

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE TEACHING OF PSYCHOLOGY 2006

Call for nominations

Nominations are invited for this annual award that recognises that the teaching of psychology is crucial to the advancement of the discipline. Excellent teachers inspire, encourage and motivate new generations of psychologists. This award is intended to identify and reward those teachers who make exceptional contributions to the teaching of psychology.

The award will confer free life membership of the Society, and a commemorative certificate will be presented at the Society's Annual Conference, at which time the recipient will be asked to give an invited paper on some aspect of teaching psychology.

Criteria for nominations

Any present or past teacher of psychology, at any level, is eligible, and nominations are not restricted to members of the Society. The following are guidelines for the types of criteria for nomination, although this list is not exhaustive. The criteria are intended to be broad enough to encompass all exceptional and unusually significant contributions to education and training in psychology within the United Kingdom.

- outstanding performance as a classroom teacher
- outstanding performance in the development of individual students
- outstanding or innovative contributions to course or curriculum development
- outstanding contributions to the profession of teaching
- outstanding contributions to the teaching literature

For further information regarding submitting a nomination, please e-mail Kelly Auty on kelaut@bps.org.uk

Nominations should be submitted to the Chair of the Division of Teachers and Researchers in Psychology via Kelly Auty at the Leicester office by 26 June 2006.



Associate Editor: Nicola Hills

Short articles (around 600 words), news, tips, quotes, cartoons and other contributions of particular relevance to students are most welcome. Send to: Nicola Hills, c/o the Society's Leicester office. E-mail: Nicola_Hills@hotmail.com



WHO/PIROT

An inspiring project

BY JAMES HARDIE

LAST year I flew to India to work in a rural hospital for three months with people who have leprosy. I was there to carry out research for my health psychology MSc dissertation project, studying the psychological impact of leprosy. My mission was to design and implement a pioneering assessment form – the Psychological Impact of Leprosy Scale (PILS) – which might offer professionals a more appropriate, biopsychosocial insight.

I had spent many hours in the library and on the internet searching for inspiration and the elusive specificity that I required, finding it difficult to identify a suitable focus and manageable literature base that contained really engaging and worthwhile issues. I was very aware that I would be committing my life to that one topic for a number of months, often forsaking all else! It was with trepidation that I finally settled on a subject, knowing that only a good selection would sustain and perpetually enthuse. Eventually I constructed an unlikely but fascinating research proposal; an unusual, perhaps ambitious project, addressing a historically important and surprisingly overlooked subject.

Such an infamous affliction as leprosy, especially with its legendary connotations and stigma, demonstrates an obvious need for psychologists' efforts; but despite this, there are almost none working in the area. Having e-mailed various professionals during the course of my literature review, I managed to make contact with a clinical psychologist in India who worked with people who have leprosy. Our correspondence led to an invitation, and a few months later I was making the necessary arrangements to visit the

hospital. In order to alleviate the financial burden of this project I applied for and secured partial but significant funding through my institution. Academic supervision was available both from the resident psychologist in India and by e-mail from my lecturers in the UK. Support and advice was also offered by the Leprosy Mission, to whom I hope to present my findings and so raise awareness of the potential use of psychology.

Carrying out this work in India has given me the opportunity to travel abroad, visiting a developing country to carry out my own research in a different culture and language. One of the hardest realities to face was the language barrier, which would not have been such an issue had I been visiting in any other capacity. I was always frustratingly constrained by my dependence upon translators and felt linguistically disabled as an impotent psychologist! Despite such difficulties it has provided me with career-enhancing clinical experience and a novel, pioneering research project for my postgraduate dissertation. I would recommend the experience to anyone.

Being able to choose your own subject to tackle in a research project is always an exciting prospect. It offers you the freedom and responsibility to decide upon and develop your own professional interests. All kinds of opportunities and even adventures may be on offer, if you look out for them.

■ James Hardie was at Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh. E-mail: JRHardie@aol.com.

GETTING FULL MARKS

KAM KHUN with a successful strategy.

AS a student at Herschel Grammar School, I got full marks for my A-level coursework. Coursework is such a vital part of student life that I thought I should share my experiences.

My project looked at the effects of changing background colour of paper on visual stress, in relation to the speed of reading. Visual stress refers to unpleasant symptoms when reading, including visual distortion of print, illusions of colour and movement, eyestrain and headaches. My interest in the area developed when reading an article in *Psychology Review*, written by Alison Wadeley. This article outlined some of the past studies: for example, Olive Meares and Helen Irlen (1989) used coloured overlays to reduce visual distortions reported by some dyslexic children.

Psychology Review is a very helpful publication aimed at psychology sixth-form students. Each publication has a section dedicated to coursework issues, providing useful outlines of how to conduct your coursework, with a breakdown of the criteria expected by the different examination bodies. Books such as Mike Cardwell's *Psychology for A2-level* and Greer and Mulhan's *Making Sense of Data and Statistics in Psychology* are helpful for the statistical part of the coursework.

But to get high marks it really does help to go beyond these sources for some in-depth research. I used the internet to narrow my search, which led me to Professor Arnold Wilkins (University of Essex). His research concerned treatment of visual discomfort and associated perceptual distortions. In 2002 Wilkins found that 5 per cent of children in mainstream education read 25 per cent more quickly with a coloured overlay of their choice.

My own study found that participants overall read significantly faster under the coloured (yellow) condition, than the control condition of white. In fact no participant read faster with white paper.

I think what made my coursework stand out was that it built on previous research rather than just replicating it. Use the internet and books/magazines to expand your idea and provide an original aspect. Talk to people, e-mail psychologists, anything to spark your imagination. Make the most of teachers – they are there to help! For the statistical part you could even ask the maths teacher. And lastly, the golden rule is good time management! Although some, like myself, may work better under pressure, leaving coursework until the last day is not a good idea!

■ Kam Khun is now a first-year at Brunel University. E-mail: kam_khun@hotmail.com.