

**PSYPAG**

Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group

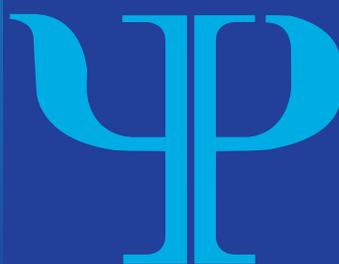
**Quarterly**

Issue 87 June 2013

**Sensory and motor abnormalities  
within early infancy in individuals later  
diagnosed with autism**

**Cognitive neuroscience:  
Skeletons in the closet**

**Tips for applying for  
Research Grants**



**Also in this issue:**

**A cognitive approach to humour:  
Absurdity and understanding**

**Conference, workshop and book reviews**



The British  
Psychological Society  
The Psychologist

Your **psychologist**  
**Your choice**



Are you a Society member looking to read The Psychologist  
on tablet, smartphone or e-reader?

Visit [www.thepsychologist.org.uk](http://www.thepsychologist.org.uk)

or scan



and log in to access your options

# Editorial

Jumana Ahmad

---

**W**ELCOME to the 87th edition of the *PsyPAG Quarterly*. I am delighted to introduce a wealth of high quality articles. Amalgamated within this issue are feature articles, hints and tips, conference, workshop and book reviews.

Amongst the feature articles in this edition, Dr Clare Alley discusses the sensory and motor abnormalities that can be detected during early infancy, in individuals later diagnosed with Autism. Dr Alley considers the implications that early identification might have for individuals. The article provides real insight into the complexity of the disorder, and the importance of research in this area. In the next feature article, Grzegorz Maciekewsky suggests that certain brain areas may be more 'fashionable' than others, and considers the implications this might have for Cognitive Neuroscience. Mairi Young, explores the psychological basis of humour, discussing the information processes that underlie it. Professor James Hartley considers the extent to which research conducted by psychologists is based on undergraduate students only. To explore this, he reviews an issue of *Psychological Science* and the populations involved. Adfer Shah then reviews virtual relationships, from a psycho-social perspective. Finally, Richard Tyler and Emma Davies discuss recruitment issues in school-based drug and alcohol research with young people. The relevance of these articles is paramount to current issues in psychology.

Alongside these articles, we are provided with a wealth of interesting conference reviews. Lucy Czwartos reviews the 40th Annual British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies Conference, and Myrthe Jacobs reviews the 9th European Conference on Psychological Theory and Research on Intellectual and Developmental

Disabilities. Dinesh Ramoo reviews the The 50th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Aphasia, and Elizabeth Freeman reviews the 6th International Adventure Therapy Conference. Furthermore, Saloni Krishnan reviews a Summer School, entitled 'Plasticity and learning, from molecule to bedside'. The reviews demonstrate the benefits of attending these events, and highlight the wealth of knowledge and experiences that can be gained from doing so. Finally, Katy Hopkins writes a book review on *The Psychopath Test* by Jon Ronson. The review is both informative, and entertaining, and highlights the knowledge that can be gained from reading non-academic but psychologically relevant texts.

Finally, I would like to introduce articles providing helpful hints and tips. Dr Carly Jim provides us with fundamental advice regarding research grant applications, and Professor Mark Griffiths describes the variety of ways that blogs can aid an academic career. Both articles provide us with valuable advice from experienced academics. I hope you enjoy reading the 87th edition of the *PsyPAG Quarterly*.

## *PsyPAG Quarterly* Editorial Team

**2012–2013**

**Jumana Ahmad**

**Daniel Jolley**

**Laura Scurlock-Evans**

**Daniel Zahra**

*Email: [quarterly@psypag.co.uk](mailto:quarterly@psypag.co.uk)*

The next edition of the *PsyPAG Quarterly*, in September 2013, will be a special issue on conspiracy theories. Please get in touch with the editors on [quarterly@psypag.co.uk](mailto:quarterly@psypag.co.uk) if you are interested in submitting an article. The *PsyPAG Quarterly* is distributed to postgraduate institutions across the UK, and is an excellent opportunity to disseminate your ideas and research to a large community. The deadline for submission is the 4 June.

You can also keep up-to-date with current Quarterly activities on Twitter: @PsyPAGQuarterly. The account is run by the editors, and we have been really excited by the amount of engagement that we have received so far.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to the *PsyPAG Quarterly* Editorial Team: Daniel Jolley, Laura Scurlock-Evans, and Daniel Zahra. While we might all take on the position of Editor-in-chief once a year, each edition is certainly a team effort. I would like to thank all the authors who have contributed to the current and past editions, and finally to wish you all a happy read!

**Jumana Ahmad**

On behalf of the

*PsyPAG Quarterly* Editorial Team

Email: [quarterly@psypag.co.uk](mailto:quarterly@psypag.co.uk)

The September 2013 edition of the *PsyPAG Quarterly*  
will be a Special Issue on  
**The Psychology of Conspiracy Theories.**

We welcome submissions from researchers within the  
conspiracy theory field.

If you would like to contribute, please send an email to:  
**[quarterly@psypag.co.uk](mailto:quarterly@psypag.co.uk)**

We look forward to hearing from you.

# Chair's Column

Fleur-Michelle Coiffait

---

**W**ELCOME to the June 2013 edition of the *PsyPAG Quarterly*. We start off this edition with some dates for your diary, as the 28th PsyPAG Annual Conference at Lancaster University is fast approaching (17–19 July) and we would love to see as many of you there as possible. The conference is a fantastic opportunity to network with other postgraduates both in your field and beyond, many seeds of collaborations have been sown at one of our conferences.

It is a really fun and inspiring event, but don't just take my word for it! Registration for the conference closes on 14 June and we have kept registration costs low at £65 for the full three days, with an extra £5 discount if you are a Master's student. For further details about the programme and online registration, visit [psypag2013.lancs.ac.uk](http://psypag2013.lancs.ac.uk). You can also follow the PsyPAG 2013 Twitter and Facebook feeds at [twitter.com/psypag2013](https://twitter.com/psypag2013) and [facebook.com/PsyPAGannualconference](https://facebook.com/PsyPAGannualconference) and we have a 2013 conference hashtag – #PsyPAG2013

If you would like to get more involved with PsyPAG, you can join our committee at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) held each year at the conference. The committee comprises core members that fulfill the key functions of PsyPAG (Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Information Officer, Communications Officer, *Quarterly* Editorial Team) and postgraduate representatives for each of the British Psychological Society's Divisions, Sections and Branches. A number of committee positions will be due for re-election at the AGM at our 2013 Annual Conference – take a look at the list at the back of this edition for details.

If you stand for election to a position on the committee at the AGM, you will be required to make a very brief statement to

attendees about your interest in a specific position and any skills or experience that would make you a good candidate for the role. Sign up to the PsyPAG JISCmail list at [www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/psych-postgrads.html](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/psych-postgrads.html) for regular updates about vacant committee positions and other news and events for psychology postgraduates.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to remind you that PsyPAG offers a number of bursaries for UK psychology postgraduates that provide financial support to attend our annual conference, PsyPAG workshops, or other conferences or events. More information about all of the events and bursaries we provide can be found at [www.psypag.co.uk](http://www.psypag.co.uk).

In terms of other PsyPAG events, we are in the process of finalising a one-day workshop on doing research in NHS contexts that will be held in the later in the year. This aims to cover the myriad of issues faced by psychology postgraduates doing research in NHS contexts and will also include a 'trouble-shooting' session where attendees will get chance to discuss any difficulties they have encountered. This event will be advertised via our website, Facebook and Twitter feeds, as well as on the PsyPAG JISCmail list.

We have lots of ideas for potential workshops that we would like to offer over the coming months, including an event addressing the transition from postgraduate to postdoctoral researcher and the implications for early career researchers of the incoming Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2014. We are always very keen to hear from you about any topics, methods or issues that you would think would make a useful workshop or event for psychology postgraduates. Contact our Vice-Chair, who oversees our workshop provision at [vicechair@psypag.co.uk](mailto:vicechair@psypag.co.uk) or you can find details on our website about how to submit a

workshop proposal at: [www.psyPag.co.uk/resources/workshops/organising-a-workshop/](http://www.psyPag.co.uk/resources/workshops/organising-a-workshop/)

Finally, if you are a psychology postgraduate who teaches at an institution, we want to hear from you! PsyPAG is surveying the teaching experiences of psychology postgraduates in the UK, as this is an under researched area and will allow us to provide relevant support and guidance to our post-graduate members on this area. The survey is aimed at people who are currently teaching or who would like to gain experience and training in teaching.

You can access it online here: <https://sites.google.com/a/brookes.ac.uk/psypag-teaching-survey/>

We are very grateful to the British Psychological Society Research Board for their continued commitment to psychology postgraduates studying in the UK. I would also like to thank the PsyPAG committee for all of their continued hard work on behalf of psychology postgraduates.

**Fleur-Michelle Coiffait**

*PsyPAG Chair.*

*Email: [chair@psypag.co.uk](mailto:chair@psypag.co.uk)*

*Twitter: @PsyPAG*

# PSYPAG 2013

The 28th PsyPAG Annual Conference will take place at Lancaster University from the 17–19 July 2013.

The annual conference provides the ideal opportunity for postgraduate researchers to come together and present their research in a supportive and friendly environment. Our aim is to provide a wide range of symposia and workshops to provide interest across the topics in psychology and those from cross-disciplinary research.

For more information visit <http://psypag2013.lancs.ac.uk>

Like us on Facebook at  
[www.facebook.com/PsyPAGAnnualConference](http://www.facebook.com/PsyPAGAnnualConference)  
and Follow us on Twitter @PsyPAG2013

# Sensory and motor abnormalities within early infancy in individuals later diagnosed with autism

Dr Clare Allely

---

## Clinical importance of early detection and diagnosis

**A**UTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (ASDs) are a group of neuro-developmental disorders characterised by difficulties in three key domains: socialisation; communication and/or restrictive and repetitive behaviours (Association AP, 1994). Autism is considered to be the most severe psychiatric disorder in childhood. Despite the fact that in the majority of cases autism has an onset during infancy (Gillberg, 1990), it is not typically diagnosed until three years of age which is around the time when the child starts to participate in structured social settings (i.e. nursery school). It is relatively easy to notice autistic behaviour at this stage because it significantly deviates from the norm (i.e. not participating in social play with other children, refraining from eye contact, difficulty expressing themselves verbally). However, in infancy these social symptoms are not so apparent as the infant in his cot relates mostly to herself/himself (Teitelbaum et al., 1998).

Early detection of autism plays a crucial part in enhancing developmental outcomes for affected children, as it promotes both earlier and more accurate diagnoses (Goin & Myers, 2004). The mounting interest in early diagnosis and treatment of children with ASDs, has drawn more attention to the motor skills of very young children with ASD (Lloyd, Macdonald & Lord, 2011). Since the majority of children diagnosed with ASD display motor abnormalities at a later age (Damasio & Maurer, 1978; Vilensky, Damasio & Maurer, 1981), many researchers argue that such abnormalities might be observable

in the first few months of life. Vilensky et al. (1981) found that the gaits of 21 autistic (mean age 6.1 years), compared to 15 normal (mean age 7.1 years) and five hyperactive-aggressive children (mean age 10 years) had: (a) reduced stride lengths; (b) increased stance times; (c) increased hip flexion at 'toe-off'; and (d) decreased knee extension and ankle dorsiflexion at ground contact. In fact, the authors even described the gait differences between the autistic and normal participants as being similar to some of the differences between the gaits of Parkinsonian patients compared to normal adults. However, great controversy surrounds the extent to which movement disorders play a role in autism (Teitelbaum et al., 1998).

## Evidence of motor and sensory abnormalities from case studies

Dawson et al. (2000) describe a case study of an infant with autism (IA), who was observed closely by professionals from birth. During the first month after birth, the mother noticed significant fluctuation in IA's tone. Some days he was rather stiff with fisting, arching and hypersensitivity while other days he was relatively hypotonic and inactive. At one month of age, because of problems with breast feeding, IA was referred by his paediatrician for an oral-motor evaluation. The occupational therapist observed that IA displayed low muscle tone in his facial area as well as difficulties co-ordinating and pacing his sucking-swallowing and breathing during feeding. Because of the oral-motor difficulties, IA was regularly assessed by occupational therapists and a paediatric neuro-

logist throughout his first year. At four months, IA began occupational therapy because of excessive muscle tone in all limbs. Muscle tone was found to fluctuate between normal and high, with tone being very hypertonic in extremities. In the second half of the first year, diffuse sensorimotor difficulties and diminished oral motor control persisted. At nine months, the neurologist noted axial hypotonia, increased extremity tone, poorly integrated and graded movements, limited oral motor control, and selective finger movement. Additionally, when IA stood he had a tendency to stand up on his toes. During sitting, he was sometimes seen rocking back and forth and banging his head. IA met the diagnostic criteria for autism at just over one-year-old.

Another prospective case study described the observations of nine high-risk infants during early infancy (Bryson et al., 2007). All infants began the study at six months of age and were assessed at six-month intervals from six to 24 months. Across all nine children, early impairment in social-communicative development co-existed with atypical sensory and/or motor behaviours. For instance, Case 1 was a male, diagnosed with autism at 36 months. At six months, he exhibited delayed motor development (floppy, not sitting independently or reaching for toys, and poor motor control) and at 12 months he displayed atypical sensory behaviours (e.g. visual interest in carpet pattern and feeling objects with his index finger), atypical motor behaviours (hand flapping and finger flicking), and significant delays in motor development (generally hypotonic but rigid when standing with assistance).

Evidence from these case studies offers insight into the presence of motor and sensory abnormalities that may be used as early indicators for autism.

### **Evidence of motor and sensory abnormalities from retrospective studies**

Studies have also investigated early indica-

tors of autism using home movies obtained from parents of children who have already been diagnosed with autism. One such study investigated the home videos of 17 children with autism using Eshkol-Wachman Movement Analysis System in combination with still-frame videodisc analysis (Teitelbaum et al., 1998). Interestingly, they found that all 17 children exhibited disturbances of movement that were clearly observed as early as four to six months, and in some instances even at birth. Specifically, they found disturbances in the shape of the mouth and in some, if not all, of the developmental milestones. These included lying, righting, sitting, crawling and walking. Persistent deviations from normal patterns of lying have been shown to be related to later diagnosis of autism.

For instance, at four months, one of the children in the study by Teitelbaum et al. (1998) displayed a persistent asymmetry when lying on his stomach, with his right arm caught under his chest. He still failed to use his right arm even when he was reaching for an object. This asymmetry continued throughout his first year, causing him to fall on to his right side. In addition, sitting stability at six months of age was found to be problematic for some children with autism. Sometimes the infant fell over, without implementing any allied reflexes to protect themselves. This was also the case in a girl with autism (eight months old), who displayed no allied protective reflexes when falling. In another case where movement disturbance were not so severe, the baby managed to sit for a few minutes. However, his weight was often not distributed equally to both sides of his body, causing an asymmetrical posture which resulted in a fall when reaching for an object. The researchers also suggested that children with autism may display abnormalities when crawling. For instance, one infant displayed an asymmetrical lack of adequate support in the arms, so that he supported himself on his forearms rather than his hands. As a result, he was stuck in the same place when he tried

to move forward which consequently led him to raise his pelvis into the air while leaning on his forearms.

Since movement disorders can be found as early as four to six months of age, and sometimes as early as the first few days after birth, Teitelbaum et al. (1998) emphasise that the study of movement disorders in infancy may serve as an earlier indicator over other currently available methods for diagnosing autism in children.

### **Evidence of motor and sensory abnormalities from prospective studies**

Prospective studies for investigating the early indicators of later diagnosis of autism are considered to be the best approach as they afford direct observation of early development. However, the low incidence of autism generally makes them unfeasible. Researchers have overcome this problem by studying children at genetic risk of autism. Typically this involves the younger siblings of a child who has already been diagnosed with autism (Baron-Cohen, Allen & Gillberg, 1992).

The literature is unclear on how early repetitive and stereotyped behaviours (RSB) including both motor stereotypies and repetitive use of objects, are present. In children over two years of age, RSBs are a reliable diagnostic feature of autism (e.g. Richler et al., 2007; Turner, 1999) and are included in all major diagnostic systems. They constitute one of the three core domains of symptoms required for autism spectrum diagnoses. However, they have been documented inconsistently in studies of very young children. RSB categorises a wide range of behaviours including stereotypies, rituals, compulsions, obsessions, perseveration, and repetitive or stereotyped use of language. RSBs have been considered central to autistic disorder since Kanner's (1943) early description of 11 children with autism, where he noticed a variety of object and body stereotypies.

Loh et al. (2007) investigated motor behaviours in a longitudinal cohort of eight

infant siblings of children with autism, a random sample of nine non-diagnosed siblings, and 15 controls. Stereotypic movements and postures during observational occurring assessments at 12 and 18 months were coded from videotapes. Stereotyped behaviours are perhaps the least well understood and studied symptom domain in ASD. The study discovered that at 12 months, 'arm wave' was more frequent in infants later diagnosed with ASD. Also, the researchers found that at 18 months, 'hands to ears' and 'arm wave' were more frequently observed in ASD siblings. Some siblings exhibited unusual postures not seen in any typically developing infants. In particular, one sibling diagnosed with ASD was three times more likely to exhibit an 'arm tensing with overflow' (all related with emotional excitement). His arms, hands, and fingers stiffened and hyper-extended. Following this, they quivered non-rhythmically for a couple of seconds.

Watt et al. (2008) investigated RSB in children with ASD ( $N=50$ ), developmental delay without ASD ( $N=25$ ) and typical development ( $N=50$ ) between 18 and 24 months of age. The researchers revealed that children with ASD displayed a significantly greater frequency and longer duration of RSB. RSB with objects were associated with measures of symbolic capacity and social competence in the second year, and also predicted developmental outcomes such as the severity of autistic symptoms at three years of age. RSB in the second year, therefore, appears to be crucial for both early identification and prediction of later developmental outcomes (Watt et al., 2008). Yet, particularly for young children, there is far less understanding regarding RSB compared to more recognised symptoms of autism such as social and communication difficulties (Lewis & Bodfish, 1998).

Historically, investigation of motor behaviour in children with ASD has centred round stereotyped and repetitive movements like hand flapping or body rocking (Richler et al., 2007). However, parents or individuals who work with children with ASD also point

out that gross motor and fine motor skills are abnormal and/or delayed (Landa & Garrett-Mayer, 2006). Lloyd, Macdonald and Lord (2011) investigated the gross and fine motor skills of 162 children with ASD between the ages of 12 and 36 months, including a subset of 58 children followed longitudinally, using the Mullen Scale of Early Learning (MSEL). In Study 1, significant group differences in the gross motor and fine motor age difference variables were observed. Gross motor and fine motor differences became significantly greater with each six-month period of chronological age. In Study 2, 58 children were measured twice, an average of 12 months apart. Results indicate that the gross motor and fine motor difference scores significantly increased between the first and second measurements. Children with ASD achieved their motor milestones within the normal range. As they got older their fundamental motor skills fell significantly behind what would be expected. Lloyd et al. (2011) posit that the slowing of gross motor development found in their study is partly explained by the fact that gross motor skills are frequently explored and discovered during 'self-directed or self-regulated learning'. This type of learning involves playing with peers and playing independently – areas which are a challenge for individuals with ASD. Tactile sensitivities and/or aversions may also be playing a role in delaying fundamental motor skill development. Difficulties in motor abilities may actually be creating a situation where poor motor skills are constraining social interactions and, on the flip side, poor social interactions are constraining motor skill development (Lloyd et al., 2011).

Ozonoff et al. (2008) in a prospective study examined object exploration behaviour in 66 12-month-old infants at risk for autism. Nine of which were subsequently

diagnosed with an ASD. In the Object Exploration task, four objects (a round metal lid, a round plastic ring, a rattle, and a plastic baby bottle) were given to the infant one at a time, for 30 seconds per item. Behaviour was recorded on DVD. Out of eight possible uses of the objects, four behaviours were hypothesised to be typical, age-appropriate explorations of the objects (shaking, banging, mouthing, and throwing) and four were hypothesised to be atypical (spinning, rolling, rotating, and unusual visual exploration). Greater atypical uses of the object were found in infants with ASD, compared to the two other groups. Even more interestingly, repetitive behaviours at 12 months were significantly associated with both cognitive and symptomatic status at 36 month outcome.

### **Conclusion**

Findings from case, retrospective and prospective studies, all strongly indicate that movement disturbances are identifiable at birth and can be used to diagnose or indicate the presence of ASD, even as early as the first few months of life. The findings here support the need to develop methods of therapy that can be delivered from the first few months of life (Teitelbaum et al., 1998). Research indicates that there are motor abnormalities observable in very early infancy that can be identified prior to the behavioural emergence of ASDs which are currently used as the basis for a diagnosis. The potential early identification of these motor abnormalities could lead to more timely and appropriate interventions, and consequently better prognosis.

### **Correspondence**

**Dr Clare Allely**

University of Glasgow.

Email: [clare.allely@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:clare.allely@glasgow.ac.uk)

## References

- American Psychiatric Association (APA). (1994). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: APA.
- Baron-Cohen, S., Allen, J. & Gillberg, C. (1992). Can autism be detected at 18 months? The needle, the haystack, and the CHAT. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, *161*, 839–843.
- Bryson, S.E., Zwaigenbaum, L., Brian, J., Roberts, W., Szatmari, P., Rombough, V. & McDermott, C. (2007). A prospective case series of high-risk infants who developed autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, *37*, 12–24.
- Damasio, A.R. & Maurer, R.G. (1978). A neurological model for childhood autism. *Archives of Neurology*, *35*, 777–786.
- Dawson, G., Osterling, J., Meltzoff, A.N. & Kuhl, P. (2000). Case study of the development of an infant with autism from birth to two years of age. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *21*, 299–313.
- Gillberg, C. (1990). Autism and pervasive developmental disorders: Published erratum appears in *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *32*, 213. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *31*, 99–119.
- Goin, R.P. & Myers, B. J. (2004). Characteristics of infantile autism: Moving toward earlier detection. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, *19*, 5–12.
- Kanner, L. (1943). Autistic disturbances of affective contact. *Nervous Child*, *2*, 217–250.
- Landa, R. & Garrett-Mayer, E. (2006). Development in infants with autism spectrum disorders: A prospective study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *47*, 629–638.
- Lewis, M.H. & Bodfish, J.W. (1998). Repetitive behaviour disorders in autism. *Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, *4*, 80–89.
- Lloyd, M., Macdonald, M. & Lord, C. (2011). Motor skills of toddlers with autism spectrum disorders. *Autism*.
- Loh, A., Soman, T., Brian, J., Bryson, S.E., Roberts, W., Szatmari, P., Smith, I.M. & Zwaigenbaum, L. (2007). Stereotyped motor behaviors associated with autism in high-risk infants: A pilot videotape analysis of a sibling sample. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, *37*, 25–36.
- Ozonoff, S., Macari, S., Young, G.S., Goldring, S., Thompson, M. & Rogers, S.J. (2008). Atypical object exploration at 12 months of age is associated with autism in a prospective sample. *Autism*, *12*, 457–472.
- Ozonoff, S., Young, G.S., Steinfeld, M.B., Hill, M.M., Cook, I., Hutman, T., Macari, S., Rogers, S.J. & Sigman, M. (2009). How early do parent concerns predict later autism diagnosis? *Journal of Developmental and Behavioural Pediatrics*, *30*, 367–375.
- Richler, J., Bishop, S.L., Kleinke, J.R. & Lord, C. (2007). Restricted and repetitive behaviours in young children with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, *37*, 73–85.
- Teitelbaum, P., Teitelbaum, O., Nye, J., Fryman, J. & Maurer, R.G. (1998). Movement analysis in infancy may be useful for early diagnosis of autism. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *95*, 13982–13987.
- Turner, M. (1999). Annotation: Repetitive behaviour in autism: A review of psychological research. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *40*, 839–849.
- Vilensky, J.A., Damasio, A.R. & Maurer, R.G. (1981). Gait disturbances in patients with autistic behaviour: A preliminary study. *Archives of Neurology*, *38*, 646–649.
- Watt, N., Wetherby, A.M., Barber, A. & Morgan, L. (2008). Repetitive and stereotyped behaviours in children with autism spectrum disorders in the second year of life. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, *38*, 1518–1533.

# Tips for applying for Research Grants

Dr Carly Jim

---

## Research Offices

Contact your university's Research Office for information on procedures and what kinds of assistance they are able to offer.

## Sources of funding

Availability of funding varies depending upon the area you want to research, the type of participants you are using and whether you are collaborating with other countries. Again your university's Research Office should be able to assist you with identifying suitable sources of funding, and in some cases small amounts of funding may be available from your university, this is often for pilot studies in preparation for larger grant applications.

Research Professional is your first point of call for the sources of funding that are available. You can do keyword searches by topic or funder. Most universities should have an institutional login <http://www.researchprofessional.com/>

It is also worth contacting charities that are connected to your area of research, some of them have official grant rounds that may be advertised through research professional and/or on their individual websites and others may be able to offer some assistance if you contact them directly.

## The Project Timeline

If you have a specific date for submission you need to work backwards from this date making sure you have time to do everything. If you do not have a specific date there is a bit more flexibility, but you still need to give yourself and team a submission window, to ensure that people stay on focus and that university's Research Offices can organise the submission of your bid along with the other bids they have to submit.

Obviously there is considerable variation in the time it takes to put a bid together. This includes who is writing the bid, how many co-applicants there are, etc., but as a rough guide from idea to submission it takes about one year!

I thoroughly recommend producing a Gantt chart to help plan your submission, and make sure you include people's annual leave on this.

## Working with collaborators and partners from other universities, the NHS, charitable organisations, etc.

Working with other organisations, and the specific people from those organisations, is essential in order to produce a research proposal that draws on the strengths that multi-disciplinary teams bring in terms of all aspects of the project from design through to dissemination. However, it may be challenging at times, some of these challenges might not be foreseeable but a list of those that include:

1. **Perceived importance of the project:** You may think your proposal is the most important piece of work, however, the reasons for other people getting involved with the project may be very different. From the start it is important to get a sense of why other people are involved in the project and how they hope to benefit from it, as this will ensure the proposal incorporates elements that everyone is happy with. Although there will undoubtedly have to be some compromising, it certainly helps to ensure everyone is all on the same page to begin with.
2. **Procedures other organisations need to follow:** In addition to the procedures set out by the university, there are also

procedures that other organisations need to follow. For example, do they require ethics approval before providing a letter of support? Do you need to go through the research and development offices in that organisation, if working with the NHS are you using them as merely recruitment sites or do you need local investigators? There are lots of issues here and they will depend on the exact nature of your research, so it is worth thinking about these early on and regularly reviewing to ensure that nothing is missed to avoid a mad dash panic at the final stages.

3. **Pressures of other people's time:** As researchers in a university environment we are afforded a certain amount of flexibility with our time, but this is often not the case with other organisations. It can be especially tricky when you are submitting a bit with a number of collaborators, especially if they are geographically diverse, to organise meetings at times, dates and locations to suit everybody. The best bet is to propose a number of different dates and do a doodle poll (visit <http://www.doodle.com> for further info), using the option where people can select multiple options including a maybe for those dates they could do at a push. This way you can make a decision based upon who can attend and also if it is important for specific people to be there, you can choose dates around their availability.

If you are going to need to travel to facilitate meetings with collaborators check if your university provide funding for this, this is known as pump-priming.

4. **Chairing collaborators meetings:** Before the meeting make sure that everyone knows where the meeting will be held, send maps if required. If appropriate, ensure that reception knows that visitors are coming and if you need any car parking spaces that people are booked in the diary. If you are meeting in a different location make sure that you (and your

collaborators) are clear about the arrangements. The meeting will need to be friendly, don't underestimate the importance of refreshments! However, you do need to ensure that you stay on topic (people will often want to rush ahead which leads to confusion afterwards and sections missed out). You should produce a clear agenda which should be emailed to people in advance and you should also print out copies (as people often forget to bring them with them). You will need to have someone to take minutes for you (perhaps have a reciprocal arrangement with someone else in the department, if this person is also able to assist with making sure people find the room all the better). After the issues you want to discuss you need to check if there is any other business and finally, I thoroughly recommend arranging a next meeting date that the majority of people can do (or two possible options). As soon as possible after the meeting minutes should be sent out to the collaborators.

5. **Letters of support:** As soon as support is offered for your project, such as from a charity partner, ask for a letter to confirm this: it can take a surprisingly long time to get these and it is worth having them in your possession. It helps if you can provide them with a template of the sorts of things the letter should say and any requirements, such as headed paper.
6. **Get a CV:** Another thing you should do as early as possible is get a CV: do check if CVs are needed for all collaborators and named researchers as is normally the case. People can always send you updated versions if things change, but get these in your possession as early as possible. Also check the requirements and tell people what they need to be, often max. two pages, size 12 font. Also check when they come in that people have adhered to the requirements and if not make sure they give you a CV in correct format.

7. **Register on JeS:** JeS is a website used by a number of organisations to enable online grant submissions. If you need to apply through this system it is essential to ensure people register with JeS as early as possible, as people need to be on the system in order to include them as being involved with the project. This is usually straight forward, but you can encounter problems, so do it as early as possible.

### **Patient participation and involvement (PPI)/involving your recipient group**

You should always involve your target group (assuming you are working with people) not only is it the decent thing to do, and funders expect it, but it will also enhance your research design and the recruitment of participants. When you are on the outside looking in it is easy to miss things that are crucial to your participants, such as does the time of the research clash with childcare arrangements, television programmes, medical appointments, etc. Obviously accommodating individual participants is part of the project itself but working out whole cohort issues in the planning stage is certainly advisable. Patient participation is extremely important as research is becoming more and more for improvements and for changes that produce less economic burden in the long run. It is, therefore, crucial to be able to justify the importance the relevance and support for your ideas.

For the PPI events you need to be mindful of the reasons people may be there. Because you have told people that they are there to provide input into your research you may assume that this is the reason that they have come, however, this is not always the case and reasons such as to meet other people with the same illness as them, and as 'something to do' may be more important to your participants. You need to create a nice environment, and arrange an informal style of getting the feedback. Also make sure your date, time and place is appropriate for your group, for example, do you need disabled accessible rooms?

If you can run a PPI event as part of something people are already attending, this is a good idea, for example if working with a charity you could ask if they will give you some time as part of the AGM. You can also perform PPI online through social networking websites. More information can be found on the INVOLVE website: <http://www.invo.org.uk/>

You may be able to apply to your department, the Research Design Service, or a specific charity for help with PPI costs.

Another word of advice – in addition to running PPI events you must include one or two people as 'expert patients' to be full collaborators and attend the meetings.

### **Project costings**

Mentally run the project and jot down every cost as you do along, as part of this you need to be aware of what is and is not funded on the stream you are applying for (again ask your research office for more information). When you submit the costs they will need to be very clear, and accurate, don't just guess or round up this is really frowned upon. The costs need to be appropriate, and you need to be able to justify this, please do ask all those involved in the project to comment on the costings.

### **Filling in the Application Forms and supporting documents**

It can take such a long time to finalise the research design that you might feel that is the end of the process. Unfortunately that is just the beginning you still have the actual application process to go through. For some grants this is a brief outline document in the first instance, for others this is a full application. No matter what route is required there are two key pieces of advice, firstly your project needs to sound like it is ready to go and all you are waiting for is the funding, an outline application is brief in word count only, a scabbled together outline with a view to being more comprehensive if you get through to the full submission stage is unlikely to impress. Secondly, follow the

instructions, all of them! Funders are very specific in their requirements for font sizes, page lengths, supporting documents, etc. I strongly recommend speaking to other colleagues who have applied for the same source of funding and seeing if your Research Office can provide you with an example of a previous (ideally successful) application.

### **The Peer Review Process – External**

It is expected that your work will have been peer reviewed before submission for bids involving the NHS. The Research Design Service run by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is really helpful. Research Design Service.

<http://www.rds-nw.nihr.ac.uk/>

### **The Named External Review Process**

On your application you will also be asked to name both expert and lay reviewers, it is important to ask people if they are happy to fulfil this role, and be prepared for people to say no. You should think carefully about your choice for reviewer, after all they are influential in deciding whether the project will be funded. Once your reviewers have confirmed remember if you are submitting online they need to be registered too. You do not need to do anything further as if they are required to review the submission the funders will contact them directly.

### **The Peer Review Process – Internal**

This is the final review stage prior to submission. It is important that this not just lip service. This process can be extremely valuable and it is becoming increasingly mandatory for universities to undertake internal review of bids. It is, therefore, important that this is done with enough time to spare that enable any necessary amendments prior to submission. I should also add you should get someone (or a few people) to spell check your proposal!

### **Are you the PI?**

PI stands for principle investigator this is the person who has the overall responsibility for the management of the project (although the actual time they spend on the project may be considerably less than the named researcher or other co-investigators). It may well be the case that the person writing much of the document is not the PI in which case you will not actually be authorised to submit it, so make sure the PI is involved in the run up to the submission process.

The process of applying for research funding is long, laborious and frustrating at times, it can be disheartening for all involved if the application is unsuccessful. However, for many people it is necessary to bring in external monies into the university and in some cases your future employment depends on it! It is, therefore, important to understand how the process works. On my first application for funding I was somewhat 'thrown in the deep end' – I hope by sharing with you my experiences over the last few years you will be somewhat less overwhelmed than I was. My biggest piece of advice is keep going, believe in your research area and your project and although there may be some projects that never get funded, and others that undergo serious revisions every now and then you are successful and that feeling is priceless!

### **The author**

Dr Carly Jim is a lecturer in psychology at Manchester Metropolitan University, where she is also chair of the Neurofibromatosis Well-being Research Group.

### **Correspondence**

**Dr Carly Jim**

Email: [C.Jim@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:C.Jim@mmu.ac.uk)

# Cognitive neuroscience: Skeletons in the closet

Grzegorz Maciejewski

---

**I**T IS NO EXAGGERATION to say that several brain systems are currently more fashionable than some of the others. Scientists interested in these trendy neural structures are more likely to publish findings in high-impact journals. Thus, attracting more funding and generally advancing their career in academia. Is it really true that so many of our research areas are simply under-represented in top journals in favour of your friend's next paper on one of the fads, say, the fusiform gyrus (associated with face processing)?

Behrens et al. (2013) decided to shed more light on this painful truth. They analysed 7324 fMRI papers (published between 1986 and 2008) and found that the pre-supplementary motor area is now in fashion; followed by the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (which is activated in almost every single study), frontal operculum, insula cortex, and Broca's area.

The researchers were tempted to test whether there is any relation between the activation locus you may have just found in your latest study and the impact factor of the journal which accepts it. It turns out that impact factor is indeed a strong predictor of several brain regions being mentioned. For example, those who managed to find increased activation in the fusiform gyrus do

not need to worry about publication in a prestigious journal such as *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* or *Nature*. Other trendy brain systems are those involved in emotion processing such as the anterior insular cortex, ventral and dorsal portions of the rostral medial prefrontal cortex, and amygdale. Even if you were unfortunate enough not to find activation in these regions, there is no need to despair. Behrens and associates reveal that you are still likely to publish in a journal with half the impact factor of your office buddy (i.e. five as opposed to nine). Not that bad at all.

So if you are a beginning research student with no clearly defined brain regions or functions that you might be interested in, why not consider this ugly truth? Whatever you decide to do for your next study, I wish you all some activation in the vicinity of the fusiform gyrus.

## Correspondence

**Grzegorz Maciejewski**

University of Bedfordshire.

Email: grzegorz.maciejewski@beds.ac.uk

## Reference

Behrens, T.E.J., Fox, P., Laird, A. & Smith, S.M. (2013). What is the most interesting part of the brain? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 17, 2–4.

Conference review:

# A CBT treat in Leeds: 40th Annual BABCP Conference

Lucy Czwartos

---

University of Leeds, 27–29 June 2012

**R**EADING 2012 Leeds BABCP Conference events catalogue felt very much like being faced with a menu in a good restaurant: too many tempting options and not a chance to attend them all. After careful consideration I opted for some ‘sensible’ events (most relevant to my current practice) and some that I wanted to attend out of pure interest.

One of the most relevant, given UK current economic climate, was Robert Leahy’s skills class: ‘Using CBT to help people cope with unemployment’. Although Leahy jokingly compared his way of working with the unemployed people to ‘military training programme’, his approach struck me as not only practical and pragmatic but also very compassionate. He put a lot of emphasis on the importance of both physical (diet, exercise) and emotional (social support, pleasurable activities, helping others) self-care during the period of unemployment. In spite of his status of celebrity in CBT world, Dr Leahy turned out to be a very unassuming and down to earth speaker with a good sense of humour.

Stephanie Fitzgerald and Ann Hackmann presented another very interesting skills class on ‘Using imagery in CBT treatment of long-term conditions’. Although recurring sensory images of trauma are characteristic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and distorted images of an individual performing poorly in social situations are powerful in maintaining social anxiety, in case of many other disorders cognitive-behavioural therapy focus on verbal cognitions has

preceded the work on images. It feels somewhat counterintuitive given that, from the evolutionary perspective, development of our verbal language is a fairly recent accomplishment. Stephanie Fitzgerald and Ann Hackmann skills class focused specifically on the group of people living with long-term physical conditions. According to the *Supporting People with Long-term Conditions* document published by the Department of Health (2005), 17.5 million individuals in the UK live with at least one long-term condition. It makes almost one-in-three of the general population. The skills class was very practical and included discussion of many clinical cases. Imagery work was presented as another useful tool, which can be used within cognitive therapy with people living with long term conditions. It stressed the importance of mindfulness: becoming aware that our mental images are just images and allowing them into our consciousness helps to realise how hideous and distorted they are.

Another group accounting for high number of consultations in primary care are people experiencing medically unexplained symptoms such as chronic fatigue syndrome. One of the leading experts in the field of chronic fatigue and co-author of the book *Overcoming Chronic Fatigue*, Professor Trudie Chalder presented the results of studies into ‘Emotional processing in the context of chronic fatigue syndrome’.

Research evidence demonstrated by Professor Chalder indicates that people with CFS have difficulties with processing emotions. It was really helpful that Professor

Chalder presented clear links between the evidence from the research and the implications for the treatment of people with CFS. She suggested a new treatment focused on emotion, which would follow CBT intervention.

Professor Ian James' keynote speech on 'The use of CBT and schemas across the lifespan' was of particular interest, although rather controversial. Professor James argued that being truthful towards a person with dementia might not always be therapeutic and not necessarily be in patient's best interest. For example, a patient with dementia keeps asking to see her husband and is being repeatedly informed that her husband is dead, which leads to her becoming upset and tearful. One can imagine that being informed again and again of a loved one's death seems more tortuous than empathetic. Professor James proposed that meeting a person's need (e.g. arranging family visit) is the best option but if meeting of the need is not possible substituting or simulating the need might be the next best solution (e.g. simulation of the family presence by watching video of family members instead). He also posed that speaking to patients in their own reality, reality where their loved ones are still alive, may preempt or reduce patients' distress and therefore may be more therapeutic than being always 100 per cent honest. He stressed the importance of 'being better therapeutic liars', which requires good knowledge of patient's life. 'Therapeutic' lies must fit with person's reality and be only used as a last resort.

Professor Salkovskis is known for his firm and unrelenting approach to safety seeking behaviours as behaviours, which prevent disconfirmation of negative beliefs and therefore maintain anxiety disorders.

During the 39th BABCP Annual Conference in Guilford Professor Radomsky, in his presentation on the 'Judicious use of safety behaviours', introduced quite different view on safety seeking behaviours. Professor Radomsky suggested that safety behaviours, if used wisely, might facilitate treatment and reduce dropout rates. Given the differences in the approach towards safety seeking behaviours the most intriguing parts of the conference were, in my view, Professor Salkovskis' keynote speech on 'How psychological treatment is effective with particular reference to (...) treatment of OCD' and Professor Radomsky's research presentation on the use of safety behaviours in CBT. Both Professors agreed that rather than throw all behaviours leading to reduction of anxiety into one bucket it would be more helpful to distinguish safety seeking behaviours, which are unhelpful as they are used to disengage from graded exposure, and approach supportive behaviours, motivated by Theory B in treatment of OCD, which facilitate engagement in exposure and are, therefore, helpful. Professor Radomsky pointed out that approach supportive behaviours should be used either early in therapy if patient is unable to engage in graded exposure without them or when we encounter obstacles in treatment.

The 40th Annual BABCP Conference was a great success and superb opportunity for practitioners' professional development. I am really looking forward to BABCP 2013 Conference in London.

### **Correspondence**

**Lucy Czwartos**

Devon Partnership NHS Trust.

Email: [lucyczwartos@nhs.net](mailto:lucyczwartos@nhs.net)

# A cognitive approach to humour: Absurdity and understanding

Mairi Young

---

‘To possess a good sense of humour or at least to laugh freely and frequently at humorous and pleasurable events is regarded as thoroughly healthy and desirable by virtually all.’  
(Chapman & Foot 2007, p.1)

**T**HE STUDY OF HUMOUR is not a new field of research for psychology. Theories of humour can be seen in the origins of philosophy, where humour was initially viewed as a form of aggression (i.e. enjoyment in the misfortune of others) and superiority (i.e. enjoyment in the misfortune of those you perceive to be beneath you). ‘Since Plato’s pioneering work... writers have been trying to define the evasive essence of humour... Aristotle, Hobbes, Descartes, Kant, Schopenhauer have all been impressed by the seriousness of humour...’ (Wilson, 1979, p.9).

As a discipline, when psychology began to move away from its philosophical foundations and formed grounding in the natural sciences, so did the study of humour. Recently, the concept of humour has undergone expansion as a theory and formed grounding in some of the most influential psychological perspectives, including gaining credibility with empirical investigation (Martin, 2007).

Psychology assesses humour in a number of ways, from the psychoanalytical approach which argues that individuals use humour (i.e. laughter, joking and play) as a means of expressing their pent up internal conflicts, motives and desires; the Evolutionary approach which seeks to establish whether or not humour was a product of the human species or an adapted behaviour from their ancestors; the social psychology of humour which posits that humour is a learned social trait and serves to promote social influence and communication; to the cognitive

perspective which is centred around the principles of information processing, mental representations and their respective roles in understanding and producing humour.

Cognitive psychology focuses on the internal processes and how these influence the acquisition, processing and storing of information (Polimeni & Reiss, 2006). In relation to the study of humour, since it can be perceived and produced both visually, linguistically and non-verbally, the cognitive approach focuses on the internal processes which facilitate this. Although each approach agrees humour is a functional behaviour and attempts to explain why humans use humour, only the cognitive approach really succeeds in explaining how humour is processed and produced, using empirical and scientific methods. Since humour is a purely subjective experience it can be difficult to explain theories of humour out with the context of humour itself. Instead, what is gained is a more abstract idea.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to examine the cognitive Incongruity Resolution (I-R) Theory of humour (Kant, 1951) in the context of a stand-up show by surrealist comedian, *Eddie Izzard: Sexie Live* (2003).

Izzard is known as much for his on-stage transvestitism as he is for his unique comedy style. His method of delivery takes the form of a stream of consciousness and rambling, frequently interjected with new ideas and anecdotes, for example:

...it must be passed down doesn’t it, like the ability to make paper airplanes, its

only, it's like, passed down. I was taught to make a really good one, where was I taught that...? Up the road at St B's, might've been in Wales, cuz I've been in Wales too, I've been everywhere! Oh yes, very well travelled when I was a kid... I cycled to Wales... uhm, I'm not even... uhm what the hell? Yes, so so, the breast thing...! (*Eddie Izzard: Sexie Live*, 2003).

The Incongruity Theory suggests humour arises from the pairing of two mismatched ideas or situations. Most often this refers to the non literal language of humour, that is, metaphors and similes. For example:

They [fire-fighters] have a bag of cats next to the window and they throw em out, one by one, that's why you get that noise, meee... eOWWwwl... and it just so happens that Dr Doppler was sitting in his car one day... 'this is a very interesting effect... I will call it the change in note of cats effect' [the Doppler Effect]...  
(*Eddie Izzard: Sexie Live*, 2003)

The theory asserts the funniness of this joke arises principally from the violation of what is expected (the cats being tossed out the window) and what is then presented (demonstrating the Doppler Effect). According to Willmann (1940) a joke such as this will work because the two ideas are specifically connected in either of two ways: A conclusion is drawn between the two ideas or, the occurrence (or likelihood of occurrence) of both ideas in reality. Although the listener may experience an initial sense of confusion by the unexpected incongruity, the funniness is appreciated when they go back over the joke and establish the explanation (i.e. the cognitive rule).

In this joke, the funniness (and potential confusion) arises from the absurdness of the idea that traffic noise is a result of cats being tossed out of a car window. In addition to the fact that traffic does indeed sometimes sound like this. However, if one does not or cannot establish the explanation (i.e. the Doppler Effect) then the humour quality of the joke is lost (The Doppler Effect 1842 is

the notable change in frequency when moving towards or away from a sound source. The frequency pitch is higher and louder when the source is closer.)

Koestler's Bisociation Theory (1964) expanded on the incongruity theory and drew, in a sense, on Schema Theory as well. He argued that the comedic value, or at least the understanding of a joke required the listener to first understand the idea or concept (L) being proposed, but secondly be able to understand this concept within two different frames of reference (M1 and M2). For example:

...you know, as a, as a transvestite, show no fear, cus you know, I had fights, people give me shit on the street... and I've learned martial arts since I had a big fight about five years ago. I am now a black belt in Sashimi, um which if you know sushi, it's like that, but its sashimi. It's just raw fish which you fling, raw fish, at people, there going, salmon, salmon, tuna, salmon, tuna, the white one that's horrible! And that only gives you about 10 seconds of shock where they are going, 'What the fuck? This is fish?' And when they are in the whaaa... you go wasabi! (*Eddie Izzard: Sexie Live*, 2003)

According to Koestler's theory, in order to find Izzard's joke funny, the listener must first understand the concept of martial arts (L). Secondly, understand what sashimi and sushi are (M1) and thirdly be able to incorporate the two concepts to understand the outcome, that is, sashimi martial arts (M2). In order to do this successfully and quick enough to appreciate the joke within the timeframe, the listener draws on the use of schemas to build a suitable comprehensive framework of each concept. The funniness then arises from the absurdity of the two concepts within each frame of reference, the normal (food and martial arts) and the abnormal (Sashimi martial arts).

Koestler and Willmann's theories each highlight the significance of comprehension to humour appreciation. For that reason if the listener cannot discover the cognitive

rule of the joke, that is, they don't know what the Doppler Effect or sashimi is, then they will fail to appreciate the joke. Therefore, it is thought that humour is a result of both the incongruity and the resolution.

Schultz and Horibe (1974) highlighted the importance of the Incongruity Resolution (I-R) theory whilst investigating the cognitive development of humour amongst children between the ages of 6 and 12 using the joke:

'Waiter, what's this? That's bean soup, ma'am. I'm not interested in what it's been, I'm asking what it is now.'

Schultz and Horibe established that humour comprehension depends largely on the understanding of both incongruity and resolution '...the transition between a stage of pure incongruity and a stage of resolvable incongruity in humour occurs between the ages of 6 and 8' (1974, p.19). This was established because children under the age of 8 years had difficulty understanding the resolution structure of the joke (i.e. what made it funny) although could express appreciation at the overall joke itself. By thinking back to Eddie Izzard's joke about sashimi martial arts, this suggests that children between these ages would although find the overall joke funny, they would not be able to understand specifically why it was funny in the way older children do.

Based on this evidence it could be argued that (following understanding) humour depends largely on the presentation of the unexpected.

'So Africa. I watched two DVDs on Africa, hmm, and it is proved that the DNA, or denah as we call it now. Crick and Watson and the other guy, and the women who was dead so didn't get the Nobel Prize... proves that we're ALL from Africa you see... proven through the Y chromosome and through the mitochondrial DNA that we are all African. Which is brilliant cus it means that racist people can now retire.'

(*Eddie Izzard: Sexie Live*, 2003)

Izzard builds up a story about Africa and DNA leading the listener to expect how the

story will end. The laughter this joke induces is a result of the unpredictability (and often shock factor) of Izzard's conclusion. However, there are flaws with this theory, for the most part because of how humour appreciation is measured.

Nerhardt (1970) contested Shultz and Horibe's theory that incongruity alone is a sufficient condition for humour and highlighted that laughter in itself is not an accurate measurement of incongruity. He attempted to demonstrate this via an experiment not involving humour, but by having participants lift a series of weights and rate their heaviness. Nerhardt found that the likelihood of laughter increased when the final set of weights were inconsistent with the previous weights, some participants still expressed humour even though they expected this inconsistency. Whilst his methodology alone is questionable since it does not involve humorous stimuli, it is theoretically sound precisely because of this. It allows for a definition of incongruity without the context of humour (i.e. jokes or cartoons) because humour on an every day basis is mostly naturalistic, arising from banter, sarcasm, irony, slips of the tongue, etc.

The cognitive perspective certainly provides an overall concise and coherent model of humour. It recognises that humour is a result of spontaneity and the unexpected, and understanding depends largely on understanding the irrationality of two opposite concepts. However, the cognitive approach in psychology is largely centred on empirical, quantifiable research methods and the paradox of this approach to humour is whether or not humour can be reliably and accurately measured. Although humour is undeniably a universal human behaviour, what counts as humour is a completely subjective experience.

Humour cannot be explained by cognitive functioning alone, therefore, it is far better to draw on a wide variety of theoretical approaches which incorporate all influencing elements. However, as a discipline it

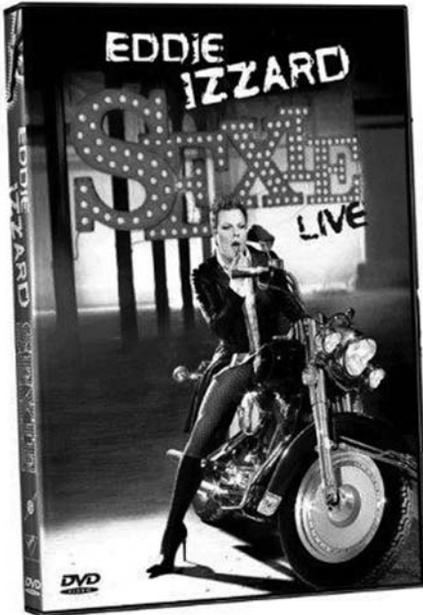
does threaten to undo the precise function of humour itself, ‘...a theory of humour is not humorous. A joke explained is a joke misunderstood’ (Critchley, 2002).

## Correspondence

Mairi Young

University of Glasgow.

Email: m.young.3@research.gla.ac.uk



## References

- Chapman, A.J. & Foot, H.C. (2007). *Humour and laughter: Theory, research and applications*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Critchley, S. (2002) *On Humour (Thinking in Action)*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Izzard, E. (2003). *Eddie Izzard: Sexie Live* (DVD). UK: Universal Studios.
- Kant, I. (1951). *Critique of judgment*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, Inc.
- Koestler, A. (1964). *The act of creation*. London: Hutchinson.
- Martin, R.A. (2007). *The psychology of humour: An integrative approach*. London: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Nerhardt, G. (1970). Humour and inclination to laugh: Emotional reactions to stimuli of different divergence from range of expectancy. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 11(1), 185–195.
- Polimeni, J. & Reiss, J.P. (2006). The first joke: Exploring the evolutionary origins of humour. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 4, 347–366.
- Schultz, T.R. & Horibe, F. (1974). Development of the appreciation of verbal jokes. *Developmental Psychology*, 10(1), 13–20.
- Willmann, J.M. (1940). An analysis of humour and laughter. *American Journal of Psychology*, 53(1), 70–85.
- Wilson, C.P. (1979). *Jokes: Form, content, use and function (European monographs in social psychology)*. London: Academic Press Inc. (London) Ltd.



## Research Digest

Blogging on brain and behaviour

-  Subscribe by RSS or e-mail  
[www.researchdigext.org.uk/blog](http://www.researchdigext.org.uk/blog)
-  Become a fan  
[www.facebook.com/researchdigest](http://www.facebook.com/researchdigest)
-  Follow the Digest editor at  
[www.twitter.com/researchdigest](http://www.twitter.com/researchdigest)

# Is psychological science the science of undergraduates?

Professor James Hartley

---

**A**LMOST 50 years ago, Christie (1965) complained that most of the research conducted by psychologists utilised undergraduate psychology students as participants. However, students are not necessarily typical of the population at large – they represent only certain ages, abilities and interests. It seems unwise, therefore, if not foolish, to base the foundations of psychology on such an insecure base. This is not an original observation: other researchers have made similar remarks through the years (e.g. see Wintre, North & Sugar, 2001). The aim of this article is to consider if this is still true today.

## Method and results

Table 1 (overleaf) shows what I found when I examined the participants taking part in the studies reported in a single issue of *Psychological Science* (23, 10, 2012). The table shows the ages of the participants taking part in each of the 58 studies reported, and an example from each study's method section. Studies that reported two or more experiments were counted separately, as sometimes the participants varied in them.

## Concluding remarks

So what can we conclude from this? It is possible that many papers with participants of specific ages appear in their own specialist journals – *Child Development*, *Ageing*, etc. – but for a journal that claims to be 'a leader in the field of psychology' it is somewhat surprising to find that readers are being treated mainly to findings from undergraduate students that are typically obtained in laboratory classes.

So what can be done about this? The way to resolve this issue (and also to reduce the vast number of submissions that journals such as *Psychological Science* receive) might be for editors to encourage authors to include replications of their findings with different samples. (Two out of the papers listed in Table 1 actually did this.) Alternatively, a wider proportion of the articles accepted in journals could be in the form of replications in different populations (Koole & Lakens, 2012).

Relatedly, it might be worth thinking about suggesting that PhD and possibly Master's students include at least one replication study in their work, possibly with a different population. Such studies are difficult (see the November 2012 edition of *Perspectives in Cognitive Science*), but any attempt to do so will enable such students in psychology to learn a good deal from thinking about these matters.

## Correspondence

Professor James Hartley  
Keele University.  
Email: j.hartley@keele.ac.uk

## References

- Christie, R. (1965). Some implications of research trends in social psychology. In O. Klineberg & R. Christie (Eds.), *Perspectives in social psychology* (pp.141–152). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Koole, S.L. & Lakens, D. (2012). Reward and replications: A sure and simple way to improve psychological science. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(6), 608–614.
- Wintre, M.G., North, C. & Sugar, L.A. (2001). Psychologists' response to criticisms about research based on undergraduate participants: A developmental perspective. *Canadian Psychology*, 42(3), 216–225.

**Table 1: Verbal descriptions of the participants in 58 studies reported in 29 papers in *Psychological Science*, 23(10), 2012.**  
(Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.)

Categories	Example
Undergraduates N=34 (59%)	Participants were 64 undergraduates (49 men, 15 women; mean age 20.5 ( <i>SD</i> =2.1).
Older people N=1 (2%)	...a comparable number of participants of both sexes and three age groups (younger adults: 25–40 years, middle-aged adults: 41–59 years, older adults: 60–75 years).
Adults N=6 (10%)	105 members of a nationwide panel (60 women, 45 men) participated for \$10.
Mixed ages N=4 (7%)	Seven healthy naïve observers (five females, two males: ages 21–36 years) participated.
General public N=2 (3%)	...we observed customers at the only ATM in the concourse of a subway station.
Children N=1 (2%)	219 children, (104 girls, 115 boys) average age=4.3 years, <i>SD</i> =2.3 months were recruited from Norwegian day-care centres.
Online surveys N=6 (10%)	A total of 3177 individuals (2124 females and 1053 males completed an online survey on mate preferences.
Online pool N=2 (3%)	Participants recruited through an online pool ( <i>N</i> =150; mean age 39.9 years, 74% female, 26% male) were randomly assigned...
Previously published data ( <i>N</i> =1 (2%))	The popularity of first names given to babies born in the United States from 1882 to 2006.
Animals N=1 (2%)	Subjects were 357 juvenile vervet monkeys born between 1990 and 2005.

The number of studies with students leading to replications with adults 0.

The number of studies with adults leading to replications with students 1.

*Conference review:*

# The 9th European Conference on Psychological Theory and Research on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Myrthe Jacobs

---

Trieste, Italy, 14–16 June 2012

THE European Conference on Psychological Theory and Research on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ECIDD) brings together European researchers in the field of intellectual disabilities, including both cultural-familial intellectual disabilities and genetic syndromes, such as autism, Down's syndrome and Fragile X. The main theme of the conference concerns fundamental psychological and applied research on intellectual disabilities and seeks to broaden understanding and knowledge of causes and conditions of intellectual disabilities, as well as prevention and intervention procedures. The conference offers a forum for the exchange of research findings and broadening of scientific networks. The conference takes place every two years and in 2012 it took place in June at the University of Trieste in Italy.

ECIDD is a relatively small conference: it runs over two-and-a-half days with only one strand of presentations running at any time. While this means that some presentations are not relevant for all attendees, it also means that presentations are attended by a larger audience and by attendees that might not have chosen to go to a particular presentation, but, therefore, can offer new views on the topic.

I was interested in presenting at this conference because of its strong psycholog-

ical and quantitative themes in intellectual disability research specifically. My PhD explores how parents of children with intellectual disabilities perceive causes of their child's misbehaviour and how that relates to parenting strategies, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. I attended UK-based conferences on intellectual disability research previously, where a lot of the research was qualitative and about adults rather than children. The ECIDD seemed a perfect opportunity for presenting my quantitative research owing to the high proportion of presentations concerning children rather than adults at previous years.

The conference started with a reflection on the change in terminology from mental retardation to intellectual disability, where the latter is a reference to intelligence rather than the mind. This is in line with a change in research themes from looking at general cognitive delays to the study of sub profiles of delay and underlying cognitive mechanisms. The first keynote speaker on the second day of the conference was Chris Oliver from the University of Birmingham, who asked the question whether it matters what particular syndrome a person has. Chris argued that it is important as certain syndromes have been found to be accompanied by certain symptoms. If a child cannot self-report physical discomfort they often

express this through challenging behaviour. Knowing what syndrome the child has, will help to pinpoint causes of physical or medical discomfort and treating it. For example, self-injurious behaviour is highly prevalent in children with Cornelia de Lange syndrome. Cornelia de Lange syndrome is a rare genetic disorder causing a range of physical, cognitive and medical challenges and, although there is variation in the degree, usually causing intellectual disability. These children also have high prevalence of reflux, and self-injury can decrease when the reflux is treated.

The second and final keynote speaker was Michele Mazzocco from the University of Minnesota. She spoke about how research on children with intellectual disabilities can underpin difficulties of children at risk for poor math outcomes. Similarities and differences in math learning observed in children with distinct aetiologies of intellectual disability, such as Fragile X, Turner and Williams syndromes (these are all genetic syndromes causing intellectual disability but have different strengths and weaknesses) can reveal a range of predictors and potential pathways of math outcomes, which can help develop appropriate educational supports.

My presentation was on the first day within a session themed 'Behavioural problems'. I presented the method and findings of a study looking at the relationship between parents' causal attributions for child misbehaviour and parenting strategies using multiple regression. Although the topic fitted well into the session, the session itself did not fit as well within the overall conference. While most presentations at

ECIDD considered cognitive development, skills and functions and the genotype-phenotype link, behaviour problems and parenting were not part of this theme. This was also reflected in the low number of questions I received after the presentation, which I found disappointing as I was hoping for some feedback on the study.

Overall, the conference was very useful, even though the topic of my presentation did not fit very well into its overall theme. As it was a smaller conference with all attendees working in the intellectual disability field, it provided me with a very good networking opportunity. I found it easier to get in touch with other attendees and find a similar research interests at this smaller conference than some of the bigger ones I have attended before. In addition to this, the conference offered a good reflection of what research in the intellectual disability field is happening in Europe at the moment and in what direction this may be going in the next couple of years. Finally, it was announced that the 10th ECIDD in 2014 is to take place in Sweden.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank the HaSS Graduate School at the University of Strathclyde for funding in addition to the PsyPAG bursary to allow me to attend and present at the 9th ECIDD.

### **Correspondence**

**Myrthe Jacobs**

University of Strathclyde.

Email: myrthe.jacobs@strath.ac.uk

# Understanding virtual relationships: A psycho-social perspective

Adfer Rashid Shah

---

*This age is the age of telecommunication, an era of android/blackberry sensation and other advanced electronic forms/gadgets of communication. This is the time of new contact practices across the cultures and boundaries where social networking, connecting even to unknown people not for any particular significant purpose/reason but for pleasure seeking and leisure enjoyment is the order of the day. Today the internet is acting as the basic medium for interpersonal relationships that have merely got reduced to electronic conversations/bonds especially among youths. This conceptual paper takes a dig into the psycho-social aspect of the virtual relationships that still remains a least described corner of social relations in the contemporary era. Also the article discusses how virtual intimacy trend has changed the frequency and content of the entire communication in the contemporary times.*

**T**HE INTERNET has become a popular medium for forming interpersonal relationships. Not only are people developing cyber friendships, but some move beyond virtual communication and interact more directly through telephonic contact and face-to-face encounters (McCown et al., 2001). Relations where people are not actually present but communicate or interact exclusively via internet, mobile phones or other communication devices are termed as virtual relationships. Such bonds can be simply understood as e-relations in the present-day times. Literally, virtual relationships are the temporary relations where knots develop out of a constant contact with strangers via social networking sites, dating or matrimonial sites, constant telephone calls, chatting and texting, etc. However, it can be safely argued that such relations can turn to actual relationships as well. For instance, intimacy developed through the virtual media like chatting or connecting through social networking can lead to actual romantic love relationships and friendships.

## **The pros and cons of virtual relationships**

Despite a number of difficulties, the virtual environment is perceived as a safer environment for sharing intimate information.

In the domain of sociology, such a trend can be analysed as the emerged social change in the living, leisure and communication patterns of the people across the globe. Vybíral and colleagues (2004), argue that adolescents involve in such relationships because it offers them a space in which they find support, interest and a certain form of love (Vybíral, Šmahel & Divínová, 2004).

With the advent of mobile telephones, the Indian society partially got transformed into a virtual community out of the transitional nature and identity and personality crisis particularly among youths. Especially since few years, social networking addiction specially that of Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo Messenger, etc., among teens, youth and even middle-aged became a full-time hobby and a culture of everyday life, thereby shaping up a distinct peer and youth culture and leading to the emergence of new dysfunctional relations developed through such a tantalising media. Many people resort to such relations because they have access to the mobile telephones with internet facility, etc. Studying such a phenomena in sociology also unfolds the emerged trends in sexuality, intimacy, dating craze, leisure enjoyment, etc.

Talking upon Cybersex, the American psychologist Alvin Cooper (1999) points out three primary factors (collectively termed as

'Triple A Engine') contingent to online sexuality. These factors include accessibility, affordability, anonymity where accessibility refers to an easy access to chat rooms filled with people looking for cyber sexual experiences. It is less expensive as the only cost is the fee paid for the internet connection (affordability) and moreover, people can move on the internet in complete anonymity, and they also perceive communication as anonymous and thus free from any moral binding with no fear of public stigma or the sense of shame which makes it more easier to open up to one another and share or talk about anything.

This ultimately gives rise to a great risk for users who suffer from sexual compulsion or who are mentally vulnerable and prone to compulsive behaviour (as cited in Vybíral, Šmahel & Divínová, 2004).

Moreover, such trends can have serious implications as hanging out with fake anonymous people via online chatting rooms, phone texts, etc., can lead to cyber offences, crucial information loss to strangers, moral degradation, economic thefts, security issues, etc., that can be doom spelling in the long run. Like blackmailing over intimate pictures/images/secrets, etc., once a person under the delusion of a serious relationship shares or opens up to another, like account hacking and even sexual abuse. The trend of inviting Facebook friends, especially girls to meet in person after developing friendship via social networking and in some cases subjecting them to abuse and even rape. Such an example was recently witnessed in New Delhi where a law student kept his Facebook friend/then girl friend, from Nepal as a captive and kept gang raping her along with his friends in south Delhi. Also two years ago in Indian administered Kashmir a boy killed his friend and dumped him in his bedroom for weeks together, after inviting him home for he had developed an affair with his (killer's) girl friend via Facebook.

Speaking sociologically, the advent of the tempting modes of communication technology, extra leisure and disposable income

available to youth, lessening family regulations, the craze for and possession of the latest/smart communication gadgets treated as status symbol, changing mindset, widening choices and breaking fiber of religious and moral ethos and emergence of a regulation free online society actually created the virtual atmosphere in this part of the globe as well and thus facilitated the virtual relationships. This can be exemplified by the changing India and access to mobile telephones, internet, etc., even in rural India where owning an attractive and expensive mobile telephone is treated as a status symbol. Also the changing family norms like the advent of nuclear family, dual career family, lack of quality time for where love is increasingly substituted/compensated with money. Also migration of teens/youths from small places to big cities for education or training purposes and thus being away from home enables them do anything they want.

Psychologically, virtual relationships are purposive in nature. For some it is a medium that enables an individual to satisfy his/her ego and sooth ones anxiety resulting from the suppression of various instincts particularly those of libidinal and for others it a medium to execute one's aloofness. Divínová (2004) reported that the basic reason often supported by the users was the desire of sexual gratification particularly in times when a partner is temporarily unavailable or is unable to meet the user's needs thereby finding it as an escape from this dissatisfaction. Such relations have both positive and negative impact upon human existence. In one way it satiates (though fallaciously and temporarily) a person's love and belongingness needs and helps him/her to give vent to the pent up feelings and emotions whose repression otherwise may lead to various psychological problems but in other way, this goes without saying that it gives rise to various anti-social, immoral and unethical psycho-social pathologies. Studies reveal that individuals involved in such relations experience serious marital problems and even

problems with other relationships. Such activities may convert them into introverted personalities while neglecting their family and other social contacts (Schneider, 2000).

### **Last words**

Virtual relations do not represent actual interpersonal ties as generally perceived and thus are characterised by hollow sociability, temporary and unreliable support and they often damage the real life ethos as people even tie communication and emotional knots to unknown people under the false sense of belongingness. Such networks though enhance people's friendship and love relationships even without geographical boundaries, enabling people find love partners cannot produce true and reliable relationships in reality and security threats above all cannot be over ruled. As there are evidences that social networking and allied issues/affairs are even responsible for a considerable number of divorces. Also information given to friends via virtual route can be false and people can be frauds/cheats who simply want to get along for some definite purpose like money, job, material favours, sex, etc.

Today, when relationships begin online and romantic love relationships, friendships, online chatting have become a norm. Also intimidating (bullying people via social networking route), hacking and attacking the accounts, photo tagging, fake applications and accounts, sharing of immoral and sexual content, etc., have taken the virtual means. Further the trends like telephone dating, telephone sex, night calling habits up to the addiction of online chatting among youths, have increased multifold and thus lead to a distressing social, cultural, moral and security threats.

The question with the alarming question mark at its end is that, 'Are virtual relationships proliferating at the cost of real relationships? Are we ignorant enough to spot out the dark side of the internet technology and social media? How cyberspace has drastically affected the real space? And what can be the shape of kinship and friendship in the near future out of the emergent virtual edge?

### **Correspondence**

**Adfer Rashid Shah**

Central University, New Delhi.

Email: adfer.syed@gmail.com

## References

- Bleecker, S.E. (1994). The virtual organisation. *The Futurist*, March–April, 9–14.
- Castells, M. (2000). *The rise of network society*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Grenier, R. & Metes, G. (1995). *Going virtual: Moving your organisation into the 21st century*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Cooper, A.C, Scherer, R., Sylvain, C.B. & Gordon, B.L. (1999). Sexuality on the internet: From sexual exploration to pathological expression. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 30(2), 154–164.
- Divínová, R. (2004). *Cybersex as a form of internet communication*. Unpublished thesis. Brno: FSS MU.
- Jamieson, L. (1998). *Intimacy: Personal relationships in modern societies*. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Ju-Yu, Y., Cheng-Fang, Y., Hsiu-Yi., Chun-Jen, H. & Chih-Hung, K. (2011). Hostility in the real world and online: The effect of internet addiction, depression, and online activity. *Cyber Psychology, Behaviour and Social Networking*, 14(11), 649–655.
- Kraut, R.E., Rice, R.E., Cool, C. & Fish, R.S. (1998). Varieties of social influence: The role of utility and norms in the success of a new communication medium. *Organisation Science*, 9(4), 437–453.
- Mowshowitz, A. (1994). Virtual organisation: A vision of management in the information age. *The Information Society*, 10, 267–288.
- McCown, J.A. et al. (2001). Internet relationships: People who meet people. *Cyber Psychology & Behaviour*, 4(5), 593–596.
- Shah, A. (2012). *The web abuse. Kashmir life*. Retrieved 5 November 2012, from: <http://kashmirlife.net/the-web-abuse/>.
- Shah, A. (2012). *The virtual edge. Rising Kashmir*. Retrieved 16 November 2012. Srinagar.
- Walther, J.B. (1992). Interpersonal effects in computer-mediated interaction: A relational perspective. *Communication Research*, 19(1), 52–90.
- Schneider, J.P. (2000). Effects of cybersex addiction on the family: Results of a survey. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, 7, 31–58.
- Vybíral, Z., Šmahel, D. & Divínová, R. (2004). Growing up in virtual reality: Adolescents and the internet. Available at: <http://www.terapie.cz/materials/czech-adolescents-internet.pdf>

# PSYPAG

Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group

**Follow PsyPAG  
on Twitter**

[www.twitter.com/PsyPAG](http://www.twitter.com/PsyPAG)

or

[@PsyPAGQuarterly](https://twitter.com/PsyPAGQuarterly)



# Recruitment issues in school-based drug and alcohol research with young people

Richard Tyler & Emma Davies

---

*The study of young people's substance use often relies on using schools as sources of participants. However, school participation rates in UK surveys are usually low and so successful research must employ a range of techniques to encourage schools to take part. This paper discuss the author's experiences of setting up two survey projects, from ethics to data collection and the challenges and successes in each stage. The authors then provide recommendations for future researchers embarking on similar projects. This guidance will be useful for PhD candidates or early career researchers particularly beginning projects in substance use among young people and will prepare other researchers so as to avoid unexpected delays in recruitment and data collection.*

THE health behaviours young people engage in can have a profound influence on short-term and long-term health and well-being (Odgers et al., 2008). Engaging in substance use, for example, is associated with poor academic performance, memory problems, risk of unprotected sex (Newbury-Birch et al., 2009) and dependence problems in adulthood (Williams, Holmbeck, & Greenley, 2002). In the UK, 45 per cent of 11- to 15-year-olds have tried at least one alcoholic drink and 12 per cent have had a drink in the last week (Fuller, 2012). The prevalence of tobacco use in the same population is 25 per cent, and prevalence for other drug use is 17 per cent with cannabis use being the most frequently reported 'other drug' with 8.8 per cent ever using it and 7.6 per cent using it in the last year.

Schools offer an ideal environment to capture representative samples of young people because attendance is compulsory up to the age of 16 in the UK. However, there are often considerable barriers to accessing school pupils as research participants. Some large scale, international projects, report school participation rates of less than 50 per cent with some as low as six per cent (Hibell et al., 2012). The reason UK schools are difficult to access compared to schools in other countries is largely unknown although qualitative research reveals feelings that schools

are already heavily audited and there is limited time to cope with an overwhelming number of survey invitations (Sturgis, Smith & Hughes, 2006). It is, therefore, necessary for researchers to employ a range of strategies to encourage participation. However, few published papers exist to support researchers in approaching schools (Madge et al., 2012) and many of the techniques proposed are resource heavy rendering them difficult for early-career researchers or postgraduates to implement. The aim of this paper is to synthesise some of the advice given in the literature about conducting school-based research. The paper also draws upon the experiences of the authors; a second year PhD student exploring young people's cannabis and tobacco use and a third year student developing an alcohol misuse intervention.

There are many ethical issues concerning the participation of adolescents in research and these are beyond the scope of this paper (see Mahon et al., 1996; Moolchan & Mermelstein, 2002; Punch, 2002). Young children are considered to be a vulnerable population due to their limited intellectual and emotional competence (Santelli et al., 1995). Although many authors are beginning to illustrate the competency of adolescent participants and their ability to provide valid and useful data (e.g. Skelton, 2008),

institutional ethics boards often err on the side of caution. The use of alcohol, cannabis and tobacco is also prohibited for this age group. By necessity, both authors negotiated meticulous ethical reviews, involving careful scrutiny of guidelines from disciplines including criminology, psychology and medical science. We begin by exploring parental consent, an area that can have an enormous impact on recruitment. We then turn to discuss the merits of several strategies that can be employed to encourage schools to support substance use research.

### **Parental consent**

In survey research with adults, participants are typically asked to give consent prior to taking part in the study. An individual is considered responsible and able to make an informed decision unless there is evidence to suggest otherwise (e.g. a diagnosis of mental ill-health or learning disability), whereas the default assumption for children is that they are not capable unless their capacity is proven (Santelli et al., 1995). The legal position for consent, however, is far from clear. While under 16s cannot consent or refuse medical treatment, no legislation exists in the UK to dictate the age of consent for research (Berger, 2012). It is the discretion of individual institutions and ethics committees that determines the approval of proposed consent procedures. Usually, young participants are considered unable to make a decision to take part and a parent, guardian or other responsible adult is asked to give consent on the child's behalf.

### **Opting in**

Parental consent can be sought by asking parents to agree in writing that their child can take part in the study. Opt-in consent requires that only those children for whom a completed consent form is returned are able to participate in the study. This approach has historically been compulsory for research into sensitive topics such as drug use or sexual health (Dent et al., 1993). Authors have commented, however, that there is little

incentive for parents to return consent forms and it is often proposed that the lack of returned consent forms reflects apathy rather than objection to the study (Ellickson & Hawes, 1989).

There are often observed discrepancies between children with returned consent forms and those without (Tigges, 2003). Importantly, the lack of action from parents results in potential participants from low socioeconomic status backgrounds being missed as returning consent forms may be a particularly low priority for these populations (Berger, 2012). Participants in research using opt-in procedures are also less likely, than using alternative methods, to report past or current use of tobacco as well as the intention for future tobacco use (Dent et al., 1993; Unger et al., 2004). Requiring opt-in consent may, therefore, result in a selection bias towards lower prevalence samples.

In a review of adolescent risk behaviour studies in the US, Tigges (2003) reported the use of opt-in consent to result in consent obtained for around 30 to 60 per cent of pupils. Follow-up letters, postcard reminders, telephone calls and daily requests for teachers to encourage the return of forms can increase the return rate (Ellickson & Hawes, 1989; Wolfenden et al., 2009). However, the costs involved in attempting to conduct surveys in whole schools would come as a significant burden and as the administration of the survey will largely be undertaken by school staff, this extra work may deter schools from agreeing to take part in the first place.

### **Opting out**

An alternative is to send full information home explaining the study and request parents only reply if they do not wish their child to take part. Consent is implied through lack of dissent and researchers need only exclude those children for whom the reply slip is returned. This 'opt-out' consent results in rates of parental permission for around 93 to 100 per cent of students (Tigges, 2003). Of course, opt-out consent is

not an easy alternative; researchers must make every attempt to ensure letters reach parents. Many schools now use electronic mail or text systems to communicate directly with parents. However, not all schools have these facilities nor do all parents have electronic mail accounts. Alternative methods include sending out a separate communication, like a newsletter, detailing the letters that should have been received over a specified time period. Again, this assumes that all parents will access this communication. Whilst it is virtually impossible to guarantee a parent has the opportunity to consider their child's participation without extensive follow-ups akin to obtaining opt-in consent, we argue that it is possible utilising the variety of communication platforms now available to be as confident as possible in reaching parents.

The UK's flagship national survey on smoking, drinking and drug use features an opt-out consent procedure and the latest school response rate was 42 per cent (Fuller, 2012). Another recent national survey commissioned by the Government, the Tellus4 survey, achieved a final school response rate of 34 per cent (Chamberlain et al., 2010) although there is no information regarding the parental consent mechanism used. The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) collects data from 15- and 16-year-old students across Europe every four years and uses an opt-out approach (Hibell et al., 2012). In all but five of the participating countries, response rates for schools were above 58 per cent. However, the UK was noted as having a very low school participation rate of just six per cent. This highlights that even large-scale, often well-resourced; projects struggle to encourage schools in the UK to take part in research.

The contrasting procedures in the current authors' projects illustrate the impact of the parental consent process. In the alcohol study, opt-in consent was required from all parents. The study aimed to recruit 500 participants but due to the

time pressures of doctoral research, recruitment had to be stopped after securing 180 responses. Even this relatively small number took months of work. In the tobacco and cannabis project the researcher was granted permission to use opt-out consent after several revisions to the protocol, including the assurance that every possible step would be taken to ensure letters reached parents and an emphasis on the costs in accuracy and bias with the ethics boards preferred (opt-in) method. The study used an opportunist sample and aimed to recruit as many participants as possible; invitations were sent to 130 secondary schools and of these, 25 (19 per cent) agreed to take part in the survey. At the time of writing the survey has achieved over 5000 responses.

### **Recruiting schools**

With the care and attention given to producing a watertight study protocol it is perhaps surprising that the approach to recruiting schools requires a great deal of flexibility (Alibali & Nathan, 2010). We argue that schools are very individual institutions and having inflexible protocols presents further challenges. The authors by their own admissions had not anticipated the energy and resilience required to enter the research environments of schools. The majority of schools, who did not take part, declined without giving a reason or simply did not respond to communication attempts. As such, the schools giving reasons for declining grant us valuable insights for future practice, however, there may be additional reasons for declining that are not apparent to the research.

### **Framing the research**

It is imperative to inspire support from adult gatekeepers as they have the power to allow or disrupt the participation of otherwise willing child participants (Skelton, 2008). It is important to recognise that schools are under immense pressure at times of the year which means that a survey is often last in a long list of things to do. It is, therefore,

useful to explicitly state how the research can help the school (e.g. contributing to policy agendas or Government/Ofsted recommendations).

Schools may have concerns about the consequences of taking part in substance use research. In the tobacco study, one school was concerned that parents would assume there was a problem in the school if their pupils were to take part. These concerns can be anticipated by emphasising key points in the research design. The researcher emphasised that schools would take part anonymously and at no point would any school be identified in reporting or media related to the research. In addition, the study documentation stated that the researchers were as interested in young people who did not use substances as they were for individuals who did and as such, participation did not imply drug use.

A considerable amount of responsibility for administering the surveys is given to schools, who may feel there is little reward in it for them (Madge et al., 2012). Incentives may, therefore, be given to schools rather than participants themselves and might take the form of a detailed report, or other consultancy type work. Both projects offered reports in addition to providing results verbally to staff, students and parents. This emphasised a tangible outcome of taking part. In the alcohol study, the researcher offered to teach A-level and GCSE psychology students and talk about her research. This was a good way of getting schools involved although a number of talks were given without reciprocal participation so in negotiating access, researchers should be clear about what will be undertaken from the outset.

### **Reaching the right staff**

As eluded to in the introduction to this segment, schools are very individual institutions in the UK and a quick lesson learnt by both authors was that there was no specific role within schools that the researcher could pitch the survey to nor was there a single

route to gaining permission. In the tobacco study, a teacher or other staff member passionate about the study was much more resourceful in gaining approval from senior management than if the researcher started at the top level. The researcher tried to contact head teachers in the first instance but found that they would rarely consider the study and it was difficult to gain access to try and encourage a decision. A second attempt ensued that directed invitations to staff members believed to be responsible for drugs education. However, as drugs education is taught under various guises; including Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), citizenship or sometimes Personal Development Learning (PDL), identifying these individuals proved equally challenging as few schools publish staff lists externally. Some schools make this information available publically but this is rare and often not regularly updated. Furthermore, there is typically just one member of staff responsible for drugs education and if they are unavailable it is unlikely that the researcher will gain the support needed.

In the tobacco project the researcher was supported by regional smoking cessation organisations and this connection was crucial to the success of the project. In particular, one of the organisations engages with schools on a variety of other projects including training for PSHE staff and school-based smoking interventions. As such, there were strong working relationships and through recommendations and forwarding study invitations on the researcher's behalf these connections can further encourage schools to consider taking part in the research.

### **The importance of multiple voiced or face-to-face contacts with school staff**

Planning meetings are integral to the success of recruiting schools. Testa and Coleman (2006) suggest that schools perceive the research to have more credence and the researcher to be more professional and committed if the researcher makes the effort

to meet with staff who will be responsible for administering the survey. In practice this may be appropriate if the schools are in close geographical proximity to the researcher but not if there are many schools spread across great distances. In some cases the tobacco use researcher was able to arrange telephone meetings, or video calls using 'Skype' or similar teleconferencing software so that the school can put a real voice or face to the researcher and hopefully experience the confidence that ensues from face-to-face contact.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, this paper considers the process of recruiting young people from school populations for substance use research. The literature identifies a host of concerns for using opt-in consent which can be limiting to sample size and generalisability. With precedents set by large-scale surveys and consid-

ering the above points researchers may be fortunate to have opt-out consent approved. However, opt-out consent does not guarantee school participation. With school participation rates presumed to be low regardless of consent mechanism, it is imperative that researchers manage relationships with schools successfully, frame the research in a way that emphasises tangible outcomes for schools, identify key personnel to support the work and harness existing links by collaborating with external organisations where possible. Above all, the authors advocate flexibility in approaching each school as an individual institute to get the best possible participation rates for studies in the substance use field.

### **Correspondence**

**Richard E. Tyler**

University of Portsmouth.

Email: richard.tyler@port.ac.uk



## References

- Alibali, M.W. & Nathan, M.J. (2010). Conducting research in schools: A practical guide. *Journal of Cognition and Development, 11*(4), 397–407.
- Berger, I. (2012). Informed consent in clinical research with youths. *PsyPAG Quarterly, 85*, 12–15.
- Chamberlain, T., George, N., Golden, S., Walker, F. & Benton, T. (2010). *Tellus4 national report*. London.
- Dent, C.W., Galaif, J., Sussman, S., Stacy, A., Burtun, D. & Flay, B.R. (1993). Demographic, psychosocial and behavioural differences in samples of actively and passively consented adolescents. *Addictive Behaviours, 18*(1), 51–56.
- Ellickson, P.L. & Hawes, J.A. (1989). An assessment of active versus passive methods for obtaining parental consent. *Evaluation Review, 13*(1), 45–55.
- Fuller, E. (Ed.) (2012). *Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2011*. London: NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care.
- Hibell, B., Guttormsson, U., Ahlström, S., Balakireva, O., Bjarnason, T., Kokkevi, A. & Kraus, L. (2012). *The 2011 ESPAD Report: Substance use among students in 36 European countries*. Stockholm, Sweden: The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAN).
- Madge, N., Hemming, P.J., Goodman, A., Goodman, S., Kingston, S., Stenson, K. & Webster, C. (2012). Conducting large-scale surveys in secondary schools: The case of the Youth On Religion (YOR) project. *Children & Society, 26*(6), 417–429.
- Mahon, A., Glendinning, C., Clarke, K. & Craig, G. (1996). Researching children: Methods and ethics. *Children & Society, 10*(2), 145–154.
- Moolchan, E.T. & Mermelstein, R. (2002). Research on tobacco use among teenagers: Ethical challenges. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 30*(6), 409–417.
- Newbury-Birch, D., Walker, J., Avery, L., Beyer, F., Brown, N., Jackson, K. & Stewart, S. (2009). *Impact of alcohol consumption on young people: A systematic review of published reviews*. Newcastle: Newcastle University.
- Odgers, C.L., Caspi, A., Nagin, D.S., Piquero, A.R., Slutske, W.S., Milne, B.J. & Moffitt, T.E. (2008). Is it important to prevent early exposure to drugs and alcohol among adolescents? *Psychological Science, 19*(10), 1037–1044.
- Punch, S. (2002). Research with children – the same or different from research with adults? *Childhood – a Global Journal of Child Research, 9*(3), 321–341.
- Santelli, J.S., Rosenfeld, W.D., DuRant, R.H., Dubler, N., Morreale, M., English, A. & Rogers, A.S. (1995). Guidelines for adolescent health research: A position paper of the society for adolescent medicine. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 17*(5), 270–276.
- Skelton, T. (2008). Research with children and young people: Exploring the tensions between ethics, competence and participation. *Children's Geographies, 6*(1), 21–36.
- Sturgis, P., Smith, P. & Hughes, G. (2006). *A study of suitable methods for raising response rates in school surveys*. London: Department for Education and Skills.
- Testa, A.C. & Coleman, L.M. (2006). Accessing research participants in schools: A case study of a UK adolescent sexual health survey. *Health Education Research, 21*(4), 518–526.
- Tigges, B.B. (2003). Parental consent and adolescent risk behaviour research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 35*(3), 283–289.
- Unger, J.B., Gallaher, P., Palmer, P.H., Baezconde-Garbanati, L., Trinidad, D.R., Cen, S. & Johnson, C.A. (2004). No news is bad news: Characteristics of adolescents who provide neither parental consent nor refusal for participation in school-based survey research. *Evaluation Review, 28*(1), 52–63.
- Williams, P.G., Holmbeck, G.N. & Greenley, R.N. (2002). Adolescent health psychology. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 70*(3), 828–842.
- Wolfenden, L., Kypri, K., Freund, M. & Hodder, R. (2009). Obtaining active parental consent for school-based research: A guide for researchers. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 33*(3), 270–275.

# Book review

---

## The Psychopath Test

Jon Ronson

Picador, 2012

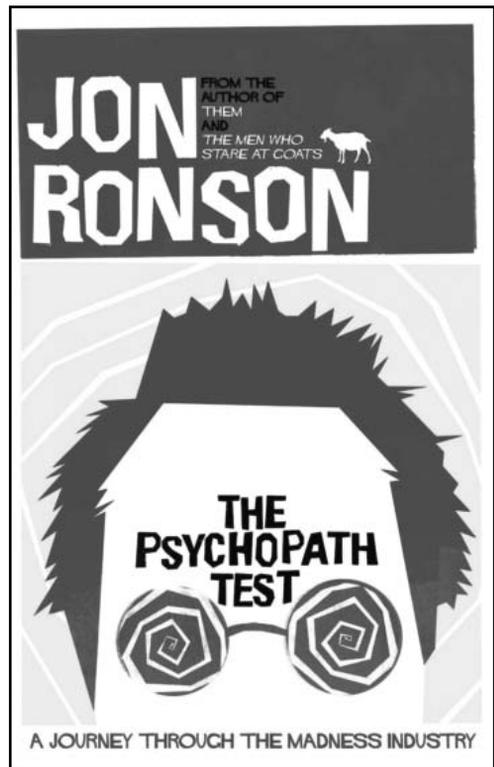
ISBN: 978-0-3304-9227-0;

304 pp; Paperback.

Reviewed by Katy Hopkins

Although not an academic text, *The Psychopath Test*, the latest semi-biographical, documentary-style novel from Jon Ronson, is a must-read for anyone with an interest in psychopathy. From a layperson's perspective, Ronson takes the reader on a journey of discovery through the history of psychopathy. He explores the roots of the disorder, outlining historical theories and treatments as well as current trends and debates in the field. *The Psychopath Test* presents high-profile and controversial cases, from a wide variety of viewpoints including those of researchers, psychologists, psychiatrists, conspiracy theorists, anti-psychiatry activists and diagnosed psychopaths.

Ronson highlights the lack of knowledge and prevalence of confusing and conflicting information about mental health problems within the general population. His initial foray into the world of the psychopath leads him to encounter a powerful, anti-psychiatry group, funded by the Church of Scientology: the 'Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR)'. Scientology and psychiatry have been locked in conflict since Scientology was first conceived. Following the publication of the Church of Scientology's seminal text, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, which advised readers to seek spiritual rather than psychiatric or psychological treatments for mental health problems, the American Psychiatric Association spoke out against Scientology, advising its members not to use the techniques described in *Dianetics*. Since then, the Church of Scientology has been openly critical of psychiatry and psychology, denouncing psychiatrists as 'antisocial



enemies of the people' and claiming that there is no medical evidence that mental health disorders exist.

The refusal of the CCHR to believe in the existence of psychopaths is another strand in the ongoing war to discredit psychiatry. Ronson's CCHR contact assures him that there is no such thing as a psychopath, or indeed a mental health disorder and takes him to meet Tony, a resident of a secure psychiatric unit, who claims to have 'faked insanity' in order to escape a prison sentence and has subsequently been detained for 12 years. Conversations with Tony's psychiatrists reveal that although he did initially fake symptoms of various mental health problems, he has since been diagnosed as a psychopath. Unsure what to believe, Ronson sets out to discover what psychopathy is, how it is diagnosed and how reliable that diagnosis might be.

*The Psychopath Test* probes to the heart of many of the controversies that exist under the surface of modern psychology; exploring the ambiguity of diagnostic criteria, the lack of proper public understanding of mental health and personality disorders and the ways in which diagnoses may be used, over-used and misused. Armed with a certificate in the use of a diagnostic checklist for symptoms of psychopathy, Ronson sets out to answer for himself some key questions about psychopaths and psychopathy. He investigates the idea that behind corporate successes lie psychopathic personalities and wonders how reliable diagnoses of psychopathy might be. By portraying himself as a 'power-mad' psychopath diagnostician, Ronson cleverly highlights the need for diagnostic tools to be used with great care and only ever considered in the wider context of the individual and the system in which they live.

The book explores the potential pitfalls of the over-diagnosis of psychopathy and other psychological disorders. Ronson questions whether, if pressed, every individual might be diagnosed with some type of psychological disorder, commenting on concerns about the over-use of psychiatric medication, as well as the potential conflict of interest presented by pharmaceutical company funded research into psycho-pharmaceutical mental health treatments.

In conclusion, *The Psychopath Test* is an entertaining, well-researched overview of psychopathy, fully accessible to people with no prior knowledge. Those already versed in psychology, will find little that is new or ground-breaking contained within but nonetheless, *The Psychopath Test* is well worth a read. Hilarious, poignant and gripping, in today's climate of 'open source' publishing, Ronson uses satire to highlight a pressing need to ensure the clarity and comprehensibility of the information reaching the public domain. Through his frank portrayal of his own journey of discovery, he points out, in a non-moralistic way, that mental health professionals should always be open to the idea that they might be wrong (as their predecessors often were). However, the general public would do well to appreciate that these people, whilst not necessarily always right, have access to the most up-to date information available and are doing their best to work in the best interests of their clients, within a fraught and complex field.

### **Correspondence**

**Katy Hopkins**

Email: khopkins23@gmail.com

Conference review:

# The 50th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Aphasia

Dinesh Ramoo

---

San Francisco, 28–30 October 2012

*'He is speechless and cannot speak... an ailment not to be treated.'*

SO READS a 16th century BCE Egyptian papyrus. Acquired Aphasia has no doubt been around since man began to speak, but it is surprising to most of us today that it is only within the last 50 years that scientists have seriously considered how this can be useful in informing us about language. The Academy of Aphasia was spearheaded by Ronald Tikofsky in 1962. Tikofsky, along with an initial set of nine members, held the first meeting in Chicago in 1963. The Academy has since grown to include 180 members with many more non-members in attendance every year. The truly astounding aspect of these meetings is the sheer range of topics that are discussed as well as the diverse range of researchers and clinicians in attendance, from computational scientists and speech therapists to medical professionals and researchers. This mix of academic and professional participants allows everyone to take in feedback on their work from other disciplines which can be very illuminating.

Last year, the Annual Meeting for the Academy of Aphasia was held at the Stanford Court Renaissance Hotel in San Francisco. Clearly, San Francisco is one of the most beautiful cities in America (a claim about which the locals are not reticent). No doubt, the city has much to boast about, from tranquil bay waters and unspoiled woods to steep streets of the city along which cluster preserved Victorian houses amid stylish retro

clubs and modern apartments. This is the city which gave birth to the United Nations along with blue jeans and mountain biking.

The meeting started on 17 October with a sunset cruise on San Francisco Bay along the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz Island. This was followed by three days of talks and poster sessions packed between 9.00 am to 6.00 pm. These were divided into five platform sessions, four poster sessions and a special symposium on Case Series Research. One of the significant aspects of the meeting was the fact that the Academy treats posters with the same academic rigour as paper presentations. This meant that the poster sessions were as alive with discussions and debates as the talks with high quality research presented in condensed form. The research presented was very diverse, including brain imaging, EEG studies, eye-tracking, speech error analysis, and computational modelling.

As someone involved in computational modelling and case studies, I was particularly interested in talks about Case Series and Advanced Lesion-mapping Methods (Myrna Schwartz), Theory Selection Using Case Series Data (Matthew Goldrick) and Outliers in the Case Series Approach (Simon Fischer-Baum). Gary Dell gave a very interesting presentation on how to work with case series data as single-case models. There was also a special 50th anniversary symposium on New Frontiers of Language Science sponsored by Cognitive Neuropsychology. The symposium included Ronald Tikofsky, Alfonso Caramazza, Argye Hillis and Jenny Crinion.

The poster sessions were divided into four sets. The sessions had posters on lexical processing, testing, rehabilitation, neural reorganisation, executive functions, bilingualism, discourse, syntax, reading and spelling. I presented a poster on my work with Hindi Aphasic patients, conducted with a Universitas 21 grant. I was pleased to note that there was a large selection of work from other languages (Persian, Kannada, Russian, etc.). This is a significant change as most of the early years of Aphasia research was confined to English and other European languages. This spread into other languages will no doubt provide us with a much broader understanding of human language production in the future.

This conference was a novel experience for me as this was the first international conference I have attended as well as my first time in America. I made many new contacts with researchers from difference disciplines who gave illuminating feedback on my own research. I was also able to talk about future

collaborations with a number of researchers and have also received an invitation to give guest lectures at Seton Hall University. I'm confident that these contacts will play a significant role in my future work. As a happy aside, my PhD supervisor has been admitted as a member of the Academy this year.

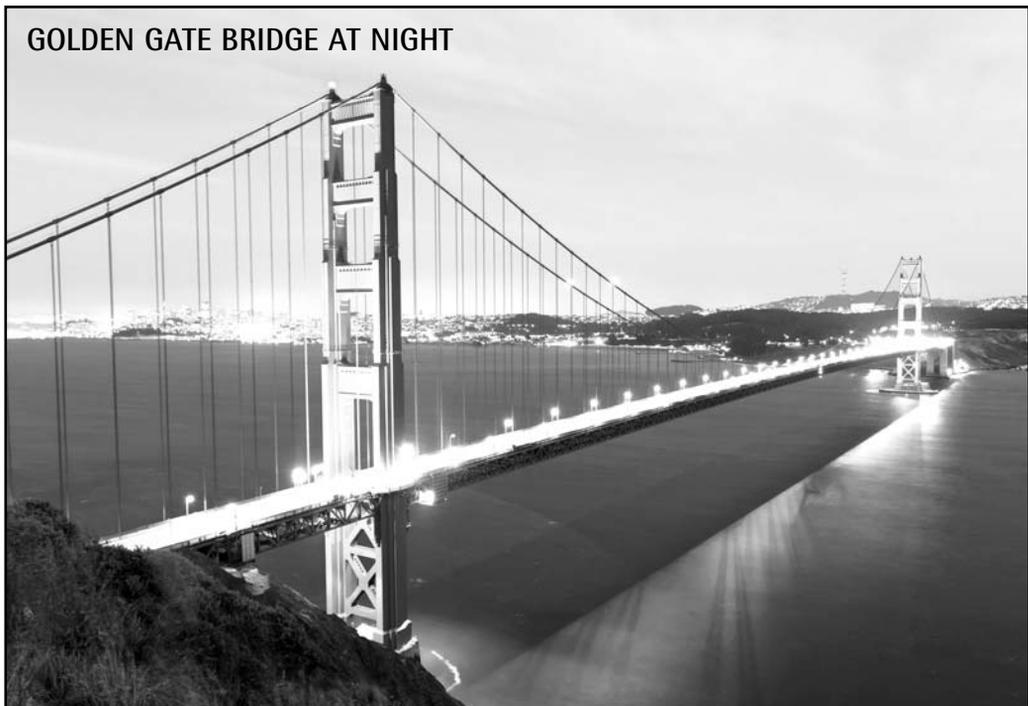
I am happy to say that this conference was a great success and has opened new avenues of thought in my own work and no doubt in others. As Ronald Tikofsky said at the closing of the meeting, the Academy has come far since its initial inception and will go on from strength to strength to see its 100th Anniversary. Hopefully I'll be presenting something then. But for now, I'm looking forward to next year's meeting in Lucerne.

### **Correspondence**

**Dinesh Ramoo**

University of Birmingham.

Email: dkr954@bham.ac.uk



# How writing blogs can help your academic career

Professor Mark Griffiths

---

IN A PREVIOUS ISSUE of the *PsyPAG Quarterly*, my friend and colleague Dr Andrew Dunn wrote an article on blog writing (Issue 85, December, 2012). Since the end of November, 2011, I have also been writing a blog on 'addictive, obsessive, compulsive and/or extreme behaviours', much of which is based on my research interests in various health-related behaviours. My article takes a different tack but will also try to convince you about the benefits of blogging.

I take my blog writing very seriously and was delighted to see my blog exceed 350,000 hits by February, 2012 (with a daily rate of 2000 to 3000 hits, and having only started blogging in December, 2011). I now normally write three new blogs a week (having written five a week for the first six months) and I would like to try and convince you of the benefits of writing one. To date, the benefits of my blog writing have included:

- **Raised national and international profile:** My blog helps in the dissemination and promotion of my research, the Psychology Division, Nottingham Trent University, and the discipline of psychology more widely.
- **Increased media opportunities:** My blog has attracted the attention of various national and international radio and television programmes and has led to 11 media appearances based purely on my blog entries (such as an American syndicated radio interview about my blog on 'punning mania').
- **Additional resources for university teaching:** I've been using lots of my blogs to supplement my teaching resources. Students on my 'Addictive Behaviours'

module have been particularly appreciative of my blogs on gambling and sexual paraphilias (based on my module feedback this year).

- **Additional resources for A-level psychology teaching:** I have also discovered that various A-level psychology tutors are recommending my blog to their classes in relation to the psychology syllabi on both gambling and addiction. The feedback I have received is that students like the populist way I write by blogs that aid student understanding.
- **Blogs as forerunners for papers and articles:** About 10 of my blogs have been lengthened and adapted for articles and papers. For instance, a recent paper I wrote for the *Journal of Behavioural Addictions* on sexual paraphilias was based almost totally on material in my blogs.
- **Blogs reprinted in other magazines and publications:** A number of editors have contacted me and asked if they could reprint my blogs in their publications. For instance, my blogs have been republished in the gambling trade press (e.g. *World Online Gambling Law Report*, *i-Gaming Business Affiliate*), and newspapers (e.g. the *Nottingham Post* have published three of my blogs in their 'First Person' column). One of my blogs on the Government's Stoptober campaign that was reprinted in the *Nottingham Post*, led to 11 radio interviews (including Radio 5 Live), and was also published in outlets such as the *Evening Standard* newspaper and the ITV news website.
- **Dissemination of preliminary results and new ideas:** Blogs can be a very quick way of disseminating preliminary results and ideas. I only ever do this if I think it will

have a wider reaching effect than waiting for formal publication (e.g. some kind of political effect). Writing blogs is also a great way of raising issues and ideas without having to write a full-blown article. They also provide an excellent forum for the establishing initial thoughts, novel observations or naming new phenomena.

- **Participant recruitment for research:** Although there are ethical questions to consider, blogs can help in the (solicited and unsolicited) recruitment of research participants. I've been amazed at the number of different paraphiliacs that have contacted me following the publication of my blogs.

I hope that this small insight will persuade you that blog writing on psychology-related issues can be good for your academic career and that there are numerous benefits.

If you would like to read my blog, it can be found at: <http://drmarkgriffiths.wordpress.com/>

### **Correspondence**

**Professor Mark Griffiths**

Nottingham Trent University.

Email: [mark.griffiths@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:mark.griffiths@ntu.ac.uk)

### **References**

Dunn, A. (2012). Blogging, the tipping point, and free will. *PsyPAG Quarterly*, 85, 31–32.

*Conference review:*

# The 6th International Adventure Therapy Conference

Elizabeth Freeman

---

Hruboskalsko Rock Town, Czech Republic, 26–30 September 2012

**W**HAT KIND OF CONFERENCE would involve risk taking, dangling from a rock, navigating ropes elevated high up on trees, dancing, laughing, trusting people you have never met with your well-being/life and ideas, and experiencing, with all senses, wild waters and rugged terrain? The 6th International Adventure Therapy Conference (IATC).

Adventure Therapy is an active experiential approach to group psychotherapy or counselling. It uses recreational activities such as climbing, kayaking, surfing, ropes course and other activities as bases for therapy, offering new, healthy ways to recreate in the process. It is a relatively new area, and although the outdoor knowledge, skills and techniques that underpin it have been around for decades, experiential education informs its underlying philosophy. As a distinct form of psychotherapy, it has been practiced since the 1960s and combines psychological and learning theories to achieve positive outcomes, namely: improved self-esteem, self-concept, and pro-social behaviour. Research shows that Adventure Therapy is effective in treating issues that affect an individual's sense of self-worth and that positive Adventure Therapy experiences foster a sense of personal responsibility and empowerment (Cotton & Butselaar, 2012; Gass, 1993; Nadler & Luckner, 1992; Tucker et al., 2012).

The 6th International Adventure Therapy Conference began its life with some pre-conference activities, provided to challenge and connect delegates with each other

and to the place. The venue Hruba Skala Castle, situated near the highest point of the Hruboskalsko range in Czech Paradise, afforded the delegates with a 180 degree view of sandstone crags, steep ravines and lavish forest. Having a castle as a venue for a conference certainly provided an auspicious backdrop to such a gathering of minds. This was not only due its history and location but to what it meant to the Czech people and how it, and the wider area, represented the regularly coined phrase during the conference – ‘the Czech way!’

The conference spoilt the delegates with an array of presentations on theory, research and practice, as well as experiential workshops that explored therapeutic techniques. A number of acclaimed keynote and distinguished invited speakers stimulated audiences with their insights and their work in the outdoor therapy/education arena and included: Alan Ewert, discussing Adventure Therapy and the natural environment; Michael Ungar, illustrating the importance of risk, responsibility and resilience; Masego Thamuku, describing Earth Therapy in Botswana; Christian M. Itin, explicating the use of metaphors in outdoor therapy/education; Ales Horeni, charting the environment protection in Czech Paradise area; and Peter Rehor, arguing for a shift in thinking within the environmental fitness/wellness debate. With a small but rich mix of 83 delegates this was an intimate and inclusive conference, which meant that many voices were heard and contributions made, whether in a formal presentation or in more informal contexts.

Creatively and interactively, family/couple/adventure therapists Gabor and Natalia Szabo ran an innovative workshop – ‘Video assisted adventure couple and family therapy’ – which involved videotaping two delegates negotiating an activity, requiring trust and collaborative movement. The activity was called low-V, which involved strap lines tightly fixed to three trees, creating a V shape. The two participants needed to walk and support each other on the strap lines that slowly get wider and wider, meaning they have to lean more and more on each other to make progress. After participating outside, the participants were invited back inside to share with other delegates the resulting video and listen to the analysis and feedback provided by Gabor and Natalia. It was clear during the feedback that this method could prove very powerful as a therapeutic intervention. The video method created essential visual feedback and something tangible that the clients and therapists could refer to during therapy, identifying positive elements and interactional, emotional improvements.

Another workshop session was ‘Barrierless Adventure’ presented by Carinna Kenigsberg and Megan Millar from Power to Be, a not-for-profit AT organisation. Power to Be inspires young people and families in need of support (e.g. young people with autism, families living with an acquired brain injury, families at risk emotionally, and more) to realise their potential and abilities through nature-based programmes. During their workshop they introduced two programmes – the Adaptive Recreation Programme and Wilderness School – that aim to accomplish comprehensive support. They make challenging activities, such as canoeing and climbing, accessible to those who, in normal circumstances, would never get the opportunity to experience them. Specialist adaptive equipment allows them to achieve this. Extensive funding from patrons and donations mean that these activities can be accessed at a low cost, which means service users are more able, and likely to,

re-access the adventures. This makes Power to Be quite unique as their programmes are inclusive, community-based, and feature long term client investment and inter-programme peer mentoring. This and their family systems approach enable them to achieve the following outcomes for their service users: interpersonal, life skills and personal development; physical health and well-being; leadership and mentorship; family connectedness; community engagement. I found this organisation particularly inspirational.

Some of the most productive time at any conference is during the informal interactions over dinner or coffee, which provide the opportunity both to re-connect and to make new connections. For example, one of the many fruitful happenings of the time spent at the conference was the gatherings of people from different regions. People of many nationalities met together, including the UK, where outdoor therapies and AT are growing in popularity. The purpose of these meetings were to locate where work is being done in research and practice and committees are built to address the needs of the UK outdoor therapy/education community including events, resources and training. Since the conference an online UK outdoor therapy forum has been set up, a Facebook page created and a UK meeting in Cumbria was held in March 2013. An International Adventure Therapy Facebook group has also been created and further members of the Adventure Therapy International Committee were added from various countries that were not yet represented, connecting research and practice all over the world.

In reality the term Adventure Therapy does not reflect the diversity of contributions and partnerships/communities that were at the conference. Some key people in the area, like Dr Kaye Richards, are pushing for a shift towards the term ‘outdoor therapy’. Whatever the term, the AT community is very inclusive, hosting a number of diverse speakers with diverse backgrounds ranging

from AT practitioners, academics, students, social workers, therapists, outdoor educationalists, and so on. Each bring different sets of skills, theory and programme design that inform practice and research, and contributes to the discovery and growth in the area.

The finale of the conference was certainly a night to remember and of discovery! Plied with tailor-made Casino money that could buy Czech beer and wine all night, all were merry when playing Black Jack, Dice, Roulette, and Chuk-a-Luck. Delegates were required to dress James Bond-style and get their best rags on. Those who did not pack a tie, which included a few, made one out of paper! Creative minds and creative people produces creative events and creative ideas, with the conference committee spending countless hours preparing the venue, collecting leaves for decoration, and making posters, among other things.

After celebrations are, inevitably, the goodbyes. Being in a natural setting provided an ideal opportunity for delegates to have a memorable and peaceful transition back to civilisation, delegates could literally walk away from nature back to society. Beautiful winding routes from the castle allowed delegates to saunter, with their belongings strapped to their backs, towards Turnov where a train could be caught back to Prague city centre. Weaving through trees and rock, taking time to stop, be still, and take in the views, delegates could gradually say goodbye to the place. It was a perfect end to a well-thought, well-organised, and inspiring experience.

The 7th International Adventure Therapy Conference (7IATC) will be taking place in the US, in Denver, Colorado, May 2015, so if you like challenge, adventure, humour and broadening your mind, be there!

## Correspondence

**Elizabeth Freeman**

York St John University.

Email: e.freeman@yorksj.ac.uk

## References

- Cotton, S.M. & Butselaar, F.J. (2012). Adventure camps for young adults and adults with mental illness. *Psychiatric Services*, 63(11), 1154–1154.
- Davis-Berman, J. & Berman, D.S. (1989). The Wilderness Therapy programme: An empirical study of its effects with adolescents in an outpatient setting. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 19(4), 271–281.
- Davis-Berman, J., Berman, D.S. & Capone, L. (1994). Therapeutic wilderness programmes: A national survey. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 17(2), 49–53.
- Durr, L.I. (2009). Optimal challenge: The impact of adventure experiences on subjective well-being. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 31(3), 451–455.
- Gass, M. (Ed.) (1993). *Adventure Therapy – therapeutic applications of adventure programming*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.
- Nadler, R. & Luckner, J. (1992). *Processing the adventure experience: Theory and practice*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.
- Schell, L., Cotton, S. & Luxmoore, M. (2012). Outdoor adventure for young people with a mental illness. *Early intervention in psychiatry*.
- Tucker, A.R., Javorski, S., Tracy, J. & Beale, B. (2012). The use of adventure therapy in community-based mental health: Decreases in problem severity among youth clients. In *Child and Youth Care Forum* (pp.1–25). Netherlands: Springer.

*Conference review:*

# Summer School in Manhattan: A review of 'Plasticity and learning, from molecule to bedside'

Saloni Krishnan

---

Manhattan, 16–19 July 2012

I'M A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST, now making the transition into academia. I'm doing my doctoral training at the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development in London. My research is centred on how language learning in the school years is influenced by non-linguistic individual differences, such as oral motor control, and auditory attention. In the UK, transitioning between disciplines, while a fantastic opportunity, does present a challenge. Building a solid grounding in the field is difficult through self-directed learning alone. Because of this, I'm always looking for courses and schools that can help me build on my training. In April, I received an acceptance letter to the Sackler Summer Institute, a competitive fellowship to attend a summer school jointly organised by the Sackler Institutes at Cornell and Columbia. This year offered a chance to learn about plasticity and learning, from molecule to bedside, as well as an opportunity to visit New York.

It can be hard to appreciate how research goes from the lab to a clinical setting, and vice versa, in a theoretically motivated manner. For this reason, I was quite excited about the summer school's theme. I was not disappointed – thanks to the programme that BJ Casey and Bill Pfifer put together. The sessions seamlessly transitioned from imaging work focusing on memory and reward processing in humans, to questions about plasticity and recovery in animals.

Our opening lecture was a fast-paced session by Bruce McEwen, who spoke about the effect of stress on the brain, and how these structural effects could even be reversed. The next day, Daphna Shohamy presented interesting work focusing on whether explicit and implicit memories were supported by independent brain systems. She suggested that there was a great deal more cross-talk than previously suspected, and described how this knowledge could guide decision making for individuals. Mauricio Delgado took over to talk about the value of rewards. He spoke about how value judgements could guide decision making, and how these interactions might play out in more complex situations, such as our everyday social lives. The following session, by Adriana Galvan, had a developmental slant. Adriana demonstrated that changes in brain maturation during adolescence could affect decision making. The day's session also had a strong focus on alumni, as both Daphna and Adriana had been students at the Sackler. The speakers were very engaging, it was inspiring to realise that they too had been in the audience not that long ago.

The third day was centred on animal work, forming the 'molecule' side of the summer school. It indicated why developmental work was absolutely necessary for asking questions about behaviour. Frances Lee's demonstration of how development was important when thinking about plas-

ticity, fit perfectly with Adriana Galvan's talk of the previous day. While Eero Castren presented some extremely engaging material on how to induce plasticity, I feel almost embarrassed to admit that the stand-out piece of information that I took away from his lecture was an amusing quote by Ramon y Cajal: 'Synapses are like protoplasmic kisses, the intercellular articulations that appear to constitute the final ecstasy of an epic love story.' Takao Hensch gave a fitting closing address to the summer institute, exploring the mechanisms underlying critical periods in brain development. The sessions fit together coherently, showcasing how inter-disciplinary collaboration can lead to the best science.

The other feature of the summer school I have to mention was the social aspect. Right from the start, the timetable mentioned blitz presentations at dinner, and skits on the last day. Judging by the quality of the science on offer to us, most of us were filled with trepidation at what this might involve. Yet, when we got there, we were put at ease by the t-shirts given to us – the programme's slogan was 'scientifically edgy and nuttily curious'. The blitz presentations were exciting, and showcased the work and creativity of all the students on the course without a single PowerPoint slide. Our only props were

things available in the restaurant. For all the anxiety about our skits, they really came together – I was part of the group that produced 'The Myelinated Misadventures of a Mid-life Crisis', and this production was completely the result of some creative and amazing teamwork that beforehand, I did not think I was capable of. This is something I really took away – science students are portrayed as being rational and logical, but we are really creative too! The school encouraged interaction with all the other students, and even though we only spent a few days together, we all came away feeling like we were all friends, due to many positive shared experiences.

I think the highest compliment I could give the school is that even though all our time was taken up by the summer school, and we were right in the heart of Manhattan, never once did we feel like we were missing anything. If anything, most of us thought it was a bit too short! The summer school was an incredible learning opportunity, and I would strongly recommend it to anyone.

### Correspondence

**Saloni Krishnan**

Birkbeck, University of London.

Email: s.krishnan@psychology.bbk.ac.uk

## PsyPAG Bursaries

Bursary	Deadline
Up to £300 for an international conference bursary	10 October 2013
Up to £100 for a domestic conference bursary	
Up to £50 for a travel bursary	
Up to £100 for other events (e.g. training events, workshops, etc.)	No deadline

For more information about any of the financial support PsyPAG offers, please visit our website: <http://www.psypag.co.uk/bursaries-funding-and-awards/>

# Dates for your Diary

---

**3–4 June 2013**

**The Division of Health Psychology Postgraduate Conference**

*University of Northampton*

<http://dhppostgraduateconference2013.weebly.com/index.html>

**26–28 June 2013**

**The British Psychological Society Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference**

*Queen's University Belfast*

[http://www.bps.org.uk/events/conferences/](http://www.bps.org.uk/events/conferences/division-forensic-psychology-annual-conference-2013)

[division-forensic-psychology-annual-conference-2013](http://www.bps.org.uk/events/conferences/division-forensic-psychology-annual-conference-2013)

**28 June 2013**

**Interuniversity Graduate Conference in Psychology**

*University of Cambridge*

More info: [iugcip@gmail.com](mailto:iugcip@gmail.com)

**3–5 July 2013**

**Experimental Psychology Society Meeting**

*Bangor University*

<http://www.eps.ac.uk/index.php/meeting-dates-current-and-future>

**10–12 July 2013**

**The British Psychological Society Psychology of Women's Section Annual Conference**

*Cumberland Lodge, The Great Park, Windsor*

<http://www.bps.org.uk/events/conferences/psychology-women-section-annual-conference-2013>

**12–13 July 2013**

**The British Psychological Society Division of Counselling Psychology Annual Conference**

*The Angel Hotel, Cardiff*

<http://www.bps.org.uk/dcop2013>

**17 July 2013**

**The British Psychological Society event: Qualitative Research Methods, Quantitative Research Methods and How to Read a Journal Paper (Qualitative and Quantitative)**

*The British Psychological Society's London Office*

<http://www.bps.org.uk/events/qualitative-research-methods-quantitative-research-methods-and-how-read-journal-paper-qualita>

**17–19 July 2013**

**28th Annual PsyPAG Postgraduate Student Conference**

*Lancaster University*

(Twitter: @PsyPAG2013)

<http://psypag2013.lancs.ac.uk>

**27–28 August 2013**

**The British Psychological Society Social Psychology Section Postgraduate Workshop**

*University of Exeter*

[www.bps.org.uk/social2013](http://www.bps.org.uk/social2013)

**28–30 August 2013**

**The British Psychological Society Social Psychology Section Annual Conference**

*University of Exeter*

[www.bps.org.uk/social2013](http://www.bps.org.uk/social2013)

**4–6 September 2013**

**The British Psychological Society Division of Qualitative Methods in Psychology Annual Conference**

*Huddersfield University*

<http://www.bps.org.uk/qmip2013>

**3 September 2013**

**Pre CogDev2013 Conference Workshop**

**Advice and Inspiration: Getting published and planning your career**

*The University of Reading*

**4–7 September 2013**

**The British Psychological Society Division of Cognitive and Developmental Psychology Joint Conference (CogDev2013)**

*The University of Reading*

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/pcls/CogDev2013.aspx>

**11–13 September 2013**

**The British Psychological Society Division of Health Psychology Annual Conference**

*Holiday Inn, Brighton*

<http://www.bps.org.uk/DHP2013>

**5–6 December 2013**

**The British Psychological Society Division of Clinical Psychology Annual Conference**

*The Royal York Hotel, York*

<http://www.bps.org.uk/events/conferences/division-clinical-psychology-annual-conference-2013>

**16–17 December 2013**

**The British Psychological Society Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology Annual Conference**

*The Midland Hotel, Manchester*

<http://www.bps.org.uk/events/conferences/division-sport-exercise-psychology-annual-conference2013>

**The British Psychological Society website has a full list of Society events:**

<http://www.bps.org.uk/events>

# PsyPAG Committee 2012/2013

Position	Currently held by	Due for re-election
<b>Core Committee Members</b>		
Chair	Fleur-Michelle Coiffait chair@psypag.co.uk	2014
Treasurer	Katie Rix k.r.rix@greenwich.ac.uk	2015
Vice Chair	Emma Davies vicechair@psypag.co.uk	2015
Communications Officer	Hamish Cox webmaster@psypag.co.uk	2015
Information Officer	Kazia Solowiej info@psypag.co.uk	2014
PsyPAG Quarterly Editors quarterly@psypag.co.uk	Daniel Zahra Daniel.zahra@plymouth.ac.uk	2013
	Daniel Jolley Dj93@kent.ac.uk	2015
	Laura Scurlock-Evans l.scurlock-evans@worc.ac.uk	2014
	Jumana Ahmad JA337@kent.ac.uk	2014
<b>Division Representatives</b>		
Division of Clinical Psychology	Anita Raman ramananita@hotmail.com	2014
Division of Counselling Psychology	Sue Whitcombe suewhitcombe@02.co.uk	2014
Division of Educational and Child Psychology	Charlotte Franklin CFranklin@tavi-port.nhs.uk	2014
Scottish Division of Educational Psychology	Position Under Review	
Divn for Academics, Teachers & Researchers in Psychology	Emma Davies edavies@brookes.ac.uk	2014
Division of Forensic Psychology	Ross Bartels RMB956@bham.ac.uk	2013
Division of Health Psychology	Kimberley Hill Kimberley.hill-2011@brookes.ac.uk	2014
Division of Neuropsychology	Ralph Pawling Pss825@bangor.ac.uk	2013

Position	Currently Held By	Due for re-election
<b>Division Representatives</b> (contd.)		
Division of Occupational Psychology	Laura Neale l.neale@northumbria.ac.uk	2014
Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology	Hamish Cox hacox@uwic.ac.uk	2014
<b>Section Representatives</b>		
Cognitive Psychology Section	Sam Reeves Samantha.reeves@canterbury.ac.uk	2014
Consciousness and Experiential Psychology Section	Greg Elder Greg.elder@northumbria.ac.uk	2014
Developmental Psychology Section	Katie Rix K.R.Rix@greenwich.ac.uk	2014
History and Philosophy of Psychology Section	Marta Wanat marta.wanat-2011@brookes.ac.uk	2015
Psychology of Sexualities Section	Sarah Beale sbeadl@gmail.com	2015
Mathematical, Statistical and Computing Section	Fayme Yeates Fy212@ex.ac.uk	2013
Psychobiology Section	Bernadette Robertson b.robertson2@lancaster.ac.uk	2014
Psychology of Education Section	Jillian Adie jillian.adie@strath.ac.uk	
Psychology of Women Section	Lauren Kita LKita@bournemouth.ac.uk	2013
Psychotherapy Section	Kate Doran K.Doran@sheffield.ac.uk	2013
Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section	Amy Fielden a.fielden@northumbria.ac.uk	2013
Social Psychology Section	Daniel Jolley dj93@kent.ac.uk	2014
Transpersonal Psychology Section	Jacqueline Stone Jacqueline.Stone@northampton.ac.uk	2015
Coaching Psychology	David Greenberg dmg39@cam.ac.uk	2015
Community Psychology	Michael Richards michael.l.richards3@stu.mmu.ac.uk	2013

Position	Currently Held By	Due for re-election
<b>Branch Representatives</b>		
North East of England Branch	Tom Merrill tommym777@hotmail.com	2013
North West of England Branch	Rebecca Band rebecca.band-2@ postgrad.manchester.ac.uk	2015
Northern Ireland Branch	Lisa Graham lgraham28@qub.ac.uk	2014
Scottish Branch	David Ellis d.ellis@psy.gla.ac.uk	2013
South West of England Branch	Amy McAndrew Am375@exeter.ac.uk	2014
Welsh Branch	Alys Griffiths alys.griffiths-2 @postgrad.manchester.ac.uk	2014
Wessex Branch	Christopher Rossiter cr00107@surrey.ac.uk	2013
West Midlands Branch	Samantha Rogers Sxr822@bham.ac.uk	2013
London and Home Counties Branch	Lynsey Mahmood lm444@kent.ac.uk	2015
<b>Board Representatives</b>		
Membership and Professional Training Board	Position Under Review	
Publications and Communications Board	Patrycja Piotrowska Pj.piotrowska@sheffield.ac.uk	2014
Ethics	Sarah Barron 070247@live.smuc.ac.uk	2014
Research Board (Chair)	Fleur-Michelle Coiffait F.M.Coiffait@sms.ed.ac.uk	2014
<b>Other Committees</b>		
Conference Standing Committee	Lauren Kita LKita@bournemouth.ac.uk	2013
International Rep	Rebecca Monk rlmonk@uclan.ac.uk	2013
Teaching & Learning Rep	Position Under Review	
National Postgraduate Committee	Position Under Review	
Undergraduate Liaison Officer	JJ Begum j.begum@gold.ac.uk	2014

# SPS Postgraduate Workshop

28–30 August 2013, University of Exeter

BPS Social Psychology Section (SPS)  
Postgraduate Workshop  
27-28 August 2013, University of Exeter

A variety of sessions, geared towards developing postgraduates!

*Our workshop presenters:*

**Dr Abigail Locke,**  
*University of Huddersfield*  
Chair of the BPS SPS

**Dr Karen Douglas,**  
*University of Kent*  
Reader in Psychology

**Donna Peach,**  
*University of Huddersfield*  
Founder of @PhDForum and @socphd

**Prof Richard Crisp,**  
*University of Sheffield*  
Winner of the BPS SPS 2013 Mid-Career Award

Topics vary from responding to reviewers (and also how to review in the first instance) to using social media as a collaborative tool.

Full details of sessions can be found at: [www.bps.org.uk/social2013](http://www.bps.org.uk/social2013)

**Here is what delegates enjoyed most about the 2012 PG workshop:**

- “*Good information and self-development opportunities.*”
- “*Meeting other postgrads and being able to talk to a small number of people at the same career stages.*”
- “*Interactive sessions, which provided a really new perspective.*”



The British  
Psychological Society



Division of  
Occupational Psychology

*Applying the science of psychology to work*

# DOP Annual Conference

## 'Investing in the Future'

8-10 January 2014 – The Grand, Brighton

## CALLING ALL POSTGRADS!

Join the DOP Annual Conference 2014 to meet potential employers; learn more about your chosen profession; build your network of contacts; and even present your own research.

See the value our 2013 postgraduate attendees derived from the conference:

*'This was my first time attending a DOP event. As a postgraduate student, attending this conference not only gave me the opportunity to learn about others' exciting developments in the field, but also the exciting chance to meet the big names that we always reference for our assignment in real life! I'm delighted that I attended this event and looking forward to upcoming conferences in future.'*

Dana Ho, MSc Work Psychology and Business Student, Aston Business School.

*'As this was my first conference, I wasn't too sure what to expect, however, I found it to be very useful and interesting. The talks were engaging and the careers forum gave both practical advice as well as providing the opportunity to meet recruiting organisations. Presenting my dissertation findings was a little nerve-wracking but a great experience and I would definitely recommend it. I would encourage other graduates to attend as I feel it was beneficial and insightful.'*

Helen Baker, MSc Organizational Psychology Student, Leeds University Business School.

### **Why not present a paper? An excellent opportunity to showcase your own research**

DOP 2014 provides postgraduates with a unique opportunity to present their own research to industry colleagues and raise their profile in the profession. You do not have to be a BPS or DOP member to present and we welcome submissions from presenters at any level of experience. **Please note PhD/MSc students do not need to have their research results in order to submit and are welcome to submit to any of the types of submission.** Why not choose a topic that interests you, learn a bit more about that topic and present the current literature to professionals in the form of a short Bitesize paper. This can help to boost your profile and will help with revision for exams.

### **Call for Submissions**

DOP 2014 is themed around '**Investing in the Future**', that is, we are looking forward to the prospects and opportunities for Occupational Psychology in the future. Submissions should relate to the conference theme and fit into one of our five strands:

Investing in the Future of Research; Investing in the Future of Our Profession; Investing in the Future of the Individual; Investing in the Future of the Organisation; and Investing in the Future of Communities.

Examples of areas that will fit our strands include: New and cutting edge research directions; Ethics and standards; Careers and skills workshops; Employee development; Leadership; Organisational development; Physical work environment; Unemployment; and Public policy. All submissions must clearly show originality and relevance to the conference theme and selected strand. We are looking for creative inputs through: Standard papers; Short papers; Bitesize papers; Symposiums; Posters; Workshops; and Discussion Sessions.

### **How do I submit?**

You need to use the BPS Online Submission System. Request your password well in advance of the submissions deadline – **Midnight on Wednesday 21 August 2013** for MSc and PhD students. **Ensure you read through the submissions guidelines before preparing your submission:** [www.bps.org.uk/dop2014/submissions](http://www.bps.org.uk/dop2014/submissions)

### **Exceptional value for money**

The DOP Annual Conference offers an exceptional opportunity for you to be a part of a high quality programme and provides an excellent networking event for those new to the profession. Conference rates offer remarkable value for money and as a **postgraduate you can also take advantage of our special three-day 'POP' package being offered.** Now is a great time to book a place at this event and take advantage of the early bird rates. Full registration details are available at: [www.bps.org.uk/dop2014](http://www.bps.org.uk/dop2014)

If you have any queries please get in touch with us at: [dopannual@bps.org.uk](mailto:dopannual@bps.org.uk)

# 2013 Conference Bursaries from the BPS Division of Health Psychology (DHP)

The DHP will be offering the following bursaries to attend their Annual Conference in Brighton, September 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 ([www.bps.org.uk/dhp2013](http://www.bps.org.uk/dhp2013)).

- Up to 8 student bursaries are available, that will cover early-bird registration to the DHP Annual Conference and up to £200 towards accommodation and travel
- Up to 4 bursaries for DHP members are available that will cover early bird non-residential three-day registration and up to £200 towards accommodation and travel.

Applications are welcome from 22nd April 2013 until the closing date of **26th June 2013**. As a result of being awarded a bursary you will be asked to produce a piece for Health Psychology Update (HPU). You will be given support from one of the HPU sub-editors and your work will go through usual peer review procedures, for the chance to appear in a future edition of HPU. The deadline for submission of the report is 13th October 2013 (students) and 15th October 2013 (non-students). The committee reserves the right not to make bursary awards should no suitable candidates be found.

**Applications should be sent to Dr. Debbie Smith ([debbie.smith-2@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:debbie.smith-2@manchester.ac.uk)), DHP National Conference Organiser, by 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013.**

## Criteria for student bursaries

- UK-based candidates with a first degree in psychology who are not yet eligible for Chartered 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 accepted at the conference, or who have submitted an abstract for review – please include your abstract with your application.
- Preference will also be given to those who have not won this bursary in the past two years.

Applications should be made in the form of a letter addressed to the National Conference Organiser (see above) and include: (i) a brief statement of why a bursary is needed (e.g., because a postgraduate student is not funded by a research council or their institution) and why the applicant should be awarded a bursary and how they will benefit from the conference, (ii) a supporting statement from a supervisor or referee, (iii) if applicable, the abstract and submission status (submitted/accepted).

## Criteria for bursaries for DHP members (non-students)

- Applicants must be DHP members.
- Preference will be given to those who have had a paper accepted at the conference, or who have submitted an abstract for review – please include your abstract with your application.

Applications for bursaries should be made in the form of a letter addressed to the National Conference Organiser (see above) and include: (i) a brief statement of why a bursary is needed; why the applicant should be awarded a bursary and how they will benefit from the conference, (ii) a supporting statement from their line manager, (iii) if applicable, the abstract and submission status (submitted/accepted).

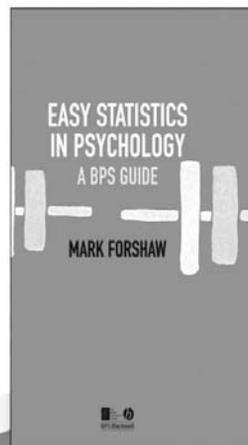
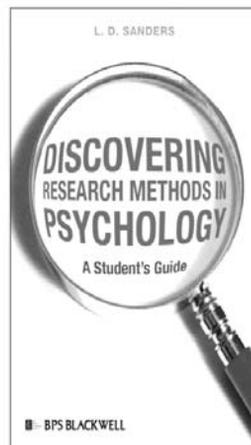
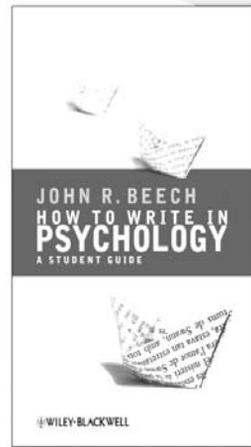
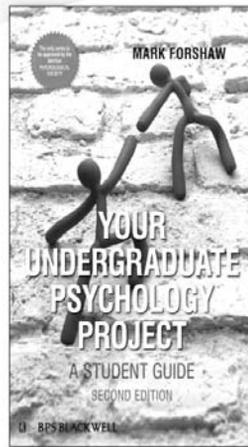
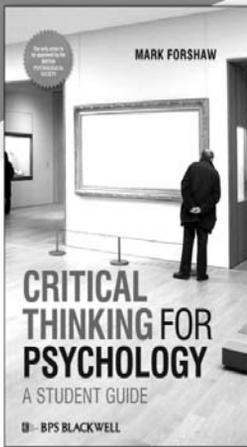
**For further information about the conference, please visit [www.bps.org.uk/dhp2013](http://www.bps.org.uk/dhp2013).**



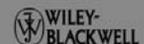
# BPS Student Guides in Psychology

No other series bears the BPS seal of approval

BPS Student Guides are short, accessible texts on key skills or the core elements of a degree, designed with the needs of students in mind.



For further information go to  
[www.wiley.com/go/bps](http://www.wiley.com/go/bps)



# PsyPAG Quarterly submissions guidelines

*The Quarterly* is a developing journal, which is distributed free of charge to all psychology postgraduates in the UK, receiving wide readership. It accepts articles on all areas of psychology.

## Types of articles accepted

*Featured Articles and Discussion Papers:* Articles can cover a wide range of topics. Articles may describe a piece of original research; provide an overview of a theory, area or issue.

*Research in Brief:* A short report of original research, often preliminary findings.

*Interviews:* An interview with anyone connected with psychology, usually written in a question and answer format.

*Conference Reviews:* Provide an overview of a conference, outlining the main themes of the conference.

*Departmental Reviews:* An overview of a department as well as research interests of the postgraduates.

*Book and Software Reviews:* A review of books or software relevant to psychologists.

*Hints and Tips:* Hints and tips that will be useful to postgraduates. For example, how to apply for funding.

*Postgraduate Research in Brief:* This is a reference list of research that has recently been published by postgraduates within a particular area or department.

## Word limits

*The Quarterly* has a broad word limit of 500–2500 words per paper, excluding references. The maximum word limit is flexible for in-depth discussion papers, longer interviews or hints and tips. The word count will differ depending on the type of article, for example conference and book reviews should be shorter than featured articles.

## Formatting

Please submit all articles in Microsoft Word. The content, including tables, figures, and references should all comply with the *BPS Style Guide* (available from [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk) – type ‘style guide’ into the search box). Please send original image files for any photos, and save tables and figures as high-resolution PDFs if possible. You should also include your contact details at the end of each article in the format of:

## Correspondence

### Name

University of X.

Email:

## Submission

To submit an article, please send as an email attachment to: [quarterly@psypag.co.uk](mailto:quarterly@psypag.co.uk).

If you have any further questions, please contact the editors at

**[quarterly@psypag.co.uk](mailto:quarterly@psypag.co.uk)**

or send in your question via twitter [@PsyPAGQuarterly](https://twitter.com/PsyPAGQuarterly)

# PSYPAG

## About PsyPAG

---

**PsyPAG** is a national organisation for all psychology postgraduates based at UK Institutions. Funded by the Research Board of the British Psychological Society, PsyPAG is run on a voluntary basis by postgraduates for postgraduates.

Its aims are to provide support for postgraduate students in the UK, to act as a vehicle for communication between postgraduates, and represent postgraduates within the British Psychological Society. It also fulfills the vital role of bringing together postgraduates from around the country.

- PsyPAG has no official membership scheme; anyone involved in postgraduate study in psychology at a UK Institution is automatically a member.
- PsyPAG runs an annual workshop and conference and also produces a quarterly publication, which is delivered free of charge to all postgraduate psychology departments in the UK.
- PsyPAG is run by an elected committee, which any postgraduate student can be voted on to. Elections are held at the PsyPAG Annual Conference each year.
- The committee includes representatives for each Sub-Division within the British Psychological Society, their role being to represent postgraduate interests and problems within that Division or the British Psychological Society generally. We also liaise with the Student Group of the British Psychological Society to raise awareness of postgraduate issues in the undergraduate community.
- Committee members also include Practitioners-in-Training who are represented by PsyPAG.

### Mailing list

PsyPAG maintains a JISCmail list open to ALL psychology postgraduate students. To join, visit [www.psypag.co.uk](http://www.psypag.co.uk) and scroll down on the main page to find the link, or go to <http://tinyurl.comPsyPAGjiscmail>.

This list is a fantastic resource for support and advice regarding your research, statistical advice or postgraduate issues.

### Social networking

You can also follow PsyPAG on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/PsyPAG>) and add us on Facebook: <http://tinyurl.comPsyPAGfacebook>.

Again, this information is also provided at [www.psypag.co.uk](http://www.psypag.co.uk).

[www.psypag.co.uk](http://www.psypag.co.uk)

# Contents

Editorial .....1 <i>Jumana Ahmad</i>	Understanding virtual relationships: ...25 A psycho-social perspective <i>Adfer Rashid Shah</i>
Chair's column .....3 <i>Fleur-Michelle Coiffat</i>	Recruitment issues in school-based ...29 drug and alcohol research with young people <i>Richard Tyler &amp; Emma Davies</i>
Sensory and motor abnormalities .....5 within early infancy in individuals later diagnosed with autism <i>Dr Clare Allely</i>	Book review: .....35 <i>The Psychopath Test</i> by Jon Ronson <i>Katy Hopkins</i>
Tips for applying for Research Grants ...10 <i>Dr Carly Jim</i>	Conference review: .....37 The 50th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Aphasia <i>Dinesh Ramoo</i>
Cognitive neuroscience: .....14 Skeletons in the closet <i>Grzegorz Maciejewski</i>	How writing blogs can help your .....39 academic career <i>Professor Mark Griffiths</i>
Conference review: .....15 A CBT treat in Leeds: 40th Annual BABCP Conference <i>Lucy Czwartos</i>	Conference review: .....41 The 6th International Adventure Therapy Conference <i>Elizabeth Freeman</i>
A cognitive approach to humour: .....17 Absurdity and understanding <i>Mairi Young</i>	Conference review: .....44 Summer School in Manhattan: A review of 'Plasticity and learning, from molecule to bedside' <i>Saloni Krishnan</i>
Is psychological science the science ...21 of undergraduates? ..... <i>Professor James Hartley</i>	Dates for your Diary .....46
Conference review: .....23 The 9th European Conference on Psychological Theory and Research on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities <i>Myrthe Jacobs</i>	PsyPAG Committee 2012/2013 .....48



The British  
Psychological Society  
Promoting excellence in psychology

St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR, UK  
t: 0116 254 9568 f: 0116 227 1314 e: [mail@bps.org.uk](mailto:mail@bps.org.uk) w: [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)  
© The British Psychological Society 2013  
Incorporated by Royal Charter Registered Charity No 229642