote and printed this book as a private edition in 1918 to give to his students. It became known on the campus as ‘the little book’. It was later revised in 1935 by Strunk and Tenney and published under the title *The Elements and Practice of Composition*. After Strunk’s death, however, a student of his, E.B. White, revised it again in 1959. At the time White was an editor at *The New Yorker* and had written popular books like *Charlotte’s web* and *Stuart Little*. It is interesting that the collaboration

between the two authors is a distant one separated by time, not space.

The edition that I have incorporates a foreword by Roger Angell (E.B. White’s stepson), and a useful glossary at the end. The book is divided in five sections. The first section covers elementary rules of usage, some of which you might find obvious. There are 11 rules overall, illustrated with clear examples. This section is followed by a chapter with 10 elementary principles of composition with suggestions like using the active voice or choosing a suitable structure. Again, some of these suggestions seemed to me a bit repetitive but I easily forget how important they are. The third section is called ‘matters of form’ and it covers anything from punctuation to referencing in a very succinct manner. I did not find this section particularly useful, except for when I’m reminded that an exclamative sentence is not just any sentence with an exclamation mark at the end (!). The part I have found most interesting is the fourth section about misused words and terms. It lists several terms in alphabetical order, and details of how they can often be misused. An example is the word ‘however’. The writers’ advice is not to use it at the beginning of the sentence with the meaning of nevertheless. Doesn’t everybody do that? The last section is about style, and includes a list of 21 reminders. It’s probably the most pleasant chapter to read, and since it’s the last chapter it contains some useful take-home messages.

This is a very enjoyable book. It makes you think how much of the English language has changed thanks to usage and how many of the forms have been transformed and

become exceptions. I have noticed that some suggestions are presented in a rigid way, making them look like they are rules that **MUST** be followed. But I guess that's also part of the authors' writing style, which adds some spice to the text, making it more enjoyable to read. Though aimed at American students, it contains universal advice on writing style. Having said so, the suggestions in this book should not be taken as gospel. It must be remembered that some of the advice is more applicable to American English than to British English. One example is the suggestion about the serial comma, which needs to appear before the 'and' in a list of words. For example, you should write 'pens, pencils, and paper', rather than 'pens, pencils and paper'. However, some wise tips can be found in this book, especially for those like me whose English is not their first language. Among those tips is the advice to 'omit needless words', which constantly pops

up in my mind when I write. After having read the book, every time I write now I am much more aware of the way I'm writing and how I can convey my ideas in a clearer way. I think *The Elements of Style* is a very useful resource for everyone that has to do any writing, be it occasionally or as part of their job. Believe it or not, after consulting this book, I actually wanted to go over my writings and revise and rewrite and revise and rewrite.

One certainly good reason for reading this book is that it will make you want to angle for simple, plain and clear writing. This book is written so simply and clearly that it's just a little precious gem to carry around.

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Were you part of PsyPAG?

PsyPAG is celebrating its 25th year and we are interested in finding out what past committee members are up to now.

As part of our 25th year celebrations, we are looking to bring PsyPAG members old and new together. If you were a member of the PsyPAG committee and would like to be part of the PsyPAG Alumni Group, or know someone who has previously served on the committee then please visit our webpage at

www.psytag.co.uk/alumni.html

Gangs in the UK: What do we know and what can we still learn?

Emma Alleyne

MY RESEARCH focuses on an area of criminal behaviour that is relatively new to mainstream UK culture, despite its recent emergence it is nevertheless daunting and disturbing. Headlines such as, 'Man hospitalised by street gang', 'Man hurt in street gang robbery', 'Youth hurt in street gang attack', 'Man injured in street gang attack', and 'Gang revenge behind shootings' are assumed to be the typical stories reported by the American press. However, all of these headlines were used by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and reflect incidences occurring in various regions of the UK (BBC News, 2004, 2006). Specifically, gang activity has been reported in major cities like Manchester, London, and Birmingham, and a growing gang culture is being found in Liverpool, Leeds, Bradford, Preston, Bolton, and Bristol (Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002). But before reviewing previous research relating to gangs, one simple yet complicated question needs to be addressed: what is a gang?

Definitional issues

The definition of a gang has been the subject of much debate and discussion in academia, as a consequence researchers have not agreed on what constitutes a gang (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; see Spergel, 1995, ch. 2, for review; Esbensen et al., 2001). This lack of agreement, unfortunately, has stunted the growth of gang research, by making comparative and meta-analytic work near to impossible. As the definition of a gang varies so much in the present literature, only descriptive reviews are possible (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). One of the main problems is that the definition changes according to who is using it, for example, academics, policy makers,

media, politicians, etc. (Spergel, 1995; Esbensen et al., 2001; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). From an academic perspective, a clear definition is necessary, yet the process of agreeing on a definition consists of balancing a see-saw between a definition that is not too broad and not too narrow in order to avoid over-estimating and under-estimating the number of gang members in a sample (Esbensen et al., 2001; Sullivan, 2005). Also, 'no two gangs are just alike' (Thrasher, 1927, p.36) adds further chaos to an already rocky boat (for further discussion, see Wood & Alleyne, 2010).

For the sake of this article (and my PhD!), I have adopted the definition agreed upon by the Eurogang Network. The Eurogang Network is a group of researchers from across Europe and America which has the goal of providing a forum for gang researchers to communicate their ideas. The definition they propose is: 'a gang, or troublesome youth group, is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity' (Weerman et al., 2009).

The Eurogang paradox

As I mentioned earlier, gangs are considered to be a relatively new phenomenon in the UK. For some time there was a tendency to claim that a gang problem was non-existent within Europe. The gang problem was ignored due to the 'Eurogang paradox', this is where authorities in European countries use the stereotype of American gangs to inform their definition of what a gang is and what they do (Klein et al., 2001). Therefore, if the pattern of illegal activity does not match these American gang stereotypes, the authorities assume that gangs do not exist.

This stereotype includes a constant series of serious and often fatal criminal activities such as black-on-black crime, drive-by shootings, turf wars, and gun crime (Bennett & Holloway, 2004), a sort of 'blood in, blood out' ideology. The irony is that this phenomenon, termed the 'violent gang', is a rarity in modern-day America (Klein et al., 2001), hence, a paradox. That is why it is so important to set the record straight and be honest about the youth gang problem in the UK.

What do we know about gangs?

Gang members in the US and the UK are overwhelmingly young on entry to the gang, with 12- to 18-year-old youths most at risk (Rizzo, 2003; Spergel, 1995); however, once a member, some continue membership well into their 20s or even older (Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Rizzo, 2003; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002; Spergel, 1995). Research has varied on the gender composition of gangs partly because there is difficulty understanding the relationship between gang membership and their actual participation in gang activity (Spergel, 1995). However, it still remains that gangs are predominantly comprised of males (Rizzo, 2003; Bennett & Holloway, 2004). Contrary to the American stereotype, close to a third of gangs in the UK are ethnically mixed, those that are homogenous are predominantly white (Stelfox, 1998; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Sharp, Aldridge & Medina, 2006). This inconsistency in the literature supports the notion that gangs reflect the ethnic make-up of the neighbourhoods they represent (Bullock & Tilley, 2002).

Researchers also acknowledge a loose and fluid hierarchy within and around the gang, consisting of gang members and youth who exist along the gang's periphery (Stelfox, 1998; Esbensen et al., 2001). Additionally, gangs have some form of identity. In Manchester, gangs have been found to have names and represent a specific territory (Mares, 2001; Bullock & Tilley, 2002). Also, a significant proportion of gangs in the UK

have been recorded to have a name, leader, and rules/codes of behaviour (33 per cent, 38 per cent, and 15 per cent, respectively) (Sharp et al., 2006). Lastly, gang members are more likely to commit a crime than non-gang members and even non-gang delinquents (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007). Gang related crimes include robbery, drug trafficking, weapons possession (Bennett & Holloway, 2004) and the use of firearms to settle minor disputes (Bullock & Tilley, 2008).

There is an abundance of literature that discusses the social factors most related to gang membership. For example, neighbourhoods high in juvenile delinquency (Hall, Thornberry & Lizotte, 2006), and characterised as 'gang neighbourhoods' (i.e. known gang presence) (Thornberry et al., 2003) put young people at risk of joining a gang. A lack of parental discipline (Thornberry et al., 2003) and parental supervision/monitoring (Thornberry et al., 2003; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Sharp et al., 2006) have also been found to put young people at an increased risk. Lastly, it is not surprising that delinquent peers and pressure from these peers increase the likelihood of antisocial behaviour (Monahan, Steinberg & Cauffman, 2009) and gang membership (Thornberry et al., 2003; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Sharp et al., 2006). All of these factors provide a social environment that reinforces gang-related and delinquent behaviour (Thornberry et al., 2003; Klein & Maxson, 2006). However, the question that remains unanswered is: why do gangs form? They probably form to fulfil the needs that any adolescents have: peer friendship, pride, identity development, enhancement of self-esteem, excitement, the acquisition of resources, and goals that may not be available through legitimate means (Goldstein, 2002). They may offer a strong psychological sense of community, a physical and psychological neighbourhood, a social network, and social support (Goldstein, 1991). In short, gangs form for the same reasons that any other group forms (Goldstein, 2002).

What can we still learn?

To date, we know very little about the psychological processes that have been described as facilitators of gang membership (Thornberry et al., 2003). Thornberry and colleagues (2003) discuss delinquent beliefs (loosely described as beliefs that delinquent behaviour is acceptable) as causes, correlates, and consequences of delinquent behaviour and gang membership, however, I argue that these beliefs need further examination as they are more resistant to intervention (Hollin, Browne, & Palmer, 2002).

Psychology offers an abundance of theories that we as researchers can use to jump-start our approach to studying gang formation. For example, inter- and intra-group theories such as social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954; Schacter, 1959) which tells us that people group together because doing so provides useful comparisons of personal attitudes, behaviour, etc., with those of others; social exchange theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) is where group membership is valued according to its benefits and costs; social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and realistic conflict theory (Sherif, 1966) offer us the potential to explain inter-gang conflict (Goldstein, 2002). However, no one theory, either criminological or psychological, has the potential to fully explain the gang phenomenon. Instead of trying to determine a directional causal relationship, my research acknowledges the additive nature of risk factors, that is, the more risk factors in a young person's life, the more likely they will join a gang. But also, it examines the gang phenomenon through interactional theory (Thornberry et al., 2003) which posits that gang membership results from a reciprocal relationship between the individual and peer groups, social structures (i.e. poor neighbourhood, school and family environments), weakened social bonds, and a learning environment that fosters and reinforces delinquency (Hall et al., 2006). This theory is a marriage between control theory – where people engage in deviant behaviour

when their bond to society weakens (Hirschi, 1969); and social learning theory – where individuals who receive more rewards than costs for offending behaviour are more likely to offend (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, my research examines how various social (neighbourhood, family, and peer factors) and psychological (attitudes, perceptions, and cognitions) factors interact resulting in the troubling outcome of gang membership and criminal activity.

In summary, the social factors, at most, can set the stage for where gangs are most likely to develop, however, they do not explain why not all young people living under these same disadvantaged circumstances turn to gangs for support. Ultimately, what are the individual differences? That is, what motivates young people to join gangs – could it be perceptions of social status or threat/coercion from local gangs, or both? Or why are young people involved in gangs so resilient? That is, how do they cope (cognitively speaking) with what we would view as troublesome and traumatic experiences?

To date, we know very little about the psychological processes that facilitate gang membership, and since the most successful intervention programmes targeting delinquency address social, cognitive, and behavioural processes (Hollin et al., 2002), these psychological factors need to be researched further. My research proposes a socio-cognitive approach to gang involvement that considers both internal and external types of influences. Also, if we could identify the psychological factors that underlie a tendency to join or form a gang then we may be able to identify at risk youth, and develop a comprehensive theory of gang development (see Wood & Alleyne, 2010). And since the most successful intervention programmes targeting delinquency address social, cognitive, and behavioural processes (Hollin et al., 2002), these psychological factors could be used to construct more successful interventions to prevent gang membership.

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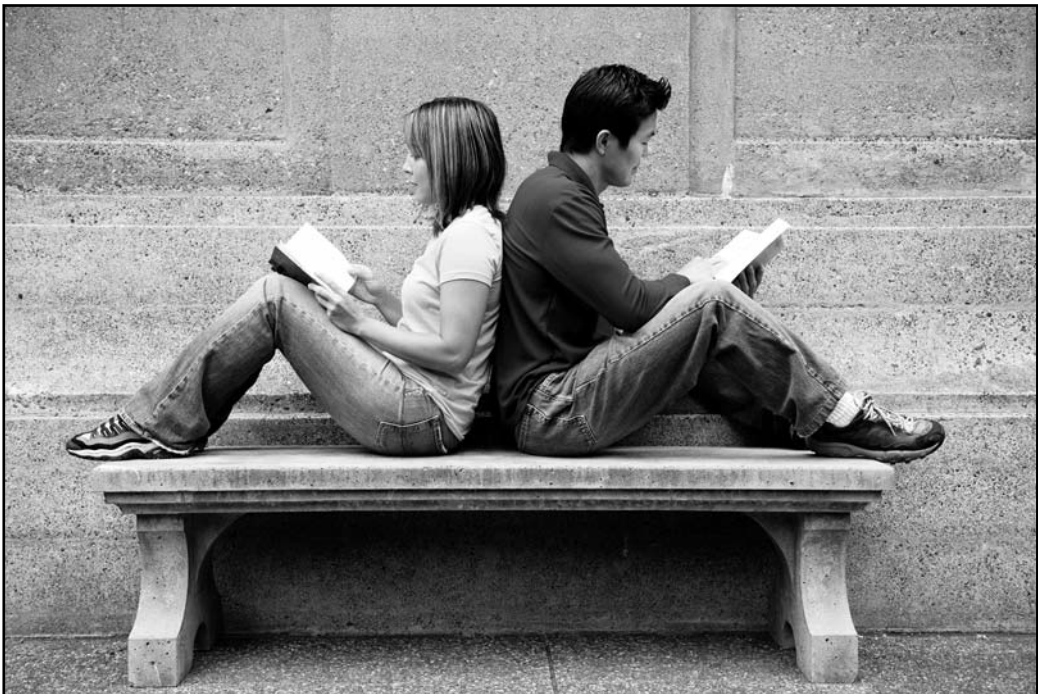
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Consciousness and Experiential Section Annual Conference 2009

Natalie Gough & Rebecca Semmens-Wheeler

St Anne's College, Oxford. 12–13 September 2009.

THE Consciousness and Experiential Psychology Section of the British Psychological Society is a section of the society dedicated to the exploration of consciousness and experience (www.bps.org.uk/conex/consciousness-experiential_home.cfm). It is run by a diverse team of volunteers comprised mostly of academics and scientists, including postgraduates, all with key interests within the study of consciousness and experiential psychology. Every year they host an annual conference at St Anne's College, which is part of Oxford University (www.st-annes.ox.ac.uk/). Now in its 12th year, this weekend event promotes lively and engaging presentations, discussions and debates. This form of event could seem intimidating for postgraduate students, however fears such as these were unfounded, as the environment was very warm and open, thus it was great fun to attend.

Last year's conference ran on the 11–13 September 2009, with the topic 'Consciousness and Belief: How do beliefs affect experience?' This theme was designed to explore what gives rise to beliefs and the impact of these beliefs on experience from a range of approaches. There was a wide variety in the contextual style from the presenters, some of whom presented their own research, whilst others philosophised and challenged existing theories such as the Computational Theory of Mind. In addition to the presentation schedule, John Pickering led morning meditation, which really helped to ready our minds for the days' intellectual stimulation!

One great feature of the programme was the range of topics included in the conference programme, from 'Neurological impairment, embodiment, belief and intersubjectivity' to the paranormal and an entertaining and challenging diatribe on computational theory of mind. The diverse nature of the programme meant that there was content that was interesting for everyone, this was complimented by the clear way the material was presented. The clear presentation style made the content easily accessible and this made asking questions at the end a lot easier. It is common for postgraduate students to lack confidence in their own opinions and, as a consequence, may not be forthcoming with questions. This lack of involvement can be exaggerated when students are surrounded by well-established academics. However, the active involvement of students was encouraged and welcomed by everyone. This gave early researchers a safe opportunity to ask questions and make comments in these debates. The positive environment gave the impression that there was plenty of room for fresh minds and perspectives and to challenge and update existing paradigms and philosophies. It was great to see this already happening, with several postgraduates (one of us being among them) presenting their work and ideas.

Aside from the daily programme of meditation, workshops, posters, papers and lively discussions, there was an opportunity to engage with other conference attendees in a

traditional English social setting: the pub. This was possibly one of the highlights because postgraduates had the chance to chat to each other and to integrate with established researchers in an informal environment. It was also nice that everyone was staying in the same type of accommodation, as this increased opportunities to network and integrate with others. The accommodation was modest, charming and comfortable with their own en-suite toilet and even a small balcony. All this was in the beautiful setting of St Anne's College, Oxford University. The college grounds were relaxing and it was an inviting environment to take a break in order to absorb the contents of the programme.

The conference finished with a feedback session in tandem with their AGM. The AGM was a lively and fruitful event attended by students and faculty from different backgrounds and disciplines. Susan Stuart was welcomed as the new Chair of the Section, in addition to several new committee members. Peoples' responses indicated that the content and the quality of the event had been a huge success, with involvement from several new sectors and a variety of presentation backgrounds. Following on from this

there were several suggestions for future conferences, both in content and organisational style, which will be implemented in the upcoming 13th annual conference this year (10–12 September, St. Anne's College, Oxford).

The theme for 2010 is 'Nature and Human Nature', which will explore the nature of human nature, the nature of nature, and the nature of their interdependence. The Section is currently inviting abstract submissions and postgraduates are encouraged to submit, with possible conference bursaries available. Attending the conference is a great experience, with a variety of activities and formats throughout the three days, and a highly stimulating interdisciplinary approach to consciousness and experience.

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Dust and ruins – and hidden treasures. Why studying the history of psychology matters

Barry Orr

Why investigate the history of psychology at all?

WHY SHOULD anyone investigate the history of psychology? What can we gain from any efforts to do so? To an investigating student, these are very valid questions. In a world today where psychology is often described as a ‘progressive, evidence-based scientific discipline’ it might seem actually seem foolish to look ‘too far’ and spend any extended time in ‘our past’. After all, researchers in our field usually receive funding through doing new research studies, and making original and new psychological discoveries. If this is the case, at first glance this actually seems to make studying our discipline’s past obsolete. Should we then jettison any efforts to look at what psychologists of the far past were up to?

As the reader might have already deduced, the conclusion is: absolutely not. We can become richer as psychologists (and as people) by critically examining the past. Note the use of ‘critically’ here. One can understand the content of psychology’s past, without necessarily thinking about it in a critical way at all. As anyone who sets exam or essay questions though knows, there is something magic about the term ‘critical’. Adopting a critical mind set can lead to new, fresh and startling insights when looking at psychological material. Historical material in psychology can be a source of important insights just as much as ‘new’ psychology writings, if the material is examined with a critical mind.

Reflexivity, perspective and the philosophy of psychology: The case of Stanley Milgram

Looking then through a critical eye, one of the first things we can notice when studying the profession of our past is that it forces us to examine crucial philosophical and subjective perceptions on which psychological science is based on.

For example, acknowledging the perspective that we hold on the world (specifically, acknowledging the philosophical perspective we as psychologists hold), and being reflexive about that perspective are now generally accepted as key tenets of the philosophy of any psychological enquiry (see Morawski, 1992). Smith (2010) has stated that ‘Historical knowledge is an essential part of the way we gain knowledge of the psychologist’s (or anyone else’s) perspective’ (p.5). This is quite obvious when considering psychology as a cumulative science (Schmidt, 1996). It seems though to be quite rare that we remind ourselves of this fact, or talk about it.

To give an example of how the examination of perspective and reflexivity has developed historically, Stanley Milgram’s (Milgram, 1963) well-known study of conformity is useful. This study is world famous, and most psychology students will know about it: discussion of it is usually included as part of most psychology courses going back to A Level and GCSE. It has generated findings that are still being replicated and debated today. Perhaps the ethics and practice of the Milgram study, and if its method was justified, have been the hottest talking points concerning this study since

the day it was published. To have a full and informed opinion on the debate surrounding ethics and practice of the Milgram study, it is necessary to know what psychology did and did *not* do prior in its methodology and ethics that the full implications can be understood. After this study, psychology's ethics were acknowledged in retrospect for being ethically lacking of certain principles. Informed consent and overriding welfare of the participant in any study were suggested as being amongst key considerations for future enquiry, especially in protecting the public credible reputation of psychology (Baumrind, 1964). Full consent and capacity for participants to make decisions are often considered top priority now, as if it had always been. That was not so prior to this study. The experimenter and scientist might often have previously been considered of higher priority than participant welfare. After Milgram, this was being appropriately challenged.

Why was this scientific power and priority in the name of 'research' so sacrosanct? Milgram himself was curious as to the effect of authority on people's behaviour. As a man of Jewish background, he was apparently influenced in his studies by events of the Holocaust and other Nazi atrocities. Naturally, one might be curious as to how apparently ordinary people should be subject to dangerous but very persuasive social influence.

It is ironic then that up until Milgram, participants were often under the control and influence of researchers, without much ethical retort in the case of researcher malpractice. One might then reasonably ask how participants came to be in this kind of position. It is perhaps another pioneering psychologist, John B. Watson, which can help provide an answer. Watson actually has a dual role in this story: that of both 'hero' and 'villain'. 'Villain' when considering the rights of participants, but a 'hero' in influencing how Milgram came to be using the experimental methods he did.

How to think and NOT to think about participants and research methods in psychology: The case of John B. Watson

In introducing Watson's case, we can first note another gain from looking at psychology's history: that we get a good idea of how NOT to do something. Students and researchers don't often learn how to do quality research, and become rigorous thinkers, only by looking at the 'great and the good'. They do so from looking at the mistakes and errors made by their predecessors.

Most of us know about (and might have done ourselves) studies in our department that ended up in the bin, or shoved at the back of a drawer. This might be because of a mistake made in the methodology, and/or in the original theoretical reasoning behind the study, that might subsequently be hard or impossible to rectify. It is better though to know the mistakes other people have made before you commit them yourself. And plenty of 'mistakes' can be recognised in past studies. These mistakes can only be recognised though after psychologists have looked at these studies in retrospect, and compared them with other studies done since to see how the preceding studies measured up. In at least one sense, this type of examination is actually critical historical enquiry.

In Watson's role as 'hero', he made a telling contribution towards purging psychology of poor research methods. Consider introspection, which was widely studied and practised in psychology at one time. Most readers will see the flaws of introspection straight away as a method for uncovering valid and reliable psychological processes. It was though the experimental methods of Watson and his successors that introspection was refuted. If not for these type of pioneers, we might still be intensely arguing the merits of introspection today. The pressure from Watson himself to adopt experimental methods that compared with the rest of the sciences was important in putting psychology on the 'scientific map' for the first time. This position of psychology has continued to this day. Psychology

(in some circles at least, and for better or worse) has assumed a position among the natural sciences in how it investigates phenomena, and is viewed widely as a scientific discipline.

Ironically though, Watson's position in demanding more rigorous methodology was influenced by his mistrust, and arguably an air of disdain, for participants as valid and reliable observers of their own internal world. In quoting some of the arguments Watson gave against introspection *circa* 1913, Hothersall states 'introspection [has] led only to endless argument and debate over such 'pseudo issues' as the nature of attention and apprehension, sensory and motor reaction times, imageless thought, and stimulus error. The method itself was defective, [and] must be replaced with objective, experimental methods comparable with other sciences' (Hothersall, 1995, p.458). The reader can note (again with irony) that Watson was correct in his conclusion, but not the preceding points of his argument. Attention, apprehension (anxiety), sensory reaction times, and stimulus error have all gone on to be fruitful areas of psychology enquiry. As Watson though might smile about if he was alive today, they have largely not been studied from an introspection perspective.

Looking backward to move forward

Hopefully then the beginnings of an argument here have been made that examining past research in psychology has given us insight into some key concepts used in psychology today: perspective, reflexivity, ethics, philosophy of purpose. We are encouraged to be reflexive and reflecting on what we have done: to consider our findings in an ethical and moral context. Beyond just clinging to obsolete theories and methods, our ability to do properly critique and acknowledge our history can help us to avoid unethical and even dangerous conclusions

from poorly considered or ethically unsound research. If we forget our history, in this case pursuing unethical or morally dubious studies or methods, we might indeed then be doomed to repeat them.

It is the responsibility of lecturers, tutors and psychology educators in general to keep the history of psychology alive for new generations. Telling the story of psychology as an historical discipline might feel intimidating to some people if it is not their field of expertise. Not everybody gets to take history of psychology courses at undergraduate level, and not all lecturers sadly consider it relevant to a BSc or BA in psychology in 2010. However, it's useful to remember that we are telling stories of psychology whenever we give a talk, a conference presentation, a lecture, a tutorial. As you might then figure, if you're someone who is spending their working life in psychology (and for most people reading this article, they're aiming to be in this group) over the course your career, you're going to be doing a lot of storytelling. If you don't know the key narratives and timeline of the profession you're working in, it's probably going to be more difficult to direct your stories – the research and findings you're adding to the grand narrative – as you would wish, or for others to understand why you're saying what you're saying in the first place.

So consider giving history of psychology a look some time if you haven't in a while, or never have. At the very least, you may discover what not to do, and at best, you might discover some points of view you've never considered from anybody you've found in the present.

Correspondence

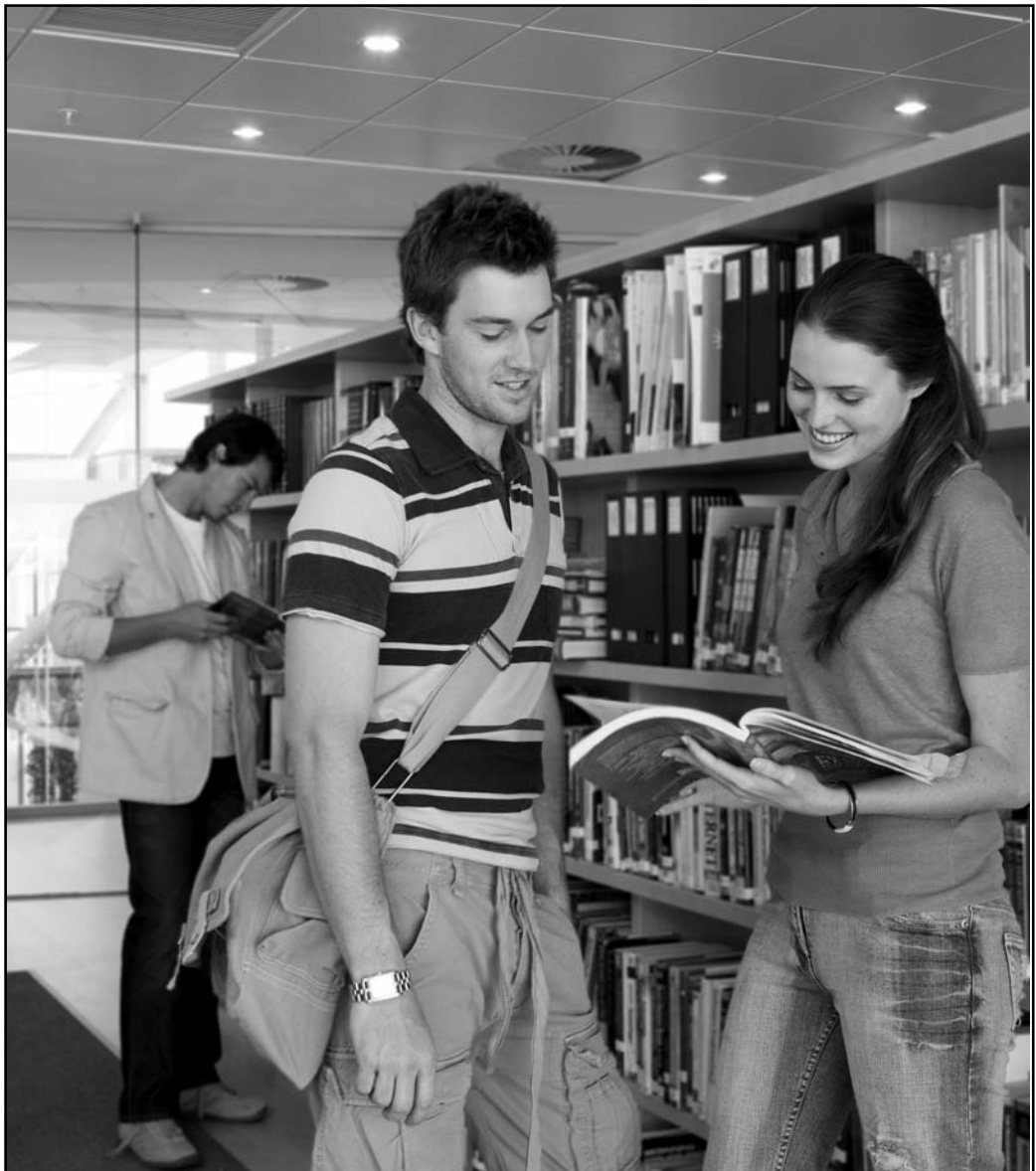
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Hw do u txt? An investigation of SMS shortcut processing using the masked priming paradigm

Kirsten Bartlett

VARIOUS forms of shortcuts are used in text messages. Some of these shortcuts represent shortened words, for example, *txt* and *l8r* (*text* and *later*), some are phonological approximations of full words, for example, *bin* and *coz* (*been* and *because*), others represent whole phrases, such as *imho* (*in my humble opinion*) and emoticons are also used to express emotions, for example, :-D representing a smile or, :-D representing grinning (Crystal, 2008; Thurlow, 2003; Plester, Wood & Joshi, 2009). Many of these items are known by individuals who regularly use them and, as most of the single word items are easy to decode without requiring prior experience, they are also recognised by individuals who do not use them. For example, the shortcut *sph* is used to represent the word *speak* and is recognisable as a representation of the word *speak* even without having seen it before. Not all words, however, have the potential for being shortened in this way and the single words that are used tend to be of high frequency, short in length, have a low neighbourhood density (i.e. not many other words are similar in sound or spelling) and lend themselves to either being shortened by the removal of vowels or by using numbers to represent syllables. Conversely, contractions of full phrases such as *imho* are not easily decoded unless you have prior knowledge of the meaning of this letter string.

The cognitive processes involved in recognising words and reading are much debated in the literature. The issue revolves around the question of whether mental representations of how a word sounds (phonological representations) are activated in the early stages of recognising written

words or not. The early stages of word recognition are generally considered to occur in the first 100ms to 200ms following a word being visually presented. Although it is agreed that the sound of a word is usually activated during this time frame or later. Proponents of a dominant role for phonology in visual word recognition suggest that meaning can only be accessed via a phonological representation and they therefore suggest that this representation must be activated in the early stages of visual word recognition (Frost, 1998, Van Orden, Stone & Pennington 1990, Lupker et al., 2003). However, Coltheart et al. (2001), developed a model (The Dual Route Cascaded model; DRC) that allows for written information to be processed without the need to activate a phonological representation and although their model can theoretically accommodate the early activation of phonological representations it is usually assumed that phonology is accessed at a later stage (Coltheart & Rastle, 1994).

The Dual Route Cascaded model (Coltheart et al., 2001) proposes that there are two routes via which words are decoded, one is the lexical route involving a lexicon (store of mental representations of words) that contains representations of the spelling (orthography) and sound (phonology) of words, the other is a non-lexical route where the letters in a word are matched to the sounds of those letters in a process called Grapheme to Phoneme Correspondence (GPC). The DRC model assumes that beginner readers access the meaning of words by using GPC to build up a phonological repre-

sensation of a written word. Gradually, however, as the reader becomes more experienced, a store of written words (orthographic representations) is established that develops direct links with meaning. It is assumed that phonology is then bypassed and these orthographic representations are used to decode the meaning of a printed word in a process known as 'direct access'.

The challenge for researchers attempting to resolve the debate regarding the question of orthographically dominant or phonologically dominant word processing has been to develop a methodology that can reveal the automated processes operating in the early stages of visual word processing (i.e. 100ms to 200ms). The priming paradigm allows for the investigation of cognitive processing that is outside the conscious awareness of an individual and has proven to be successful in highlighting potential influences on word recognition (Davis, Kim & Forster, 2008; Forster, 1999). The technique involves presenting visual stimuli to a participant with very brief presentation durations before presenting a target word to which the participant is asked to respond. Often the prime stimuli are presented at durations that can be considered sub-optimal or where participants report no conscious awareness of seeing the prime (30ms to 60ms). Despite this lack of awareness a facilitatory effect is found in the reaction time to the target stimulus if the prime is related compared to an unrelated prime. For example, if the target word TEXT is preceded by the prime [text] the reaction time to the target word will be

faster than if the target word is preceded by an unrelated prime like [sheep] (see Figures 1 and 2 below). This suggests that the visual word recognition system has already begun to decode the information contained in the prime despite the individual having no conscious knowledge of having seen it.

Evidence from behavioural studies suggests that orthographic effects can be found with a prime presentation of 30-40ms (Lukatela, Frost & Turvey, 1998) and phonological effects are generally found with prime durations of around 60ms (Drieghe & Brysbaert, 2002). Ferrand and Grainger (1992), however, found phonological priming with a prime duration of 32ms and it is possible, therefore, that phonological representations are activated during the earliest stages of word processing.

Studies investigating Event Related Potentials (ERP) can provide an indication of the time course of information processing and the evidence from these studies suggests that the orthographic lexicon is accessed in the first 100ms to 200ms, phonological processing occurs around 300ms and semantic analysis at 400ms (Dien, 2009). These findings are based on studies using tasks that isolate the process of interest, i.e. orthographic, phonological or semantic, to produce recordings of the brain activation that occurs during these tasks. The recordings from repeated trials are averaged to extract the relevant pattern of activation that has occurred just as a stimulus is presented. Although the time course detailed above supports the assumptions of the DRC model

Figure 1: Related priming condition.

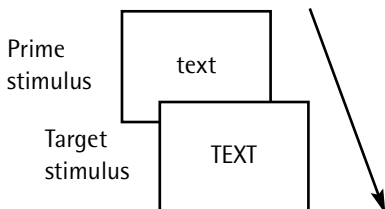
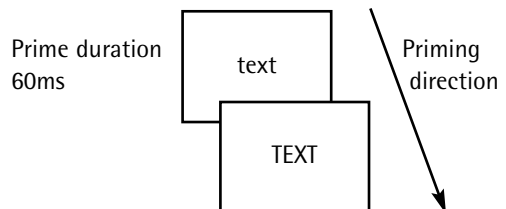


Figure 2: Unrelated priming condition.



a large amount of overlap is found between the timings of the different processes, which affects the consequent conclusions drawn by studies of this nature (cf Dien, 2009 for a discussion). However, the evidence from both ERP and behavioural studies suggests that phonological processing is preceded by orthographic processing and this supports cascaded models of visual word recognition such as the DRC model (Coltheart et al., 2001) rather than strong phonological theories of word recognition (Van Orden et al., 1990; Lupker et al., 2003) which assume that orthographic and phonological information is accessed in parallel.

Interestingly many of the single word shortcuts used in text messages lend themselves to orthographic or phonological codes as they are either abbreviations of the spelling of a word (orthographic) or represent the sounds of a word (phonological). For instance, the shortcut *txt* is an abbreviation of the orthography of the word *text* whereas the shortcut *l8r* represents the phonology (sounds) of the word *later*. The DRC model predicts that these items would be decoded via the lexical or non-lexical route when first encountered, for instance, the shortcut *txt* may contain enough information to allow it to be matched with the existing orthographic representation of its base word *text*. Research investigating the position and structure of letters within a word suggests that there may be a processing difference between consonants and vowels such that consonants carry more information required to process written words than vowels. It has been found that transposing the position of consonants in prime stimuli (aminal – ANIMAL) produces a faster reaction time to a target word compared to replacing the consonants in the prime (asiral – ANIMAL), however, neither transposing nor replacing the vowels in a prime (cisano – CASINO, cesuno – CASINO) had any effect on the processing speed of the target word (Lupker, Perea & Davis, 2008; Perea & Lupker, 2004). It could be the case, therefore, that the consonantal information

contained in abbreviated shortcuts (*txt*) provides sufficient information to link the shortcut with the existing orthographic representation of the base word (*text*) allowing it to be processed via the lexical route. Conversely the visual irregularity of the shortcut *l8r* would preclude this being matched with an orthographic representation of *later*, but meaning could be accessed by activating a phonological representation using the non-lexical GPC route to decode the sounds of the shortcut *l8r*. As such text message shortcuts can potentially provide us with a means of tapping into the contribution of orthography and phonology to visual word recognition.

Developmental models of learning to read suggest that when children begin reading they use a system such as GPC to sound out words (Share, 1995). Having learnt these rules children then fundamentally teach themselves to read and build up an orthographic lexicon to compliment their existing phonological lexicon. Both the DRC model and developmental models predict that with exposure orthographic representations will develop and research suggests that this can occur after around four exposures to a 'new' word. In a number of studies it has been shown that after up to four exposures the 'correct' spelling of a 'new' word will be selected in a forced choice task to a level significantly above chance, suggesting that an orthographic representation has developed (cf Ehri, 2005, for a review). Shortcuts would, therefore, be expected to develop unique orthographic representations in those who use them or who see them regularly. However, as there is already a mental representation of their base words stored in the lexicon that allows these items to be recognised without prior exposure, it is also possible that they do not develop unique representations but link to either an existing orthographic representation (in the case of the abbreviated shortcuts) or phonological representation (in the case of the phonological shortcuts).

If unique representations of shortcuts are not developed in the lexicon and the consonantal information contained in abbreviated shortcuts is sufficient to provide lexical access, it should follow that the consonants contained in any word would also successfully access the lexicon. For example, if the consonants in the shortcut *wrk* are sufficient to link to the base word *work*, the information contained in the unfamiliar but matched shortcut *hgh* should be sufficient to access the base word *high*. Likewise with the phonological shortcuts (*l8r*), if the phonological information contained in these shortcuts is sufficient to access the lexicon no priming advantage should be found for real familiar shortcut primes over a set of 'fake' unfamiliar shortcuts (*st8* – *state*) that are phonologically viable but not in current use. Additionally if phonological representations are accessed in parallel during the early stages of visual word recognition a priming advantage of an equivalent size should be found for both abbreviated and phonological shortcuts. However, if orthographic information plays a dominant role in the early stages of processing then the visual irregularity of the phonological shortcut might disrupt processing compared to the more orthographically regular abbreviations.

This study was, therefore, conducted, using the masked priming methodology, to investigate differences between the two types of shortcut (abbreviated and phonological) and test the ability of real and 'fake' shortcuts to access the lexicon and prime their base words. The base words were preceded by prime stimuli consisting of real shortcuts (*txt* – *TEXT*, *l8r* – *LATER*) and fake shortcuts (*hgh* – *HIGH*, *st8* – *STATE*), as a comparison for the shortcut primes a real word identity prime condition was included for both real and fake base words (*text* – *TEXT*, *later* – *LATER*, *high* – *HIGH*, *state* – *STATE*) and a baseline condition was included (%%% – *TEXT*) to provide an indication of how quickly participants would respond to the target words in the absence of prime stimuli.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study showed a difference between the priming patterns obtained for the abbreviated (*txt*, *msg*, etc.) and phonologically viable (*l8r*, *m8*, etc.) types of shortcut. Abbreviated shortcuts demonstrated a priming advantage that was equivalent to real word primes and significantly faster than a baseline condition; whereas the phonological shortcuts displayed a priming advantage that was significantly faster than the baseline primes but also significantly slower than the word primes. Both sets of real shortcuts however, were processed significantly faster than the 'fake' shortcuts.

The results suggest that real and, therefore, familiar abbreviated and phonological shortcuts are more successful at activating a lexical representation than unfamiliar 'fake' shortcuts. An online survey conducted as part of this research established that with enough processing time the 'fake' shortcuts do activate their base words, however, at these very brief presentation durations only the real shortcuts are able to access the lexicon. This suggests that neither the consonantal information contained in the abbreviated shortcuts nor the phonological information in the phonological shortcuts is sufficient to activate a base word mental representation in this early phase of word processing.

Compared to real words, however, a difference was observed across the patterns of priming for the abbreviated and phonological shortcuts suggesting that the abbreviated shortcuts are processed like real words whereas the phonological shortcuts are not. However, it is possible that the visual irregularity of the phonological items has resulted in a significant difference between these shortcuts and real words. Considering that the real word primes are identical to the target words (*later* is used as the prime stimulus for *LATER*) it is not implausible that primes made up of visually irregular letters and numbers (*l8r* used as the prime stimulus for *LATER*) would not be processed as effectively as the identical primes. However, the

abbreviated shortcuts (*txt* used as the prime stimulus for *TEXT*) and the real word condition (*text* used as the prime stimulus for *TEXT*) may be more comparable. It is also possible that the difference seen here is an example of later phonological processing and dominant orthographic processing, as predicted by the DRC model, with the orthographic items (abbreviated shortcuts) displaying a faster processing speed compared to the phonological items (phonological shortcuts).

The DRC model (Coltheart et al., 2001) and developmental models (Share, 1995) predict that with exposure unique orthographic representations of visually presented material will develop; if the shortcuts develop unique representations no significant difference would be expected in the reaction times to either abbreviated or phonological shortcuts. The differences found between the two types of shortcut in this study, therefore, could be an indication that these items do not develop unique lexical representations or might represent the contrast between the visual familiarity of real words compared to the irregularity of phonological shortcuts. It is also possible, however, that these findings are the result of a lack of familiarity with the phonological

shortcuts used due to variations in participant knowledge. A post-test questionnaire was used to establish the usage and comprehension of the shortcuts for each participant and whereas a high level of comprehension was found usage was more varied.

Further studies are planned to investigate the cognitive processes that are influential in providing lexical access from text messaging shortcuts, however the outcome of this study provides support for the hypothesis that real text messaging shortcuts do effectively access the lexicon in the earliest stages of visual word recognition. Additionally the significant differences found between the abbreviated and phonological shortcuts, when compared to real words, also suggests some support for the assumptions of cascaded models such as the DRC model (Coltheart et al., 2001) that phonology is accessed after orthography in the process of visual word recognition.

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Conference Review

British Psychological Society Education Section Conference 2009

Anneka Dawson

Preston Marriott Hotel, Lancashire. 30 October – 1 November 2009.

AS A researcher whose interests lie between the domains of developmental and educational psychology it is sometimes difficult to know where best to focus my attention for conferences and paper submissions. I had previously attended two developmental conferences and found both of these of limited use. However, this was in contrast to the British Psychological Society Education Section conference held in Preston last year, as I was delighted to find a completely different story! The main theme of the conference was 'Transitions in Education' which examined the issues of starting school, transition to secondary/middle school and starting university. My research examines academic self-concepts in middle childhood and hence my main interest focuses on the transition between primary school and secondary school. Thus I found that the conference presentations were very relevant and useful to my research area.

The education conference was small with about 60 people attending. This made it a more relaxed environment and for a student it was less intimidating to ask questions of the speakers after their presentation. In addition, I had a better opportunity to speak to delegates for longer, as I was able to discuss my research in more detail and find out about other peoples' research in more depth too. I have found that at larger conferences it can be difficult to have time for lengthy discussions and find that I only get a chance for brief introductions with the other conference attendees. I also felt that the

smaller setting encouraged interest and questions in response to my poster, from those who were familiar with the area. This challenged my knowledge and gave me some new ideas for future directions.

The conference started with a keynote speech from Dr Linda Hargreaves from the University of Cambridge about the primary-secondary transfer and how things have changed over the last 20 years. There have been various improvements over this time, including increased use of pupil exchange/buddies and bridging units (where a piece of work is started at primary school and finished at secondary school). However, there are still problems with enthusiasm and intrinsic motivation so research needs to continue to focus on these areas. This was a very engaging talk and provided much to discuss over the delicious buffet dinner which followed. This was also an excellent chance to network and socialise, this was particularly relevant, as I was the only member of my university to attend this conference. The Saturday consisted of a good variety of presentations including 'Teacher's use of fear appeals in the mathematics classroom: Terrifying or motivating students?' 'The transition to university: Changes in academic confidence' and 'The effect of Steiner, Montessori and mainstream education upon children's graphic, language and pretend play development'. Therefore, the broad scope of the presentations meant that there was something for everyone and represented the diverse nature of research in educational psychology. In the early evening a poster

session was held, where I presented my research entitled 'I'm not good at maths: Academic self-concepts in middle childhood' and then the Vernon Wall award lecture by Professor Susan Hallam from the Institute of Education, a very notable figure in the education field, entitled 'Transitions and Development of expertise'.

The conference included an hour of dedicated small group discussion time. I particularly enjoyed discussing our interests and the opportunity to initiate collaborations. For this session there was a table dedicated to one of about six topics including primary to secondary transitions, primary education, methodology, higher education, and special education. This was a great chance to elaborate upon these issues with those who had a special interest and enthusiasm for the area. In my group (discussing secondary transitions) there were some very different perspectives on approaches to helping children cope with what can be an extremely difficult time. The group consisted of an educational psychologist, a teacher (and researcher), two experienced lecturers and a hospital researcher as well as myself which made the discussion varied. I was treated as an equal member of the group even though I had less experience than others at the table and felt I was able to make some valuable contributions to the discussion. From these groups, ongoing contact shall be maintained to include exchange of ideas and possible collaborations for the future.

On Sunday, there were a final few talks including a particularly interesting presentation titled 'Teacher-pupil relationships in primary and secondary schools: Do differences matter?' The content focussed on how the teacher-pupil relationship can change over this transition in a negative way and how this had an aversive impact on the children, such as adjustment problems during secondary school. This talk was interesting because it showed the clear importance of the teacher-pupil relationship and examined in detail the exact differences between schools.

These differences include the amount of time spent with the pupils by the teachers, as at secondary level pupils now have to move between many different teachers throughout each day. Also the level of support the teachers give to the pupils is different, as at primary level this is more of a caring role. The conference ended with a plenary session which focussed on issues in education research from the previous year, including a discussion on how technology is affecting both the classroom and bullying, and problems with internet data collection. This was an interesting debate and brought all members of the conference together to share their experiences. Even if delegates hadn't directly studied these issues, the discussion was pertinent to everyone in the field of educational psychology. This is because there is an ever increasing influence and impact of technology on teaching and research, as the use of technology within these domains is becoming increasingly common.

In terms of venue and accommodation, the Preston Marriott hotel was a great setting for the conference and the rooms and food were splendid. This made a big change from a previous conference I had attended where attendees were staying in student accommodation and offered canteen food! However, the conference was no more expensive than other ones in the UK I had attended in the past and student bursaries are made available to those who are presenting to further help with the costs. The social side of this conference really made a big difference to my overall impression of the experience, as I attended the conference on my own and so meeting new contacts was one of my main aims. The relaxed atmosphere at each of the meals meant that I talked to almost everyone that was at the conference at some point during the three days and had some really fascinating discussions.

Overall, I found many more people with similar research interests than past conferences and thus the presentations I attended were relevant and enjoyable. Due to its size I was able to spend more time discussing our

research interests and developing relationships. I would definitely like to attend future British Psychological Society Education Section events as I found this conference to be the most interesting and rewarding I have attended and I met a thoroughly nice group of people too.

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Tips on ... getting the most out of conferences and seminars

Mark Griffiths

Be pro-active – Although this is easier said than done, attending a conference should be an *active* experience. Do not wait for things to happen.

Plan ahead – It is very easy when attending your first few conferences to be ill-prepared. Decide on your goals and try and accomplish them before the conference ends.

Get business cards printed – Nowadays, business cards are a necessity rather than a luxury. They are – and will – come in useful. Make sure your e-mail address is on.

Take a notebook and/or a pocket tape recorder – Don't depend on your memory to follow up leads and contacts. You may think 'I won't forget' but you'll be surprised how often you do!

Take note of other things being advertised – One conference often leads to others. Take note of new books, new jobs, similar conferences, etc.

Get to all the key sessions and workshops – Remember you (or your employer) have paid to go to a conference so make sure you get your money's worth!

Get yourself onto mailing lists – Whether it's books, computer software/hardware and/or research networks, make sure you get involved. The exhibition hall is usually a good place to start!

Dress comfortably – Although you will want to be smart, wear what's comfortable for you.

Make the most of it – Remember why you registered, i.e., to see speakers, to gain information, to meet new people.

Go to the social events – Most conferences have wine receptions and/or scheduled excursions and these are 'easy' ways to meet new people.

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When research plans need to adapt: An example in commitment research

Andrew Clements

COMMITMENT is a construct that has attracted attention for several decades now. Commitment correlates positively with important work variables such as job satisfaction, and negatively with turnover intentions and absenteeism (Meyer et al., 2002). It is also positively correlated (albeit weakly) with job performance (Meyer et al., 2002). However, despite much work within the field that has examined the correlates of commitment, there are still serious conceptual and theoretical problems with the construct. In planning my programme of research, I found that ecological and methodological issues necessitated a change of approach. It is the aim of this article to review the current commitment literature, but also to demonstrate how a number of factors have influenced the development of my programme of research.

Early perspectives of commitment

Early research into commitment adopted a variety of viewpoints. Becker (1960) treated commitment as the consequence of 'investments' that make it difficult for the employee to leave the organisation (or other group to which one might belong). A commonly used example of an investment in the organisation is a pension scheme, but participation (current or potential) in a personal development scheme might also serve as an inducement to remain. Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) acknowledged the importance of this approach, but emphasised an 'attitudinal' form of commitment based upon the individual identifying with the organisation and sharing its values. In contrast to examining attitudes, Kanter (1968) made reference to social control, obedience, and social cohesion as aspects of

commitment. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) adopted a similar but expanded approach, presenting commitment as compliance, identification and internalisation. Wiener (1982) expanded the concept into a 'moral' dimension by treating commitment as resulting from internalised norms that would continue to exert influence in the absence of reward or punishment.

The three component model of commitment

The three component model (e.g. Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991), which was developed in an attempt to integrate the various strands of commitment research, currently dominates the literature. The model posits three 'mind sets' of commitment: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. These mind sets, respectively, represent commitment based upon a desire to maintain membership (much like attitudinal commitment in Mowday et al., 1979); commitment based upon the recognition of investments based within the organisation to which one belongs; and commitment based upon internalised norms of behaviour. Although this model has been widely utilised, several problems have been highlighted. For example, the construct validity of normative commitment has been criticised due to its high correlation with affective commitment (Bergman, 2006; Ko, Price & Mueller, 1997). Researchers have attempted to address these issues, for example, Gellatly, Meyer and Luchak (2006), who suggest that the role of the normative mind-set may be in its interactions with the affective and continuance mind-sets. When affective commitment was low, for example,

the normative commitment mind-set was influenced in its relationship to citizenship behaviours by the continuance commitment mind-set. When continuance commitment was low, then normative commitment correlated positively with citizenship behaviours within the organisation. Conversely, when continuance commitment was high, normative commitment correlated negatively with citizenship behaviours.

Current issues in the literature

Despite a lot of research being conducted on the construct of commitment and its antecedents, correlates and consequences, there is still a lack of clarity and agreement on what commitment actually is (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). In 1960, Becker remarked on the lack of a consensual definition of commitment as well as its conceptual development, criticising its then 'ad hoc' use. There is strong evidence that these concerns remain. Klein and colleagues (Klein, Brinsfield & Molloy, 2006; Klein, Molloy & Cooper, 2009) identify two problems hindering the advancement of understanding of commitment: first, that there is a lack of consensus on its definition, and secondly that definitions and measures of commitment are often confounded with antecedents, correlates and outcomes.

Examples of the way in which commitment has been confounded with other variables can be found in definitions and measures in the literature. Meyer and Allen (1991) define organisational commitment as a psychological state, characterising an employee's relationship with the organisation, with implications for the decision to continue or end membership of the organisation. Further, a number of the items measuring commitment in Meyer and colleague's commitment measures (e.g. Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993) reference turnover intentions, while some items in the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; Mowday et al., 1979) reference turnover or performance. Although it can be difficult at times to discuss commitment without invoking its

relationship with other variables, it is nevertheless important that they be conceptually distinct.

Recent work has attempted to resolve the conceptual difficulties in commitment research. Work by Meyer and colleagues conceptualises commitment as a force binding an individual to a course of action, relevant to the commitment 'target' (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer, Becker & Vandenberghe, 2004). Klein and colleagues (Klein et al, 2006; Klein, Molloy & Brinsfield, unpublished manuscript) argue in favour of treating commitment as a uni-dimensional psychological state, reflecting a perceived bond between the individual and the target of commitment. In this treatment, 'mind-sets' of commitment are actually rationales, a narrative constructed by the individual to describe how he or she perceive their relationship with the commitment target. More recently, Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield (unpublished manuscript) have argued that commitment is best seen as a perceived bond reflecting dedication. They have suggested that a more precise conceptualisation of commitment will promote clarity and improve understanding.

Calls for research

As well as seeking clarification of the concept of commitment, Klein and colleagues (Klein et al, 2006; Klein, Molloy & Brinsfield, unpublished manuscript) have called for more research into how commitment is experienced by individuals, and how individuals make sense of their commitment. This would allow the development of a new measure reflecting their updated definition of commitment. Becker, Klein and Meyer (2009) have further suggested that qualitative research methodology may be an effective means through which to investigate how individuals 'experience and make sense of the full range of commitments they have relating to their work lives' (p.436). More specifically, they advocate qualitative research that examines why employees feel committed, and how their commitment

developed, arguing that this may have implications for developing new measures. Qualitative research allows for a deeper exploration of particular contexts, allowing researchers to provide richer explanations of 'how things work' in a particular situation or environment (Mason, 2002). Further, qualitative research has the potential to complement quantitative data.

At present, most studies that have examined commitment using quantitative methodology rely on cross-sectional data that is collected at a single point in time. More longitudinal research is required in the field of commitment, in part to examine the ways in which commitment might develop over time (Becker, Klein & Meyer, 2009; Klein et al., 2006; Meyer et al., 2002). Taris and Kompier (2003) have argued that longitudinal research should obtain data at three or more points in time. Whilst two-wave longitudinal research facilitates the testing of reciprocal relationships and the amount of change in a variable across time, they do not allow for the observation of individual growth curves (Taris & Kompier, 2003; Zapf, Dormann & Frese, 1996).

In summary, research on commitment lacks conceptual and theoretical clarity. It has previously been dominated by cross-sectional correlational research. While quantitative research is, of course, valuable, a more inductive approach may assist in clarifying conceptual difficulties. This then has the potential to inform the development of three-wave longitudinal studies that examine changes over time.

My first plan of research

It had been my original intention to conduct a three-wave longitudinal survey of three different student samples: nursing and midwifery students, social work students and students training to be teachers. The advantage of these groups, from a practical standpoint, was that they were easily accessible, whilst training for specific occupations, and with experience of the workplace via placement throughout the course of study.

My initial plan was to examine the role of affect in work commitment and job satisfaction, and the resultant impact upon measures of job performance. It was my expectation that as positive affect rose and fell, work commitment would also, and mediate the impact of affect on work outcomes such as performance and absenteeism. My eventual plan was to utilise qualitative methodology in follow up research to provide a context-based view of what the correlations actually meant.

Ecological and methodological issues

In order to conduct my initial study, I gathered a selection of measures relating to organisational and occupational commitment, job satisfaction, affect, well-being, job performance, and other variables of interest. As part of my preparation for the study, I showed my questionnaire to contacts who worked with the students I was interested in surveying and who had lengthy experience within the nursing and social work fields. These people expressed concern that the commitment items, although widely used in workplace contexts, were not appropriate for students, whose role as 'employees' and organisation membership are not clear cut. It was argued that they are not quite students, but not quite employees either. Indeed, contacts expressed doubt as to whether students would experience organisational commitment *per se*.

In deciding how to react to this potentially catastrophic information, I faced (with the help of my supervisors!) a choice between two decisions: continuing with the planned quantitative approach that might be fundamentally flawed, or adopting a more inductive qualitative approach to develop a framework essentially produced by participants, rather than beginning with an imposed structure to test.

Response to the problem and to the literature

During this time, I was also beginning to have doubts about the measures that I was

planning to use, as well as the definition of the commitment construct. I have been strongly influenced, as a result, by the recent work investigating the 'way forward', particularly that of Klein and colleagues (e.g. Klein et al., 2006; Klein, Molloy & Brinsfield, unpublished manuscript; and Klein et al., 2009). As such, it is my hope that my research will, at least in part, answer the questions for future research posed by Klein and colleagues.

As a consequence, my research is now beginning with a qualitative, rather than quantitative, focus. I am at present interviewing faculty members who teach vocational students, not only to gain their perspectives of issues relating to student commitment, but also to benefit from their experience in how they view the vocational role, and how this may have changed over time. A second study will utilise focus groups to discuss with vocational students how they experience commitment, the targets that they feel committed to, and the ways in which this influences them affectively, behaviourally and cognitively. This research may subsequently inform the development of a new measure reflecting the focus group discussions. This may or may not fit Klein's framework.

Conclusion

In writing this article, it was my intention to show that while theoretically-based plans are important to frame research questions, sometimes the research process does not go according to plan. I have seen the frustration this causes in fellow PhD students – and, of course, I have experienced it myself. However, being forced to assess how to proceed with my research has given me the opportunity to take a more inductive approach. Further, it was serendipitous that during the time that I was preparing for a new approach I came across more recent literature calling for the kind of research that could easily be integrated into my planned programme of research. If there is any kind of moral to this article, it may be that an initial sense of everything going horribly wrong is not necessarily a cause for alarm. You may end up with something more ecologically valid, and of course more useful, as a result.

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The psychological and physical benefits of pole dance for fitness classes, an increasingly popular yet controversial form of exercise

Michelle Haslam & Lindsey Cooper

POLE DANCING is a form of dance that involves dancing around a highly polished metal pole. It is increasingly becoming recognised as a valid and respectable form of dance throughout the world and is considered to require strength, flexibility and co-ordination, whilst combining elements of gymnastics and dance. It can be performed in many dance styles, from ballet to freestyle, some with a sexy component and some purely as fitness. It also has many possible dimensions, such as spins, static and moving positions whilst on the pole, dancing away from the pole and floorwork.

The history of pole dancing is poorly documented due to its negative stigma and is, therefore, difficult to describe with any accuracy, but it is thought that the first recorded pole dance occurred in a strip club in Oregon in 1968, by a Miss Belle Jangles, who performed a striptease. From here, it appeared to spread to the exotic table dance and lap dancing clubs of Canada where it then spread to North America, Europe and eventually the rest of the world. In a similar fashion, it is impossible to pinpoint the first person to teach pole dance in its modern form to the everyday woman, but the first pole dancing schools are thought to have begun emerging in the late 1990s, spreading in a similar way through the continents as a form of physical activity and self-expression.

The pole dance tuition that occurs across the world today is a far cry from that which began in the lap dancing gentleman's club. At present there are over 50 pole dancing schools that operate throughout the UK,

providing tuition in pole dance techniques, with no reference to stripping or nudity. Many classes are held within sport and leisure centres by qualified fitness instructors who view pole dancing as a new and exciting way to keep fit. Such classes have a strict no nudity policy in an attempt to improve the reputation of the dance form. Despite the rapid growth of the pole dancing business, there is currently no existing research investigating its occurrence or the physical and psychological benefits of participating in this form of dance.

The websites of pole dance schools make many claims regarding the potential physical and psychological benefits of their classes. Physical benefits include the potential for increased strength, stamina, and weight loss. Pole dancing requires considerable core strength and some of the moves include gymnastic techniques such as holding yourself upside down on the pole in different positions. Dancing around the pole and performing one move after the other increases stamina and cardiovascular fitness. This can lead to weight loss in those who attend regular classes. In addition, the dance classes are enjoyable, and encourage those who would not normally exercise in a conventional way to keep fit. These factors can also lead to an increase in self-confidence.

There are several potential psychological benefits of pole dancing, some of which are simply due to the fact that the individual is exercising, and some are specific to dance and/or pole dance. There is a wealth of research that outlines the potential benefits

of exercise for psychological health. Over the last 20 years there have been several extensive reviews of the exercise psychology literature which offer support for the role of exercise participation in maintaining positive mental health. (Reed & Ones, 2006; McDonald & Hodgdon, 1991; Mutrie & Biddle, 1995; Martinsen, 1995, McAuley, 1994). Such reviews highlight positive associations between exercise and positive mood states and self esteem. They also highlight negative associations between exercise and depression, anxiety and stress (McAuley, 1994).

Reed and Ones (2006) acknowledge that while the majority of previous research on the exercise-affect relationship has studied the effect of exercise on negative psychological states such as anxiety and depression (e.g. Biddle, 2000; Brosse et al., 2002; Landers & Arent, 2001), it is also important to study the positive psychological effects of exercise. According to McAuley (1994), health is not just the absence of disease and negative mood states, but also a condition of physical and mental well-being. Reed and Ones (2006) carried out a meta-analysis on the effect of acute aerobic exercise, such as aerobic dance, on positive affect. They concluded that increases in positive affect can last up to 30 minutes post-exercise and effects remain positive for different intensity/duration combinations, and despite of varying personal and situational settings immediately post-exercise.

Dance is known to provide a means of expression and communication that other forms of exercise do not provide (NDTA, 2004). Dance therapy works on the premise that dancing improves mood and is defined by the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA, 2008) as 'the psychotherapeutic use of movement to further the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration of the individual'. Although there is limited research on the positive effects of aerobic dance participation on mood (e.g. McInman & Berger, 1993), research on specific dance forms such as ballet, modern, tap, street or pole dance remains non-existent. Therefore,

the extent and nature of the psychological benefits of dance are currently unclear. Thus, specific investigation is required to identify the unique benefits associated with this specific form of exercise. It is likely that pole dancing has the same psychological benefits as any form of exercise and dance, in that it encourages positive mood states. In addition, it is likely that there are additional psychological benefits, which are associated with an increase in social networks and feelings of empowerment. Pole dance classes are conducted in groups, thus it is a social activity. Furthermore, it is generally considered that group pole dance classes encourage female empowerment. Pole dance is a sensual activity that helps women see their bodies as alluring and graceful. This is likely to have a positive effect on their self-confidence over and above participation in normal exercise.

Unfortunately, it is this sensuality which gives pole dance its bad reputation. Many individuals hold a negative view towards the form of dance, claiming that it is exploitative and encourages young women to see themselves as sexual objects. These connotations put many young women off trying the dance form. However, there is a clear difference between a woman who chooses to attend a pole dance class, with no men watching and no nudity allowed, and a woman who is pushed into stripping by poverty. Joan Price, an author who writes about female sexuality, stated that 'If we were to limit what we do in the realm of affirming our sexuality because it has been used against us in the past, we would then be buying into the idea that we don't own it' (Price, 2006).

It is clear that pole dancing has become a widespread and respectable dance form over the last few decades, being taught at over 50 dance schools and many university students unions. It seems that it is time that pole dance became the subject of evidence based research, in order to rid it of its negative stigma and help its acceptance as an enjoyable and challenging form of exercise and self-expression.

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Conference Bursaries available from the Division of Health Psychology

The DHP will be sponsoring students who wish to attend the DHP conference in Belfast, 15–17 September 2010.

- Up to 8 bursaries are available that will cover registration, accommodation, entrance to the social events, and travel to the DHP Annual Conference.
- Up to a further 15 bursaries will be available that cover registration and social events only.

Applications are welcome from 9 April 2010 until the closing date of 25 June 2010.

UK-based candidates with a first degree in psychology who are not yet eligible for Chartered Health Psychologist status (e.g. postgraduate students, research assistants) will be considered. Applicants should be DHP members. Preference will be given to those who have had a paper or poster accepted (or is under review) at the conference – please include your abstract with your application.

It is a condition of acceptance of the award that the recipient should submit a report of some aspect of the conference to Health Psychology Update by the deadline immediately following the conference.

Applications should be made in the form of a letter addressed to the National Conference Organiser of the DHP (see below) and include: (i) a detailed statement of why a bursary is needed (e.g. because a postgraduate student is not funded by a research council or their institution); why they think they should be awarded a bursary and how they will benefit from the conference; (ii) a supporting statement from a supervisor or referee; and (iii) their abstract and submission status (submitted/accepted). The committee reserves the right not to make awards should no suitable candidates be found.

Applications should be sent to Dr Caroline Henderson, Division of Health Psychology National Conference Organiser, at cjhend@essex.ac.uk.

For further information regarding the conference please visit the event website at: www.bps.org.uk/dhp2010

PsyPAG committee: Research interests

Rebecca Semmens-Wheeler

PsyPAG Representative for the BPS Consciousness & Experiential Section.

University of Sussex.

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I am currently in the second year of my DPhil at Sussex University. My research explores the cold control theory of hypnosis (Dienes & Perner, 2007) and using a variety of quantitative methodologies. I use alcohol and TMS (transcranial magnetic stimulation) to explore the role of the brain in hypnosis, surveys to investigate potential correlates of hypnotisability and cognitive experiments to explore differences in attention, volition, and other cognitive features of consciousness (and unconsciousness) in people of different hypnotic susceptibility.

Laura Crane

PsyPAG Chair

Goldsmiths, University of London.

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I recently completed my PhD, which explored autobiographical memory in adults with autism spectrum disorder. Specifically, my thesis explored which aspects of autobiographical memory were impaired/intact in adults with autism and the mechanisms that underlie this distinctive pattern of memory. I also conducted a preliminary investigation into how the autobiographical memory profile of adults with autism is similar to/different from that observed in adults with depression. I am currently working as a researcher on a project examining creativity in adults with autism, to identify cognitive strengths in this group that could be applied in an educational or workplace setting.

John Hyland

PsyPAG Information Officer

Dublin Business School of Arts.

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My research focuses on the cognitive, behavioural, and neurological processes which underpin temporal relational responding, and is funded by the University of Ulster's Vice Chancellor's Research Scholarship (VCRS). There have been numerous Philosophical, Psychological, and Psycholinguistic debates about the processes which underpin human understanding of the passage of time. In the Behavioural literature, the observed phenomenon of Stimulus Equivalence (Sidman, 1972, 1994) and subsequent development of Relational Frame Theory (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes & Roche, 2001) have uncovered much about how complex and novel patterns of human behaviour are controlled through relations between verbal and environmental stimuli. However, there has yet to be a detailed investigation into the nature of temporal relations and how they are implicated in the underlying processes of human cognitive behaviour. The current thesis provides the first experimental attempt at exploring such behaviour and the accompanying underpinning neurological correlates. A detailed analysis of this kind will provide the explanatory tools to address complex human, including complex grammatical and verbal control, relative reasoning, and temporal perception.

Dates for your diary

- Date:** 22 June 2010
Venue: University of Kent
Event: BPS Division of Forensic Psychology: Postgraduate workshop
Contact: www.bps.org.uk/dfp/dfp-training-events/dfp-training-events_home.cfm
- 23–25 June 2010
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www.bps.org.uk/dfp/dfp-training-events/dfp-training-events_home.cfm
- 23–25 August 2010
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www.bps.org.uk/qmip/qmip_home.cfm
- 6–7 September 2010
Winchester University
BPS Social Psychology Section Postgraduate Workshop 2010
www3.winchester.ac.uk/bps2010/
- 6–8 September 2010
London
London International Conference on Education (LICE-2010)
www.liceducation.org
- 7–9 September 2010
Winchester University
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- 10–12 September 2010
St. Anne's College Oxford
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www.bps.org.uk/conex/events/cep_2010.cfm
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www.gold.ac.uk/bps2010/
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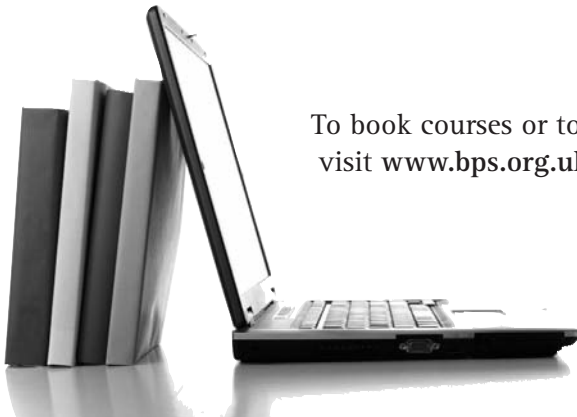
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