



TO THE EDITOR...

Letters should be marked clearly 'Letter for publication in *The Psychologist*' and addressed to the Editor at the Society office in Leicester. Please send by e-mail if possible: psychologist@bps.org.uk (include a postal address). Letters over 500 words are less likely

to be published. The Editor reserves the right to edit, shorten or publish extracts from letters. If major editing is necessary, this will be indicated. Space does not permit the publication of every letter received. Letters to the Editor are not normally acknowledged.

Twin research problems

ROBERT Plomin's timely article ('Genetics and behaviour', March 2001) prompts me to wonder whether twin-based assessments of heritability can ever be good indicators of the involvement of genetic variability in psychological traits.

For valid assessments of heritability to be possible it

would be necessary to have access to monozygotic twins who have never experienced shared environments. Only then can the influence of shared experiences be ruled out. In fact, of course, raising identical twins entirely separately is not possible during the prenatal period. At that time shared environments are especially

influential, however. That is evident from evidence such as the finding that concordance rates for schizophrenia in monozygotic twins are much higher when the two infants share a placenta (Davis *et al.*, 1995).

Even in the postnatal period it is extremely difficult to find identical twins who have been

raised entirely separately. That is probably why certain twin pairs are described in published research as having been reared apart when they have actually spent substantial parts of their crucial early years together or in similar environments (e.g. Bouchard *et al.*, 1990).

The impossibility of locating identical twins who have lived entirely apart throughout the whole of their lives since the time of conception must be frustrating for researchers. But that is not a justification for accepting the findings of invalid assessments.

Michael J. A. Howe
Professor of Psychology
University of Exeter

References

- Bouchard, T. J., Lykken, D. T., McGue, M., Segal, N., & Tellegren, A. (1990). Sources of human psychological differences: The Minnesota study of twins reared apart. *Science*, 250, 4778, 223–227.
- Davis, J. O., Phelps, J. A., & Brancha, H. S. (1995). Prenatal development of monozygotic twins and concordance for schizophrenia. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 21, 357–366.

Bioethics feedback

IN the March issue Professor Robert Plomin sought the views of the wider psychological community on issues surrounding behavioural genetics.

In November 2000 the Nuffield Council on Bioethics convened a working party to report on the ethical context of genetics and human behaviour. A public consultation was launched in March this year inviting comments on the issues raised by this kind of research. We would very much welcome comments from BPS members.

Copies of the consultation document are available on the Council's website at

www.nuffieldfoundation.org/bioethics/ or can be requested by phone (020 7681 9625). The closing date for the receipt of submissions is 31 July 2001. A final report will be published in mid-2002.

If you do not wish to submit comments but would like to be included on a mailing list to be updated on the working party's progress, please forward your e-mail address to: ymelia@nuffieldfoundation.org.

Sandy Thomas
Director
Nuffield Council on Bioethics
London WC1

In search of adequate payment

I AGREE with both respondents to the 'Head to head' debate on publishing (Letters, March 2001). Mark Griffiths is quite right that academics can work well with the media, and he has done much to promote psychology by this means. One would wish though that this were the norm rather than the exception.

Griffiths is also right that academics follow their profession largely for its intrinsic value. Studies by Leonard Holdstock and myself on reasons for choosing a career indicate to me, however, that such choices are made on



Publishing is an area in which academics need to advance their status

the assumption of at least adequate payment and working conditions. The well-documented current difficulties in recruiting to academic posts,

pointed up by David Parslow's letter, show that this assumption can no longer be made. As far as the Society is concerned, my main point is that, with the

establishment of the Division of Teachers and Researchers, academics are now a professional branch of psychology, and action needs to be taken to advance their status. Publishing is only one part of this, but I did suggest some first steps that might be considered, in a paper submitted to the Scientific Affairs Board, and thence to the Division. I shall be happy to supply a copy to anyone interested.

John Radford
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Not such a flexible friend?

It is with great regret that I shall not be renewing my membership of the Society at the end of this year. My three-year post-qualifying period will finish, so I will have to pay the full membership fee. This is despite not being in paid

work for the last four years due to having children. Since I do not expect to be in paid employment for another three years, when my daughter will be in school, I feel that £70 is a lot to pay out just for reading *The Psychologist*, as much as I do love reading it.

Surely there should be a grade of membership for people who have taken time out for whatever reason, so that we can keep up to date without paying the full cost.

With six million pounds of total funds, I'd have thought the Society would be more

flexible in its fee structure, especially when postgraduate students can be members for only £13.

Jill Cliff
55 Balfour Road
Walmer
Deal
Kent

INFORMATION

I AM a PhD student and UKCP registered psychotherapist undertaking a research study on the **psychotherapeutic experience of clients and clinicians who are working with the long-term effects of extreme childhood abuse**. If you are interested in taking part in the study and would like more details, please contact me either by telephone or e-mail. All information will be confidential, and your anonymity would be maintained.
Janice Scott
Tel: 020 8840 4886;
e-mail: janice@jvscott.freeserve.co.uk

I AM currently working on a project aimed at the **development of psychosocial services within paediatric cardiology**, at the Yorkshire Heart Centre, Leeds. I would be interested to hear from other psychologists working with

children and families affected by congenital heart defects, attached to the 18 regional paediatric cardiology centres around the UK, with a view to establishing a national group.

Any international contacts would also be gratefully received.

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Department of Clinical & Health Psychology
St James's University Hospital
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Sara.Matley@GW.SJUH.Northy.nhs.uk

I AM researching into the experience of studying for **Chartered status in counselling psychology via the independent route** and should be glad to hear from anyone who is engaged in this at present, or who has recently finished and got Chartered status,

or who may have decided not to enrol after all, or who may not have completed their studies for any reason. Anonymity will be assured.

Sue Vogel
1 to 1 Counselling Service
25 Spenser Road
Bedford MK40 2AZ
Tel: 01234 341103; fax: 01234 308120; e-mail:
sue@vogel.demon.co.uk

I AM an educational psychologist considering the **lateral transfer (Statement of Equivalence) route to clinical psychology**. Are there any clinical psychologists who have qualified by this route, or anyone who is currently following it, who would be willing to share their experiences with me?

Louise Benson
Tel: 0161 480 4584; e-mail:
louise.benson@ukgateway.net

I AM interested in hearing from anyone who has had experience of writing an **information leaflet for clients of clinical psychology services in a paediatric setting**.

Also I would love to hear from anyone else trying to develop a small paediatric psychology service in a community setting.

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DEADLINE

Deadline for letters for possible publication in the July issue of *The Psychologist* is **1 June**