



LETTERS

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. Letters to the editor are not normally acknowledged, and space does not permit the publication of every letter received. However, see www.thepsychologist.org.uk to contribute to our discussion forum.

Derailing the statutory regulation train

IF I were a different kind of person, I would work out exactly what to do to derail statutory regulation instead of writing a letter. Nevertheless, I have heard few voices raised against the process in recent years, so I am resorting to writing in the hope that someone else will take the actions needed to derail the train.

I do not think that statutory regulation will do much to protect the public, for three reasons.

1. Most abuses of psychology are by mainstream psychologists. For example, they apply psychometric models that deny most people recognition for their talents; they work for clients – like the army or government educational systems or toy companies or drugs companies or branded goods companies – in which they deploy their psychological knowledge and techniques of research or manipulation in the service of their clients (i.e. those who pay them). Such practices are very much to the disadvantage of many people: the citizens of Iraq; most of the children who pass through the educational system; families who are led to buy junk foods, junk toys and 'fashionable' clothes as a result of children having been deliberately induced to nag their parents (itself an unpleasant experience) to do so; people persuaded to take drugs (or undergo psychotherapy) whose claims to effectiveness stem from researchers' deployment of invalid procedures to demonstrate change.

2. As American experience testifies, there are endless ways in which those who wish to evade registration can continue to practise, for example by renaming themselves as 'psychodiagnosticians' or 'psychocounsellors' or something similar.

3. The prescribed arrangements for asserting competence, while enormously expensive, time consuming, and complicated are grounded in a technico-rational model of competence which entirely misses the kinds of competence that are required to make good discretionary judgements or act in ways which, while from time to time mistaken, are likely, overall, to lead to innovation and action in the long-term public interest. The proposed procedures mandate years of mostly irrelevant and rarely useful

'training', the inspection of certificates, compulsory CPD, the development of codes of conduct and the instigation of related disciplinary procedures, endless discussion of every potential action with supervisors and committees, and mandatory financial contributions to the BPS and HPC. Yet what we learned at the last annual conference was that very few members of the Society are caught by the net. Most of those caught by it had no case to answer – the offences of most of those who had done something wrong were trivial – and the serious ones could have been dealt with through standard legal procedures.

So, if the proposed procedures do not protect the public and amount to an

enormous drain on energy, time and money, focusing participants on valuing presentation rather than real progress, what is their function? In the course of one of the sessions I attended at the conference it was suggested, and I am inclined to agree, that these procedures are to be understood as a marketing ploy designed to present ourselves as clean and ethical. But they are more than that. They allow those that are in fact engaging in highly unethical procedures (largely through sins of omission) to hide behind the claim that whatever they are doing has been approved by some authority. They drive out the risky, adventurous, critical activity that is required to improve our contributions to individuals and society. They are concerned with protecting individual psychologists from the accusation of incompetence or having made a mistake.

Personally, I would prefer the same time and effort to be devoted to the extremely risky task of advancing psychology.

John Raven
30 Great King Street
Edinburgh

READING the article in the April issue ('Statutory regulation – Some questions answered') raised a number of questions again for me about the whole business of registration and why the Society is pursuing this route.

I'm sure I'm not the only psychologist who has been puzzled by the Society's inability to protect the title 'psychologist'. Now we are told that it is because; 'academics would need to register and the Society has always resisted this as unnecessary'. First, why is this unnecessary, and, secondly, would that be the academics in the Society who have resisted this or the membership as a whole?

I'm not sure what proportion of the membership class themselves as academics, but isn't there an issue here about the greater good for both psychologists and the public in having the title protected?

The article goes on to say, within the context of a question about academic psychologists, that only those applied psychologists 'who have direct contact with the public' will need to be on the statutory register. Then, in the next paragraph, it states that academics who carry out consultancy but don't have adjectival titles will be able to carry on as before, i.e. without registration, provided they don't claim or appear to claim that they have the competencies which require registration.

So it seems academics will be allowed to work as applied psychologists without being registered. Isn't the purpose of registration to cover all applied psychologists? How will they describe themselves to secure this consultancy work? Why are exemptions being made for academic psychologists in this way which affects the Society as a whole?

Why doesn't the Society insist that all psychologists, including academics, be registered and then, according to the article, we can protect the title of 'psychologist'?

Finally, as an occupational psychologist I have severe reservations about being linked with a health professions council in any event – we have enough problems being confused with occupational therapists as it is!

Mike S. Guttridge
5 Mount Pleasant
Nangreaves
Bury

Small, but perfectly informed

BEING part of a small audience attending an inspiring event is often a source of pleasure for me. However, when it is an award lecture at the Annual Conference it is a source of shame. Professor Chris McManus gave the most



Chris McManus

engaging, scientifically rigorous and intellectually stimulating lecture of the conference, and all but a handful of you missed it.

I hope that the 'new style' conference next year will include more stimulating presentations such as the McManus one, and a schedule that would ensure many more attend and are inspired.

Paul Redford
University College Winchester

Editor's note: For those of you who missed the McManus talk, at least keep an eye out for his article based on it later in the year.

THOUGHTS AND FELINES

WHY do we look up when thinking? In the April issue, Stéphane Duckett posited an alternative account to explain the Previk *et al.* finding (reported in 'Research in brief', March 2005) that people tend to look upward when they are thinking.

Previk's view, as reported in *The Psychologist*, is that eye movement and working memory are both under the control of lateral prefrontal areas, suggesting an evolutionary account of the phenomenon: 'the origins of many cognitive operations in humans may be linked to more primitive systems involved in the exploration of distant 3-D space'. Duckett's view is that looking skyward is simply a way of 'strengthening concentration by excluding redundant visual stimuli'.

I have recently trained my cat to stand at the kitchen door whilst I put his food in his bowl. The signal for him to enter the kitchen is my tapping my fingertips on the floor. I tried to fool him a few times by placing my fingers close to the floor, then scolding him when he took that as a cue to enter the kitchen. He has got wise to me: he now stands at the kitchen door but averts his gaze, so he has indeed excluded 'redundant visual stimuli' and now affords himself only auditory stimuli. My cat asked me to write in, in order to lend his support to Duckett's account.

John Higgon
Earlston
Scottish Borders

An unfair charge?

IHAVE recently applied to pay my subscription fees by quarterly direct debit. I have wanted to spread this cost for some time but have been put off by having to pay an extra £8 for the 'privilege'. This is not because I do not have £8, but more because I could not think of an adequate justification for the charge, and I don't like paying out any sum of money without good reason. However, as my financial situation became more restricted I felt I had no choice. And this is my problem with this charge.

It strikes me that the people who are most likely to take up this offer are those who least likely to have a spare £80 knocking around in their pay every month. Therefore, not only is the charge unjustifiable on loss of interest or administration grounds (it's direct debit and, therefore, involves less administration), but it is also something of a poverty tax: neatly capturing

those with the least means of paying it, and the least choice in the matter.

Neil Smith
71 Landells Road
London SE22

Bernard Marriott, Acting Operations Directorate Manager, replies: *The facility to pay quarterly by direct debit was introduced in 1995. At that time it was felt that the cost of setting up the scheme, administering it, and making allowance for the loss of interest, should be borne by the users, and that this would be recovered by a charge of £8. After 10 years, the scheme is under review. The Trustees are considering a proposal by which most members paying annually by direct debit would have a reduction of £5 compared with cheque-payers, and those paying quarterly by direct debit would pay the same amount as cheque-payers. If the Trustees approve this proposal, the matter will be put to a vote of members.*

A role for qualitative methods

AS authors of the proposal for the recently inaugurated Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section, we would like to respond to Mark Shevlin's letter (May 2005). Despite the adversarial tone of the letter, he does draw our attention to aspects of our proposal which the new Section may wish to develop.

First, defining qualitative methods as the absence of statistical analysis allows us to capture this diverse field concisely, and we did want to encapsulate the variety of qualitative methods with their different approaches to data collection, analysis and epistemological positions. However, it may be useful to

develop a more positive definition, perhaps building on the statement included in our proposal that in qualitative analysis results are expressed in words rather than numbers.

Second, it would be a mistake to downplay what statistical analysis can achieve. We hope that the new Section will work to develop mutual respect between psychologists specialising in different methodologies.

Third, our proposal could have been clearer in explaining the usefulness of qualitative

DEADLINE

Deadline for letters for possible publication in the August issue is **1 July**

methods in the hypothesis-development stage of psychological enquiry. Clarity in such matters is essential if the new Section is to work towards greater understanding of qualitative research.

Overwhelmingly, we have found our colleagues specialising in quantitative methods to have been open-minded and generous in their attitude towards the new Section, and many have

supported its inauguration. We are therefore optimistic that there is a general tolerance for diverse methods within British psychology and a motivation for genuine dialogue.

Anna Madill
Zazie Todd
University of Leeds

See p.373 for more on the founding of the Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section, and for details of the ways it hopes contribute to the discipline.

JOHN D. HANDYSIDE 1923-2005

JOHN Handyside, who died on 20 February, was a quiet, kind genius. Cyril Burt awarded him a first class honours degree in psychology, and after a period in naval selection he joined the National Institute of Industrial Psychology to research the selection, training and motivation of supervisors in industry, sponsored by the Medical Research Council.

For five years we shared an office on the top floor of 14 Welbeck Street, regularly disturbing our neighbours with recapitulations of *The Goon Show*. I owe him a deep debt of gratitude, for transforming psychometric statistics from mere hamburger-grinding into exciting tools of discovery. He was awe-inspiring in other ways. Whereas I never quite knew what I was going to say until I said it, and anything I wrote needed several changes to be right, John's writings were right from the start, and every sentence he spoke seemed to have been thought out beforehand. The case studies which he produced for NIIP assessment centres were memorable. He was a worthy director of research at NIIP. Frustrated by Bartlett in his researches into motivation, he left NIIP in 1961 to join Standard Telephones and Cables, where he became Vice-President Personnel, and built up a formidable team of experts in assessment.

Another form of expertise eventually took over. He had a prodigious knowledge of the stock market, and at NIIP I shared his celebration of success in stag issues. By the age of 50 the dividends on his investments were such that his entire salary at STC was taxed at the top rate, making salaried employment no longer worth while. So at the Occupational Psychology Conference of 1976 he announced himself as a 'Gentleman of Leisure'.

In his 'retirement' he continued his enthusiasm for the latest developments in programmable calculators and personal computers. His friends in occupational psychology then discovered that he enjoyed the challenge of being presented with substantial amounts of raw data for multivariate analysis, the results of which were always impeccably presented. Cattell's I6PF measure was one of his favourites, and 'Analysis of I6PF' contains a number of his occupational profiles, his photograph and his I6PF profile – which was bold, for it was accurate!

For these, he will be missed, and for his hand-crafted Christmas cards analysing the statistical uniqueness of the year in question.

David C. Duncan
74 Park Avenue
Ruislip
Middlesex

Iraq - We have things worth saying

PERHAPS the dispute over whether or not the BPS should make a statement about controversial issues such as the Iraq war could be resolved by the Society in future publishing a statement simply commenting on the psychological processes germane to the issue in question. There is, for example, a substantial literature relating to decision making which could usefully have been brought to the public's attention during the Hutton Inquiry.

This strategy would raise

the profile of the BPS, inform public debate and make available a source of information for non-psychologists who might otherwise be unaware of it. It would avoid the obvious problems involved in either keeping silent on issues about which psychology has a lot to say, or committing the Society to a position which is not representative of the views of its members.

Sue Gerrard
8 Croft Way
Market Drayton
Shropshire

Drawing comparisons

CARTOONS of comedy fat people lounging on sofas and eating junk food, and a big juicy 'builder's bum' on the cover! What next? Cartoons of black people boiling missionaries in cooking pots? Cartoon gays in pink frilly shirts and makeup? Asians saying 'Goodness gracious me'? Or maybe we could have a page three girl. *The Psychologist* is the in-house magazine of an internationally respected learned society. Would it not be possible for us to avoid poking fun at groups whom others are trying to support and understand?

John Morris
Department of Psychological Services
West Cumberland Hospital
Whitehaven

Jon Sutton, Editor of The Psychologist, replies: It was certainly never our intention to poke fun. We chose illustration mostly because photos of individuals can be problematic in sensitive areas such as this. However, some of the feedback we have received since the April issue suggests we may have misjudged the required tone. We apologise to anyone who was offended.

Indigenous psychologies – Global or local?

In his response to February's special issue 'Bringing psychology to all societies' Gustav Jahoda disagrees with the contributors about the status of the indigenous psychologies – mainly non-Western reactions to mainstream Western psychology which aim to make psychology more relevant to the local culture ('What kind of psychology for all?', April 2005).

Jahoda asserts that 'today most "indigenous psychology" is, by and large, Western psychology extended and adapted more or less extensively so as to be more suitable for use in local contexts' which 'may include the introduction of culture-specific contexts'. Largely I agree; however, there is a lot of heterogeneity in the indigenous

psychologies and indigenisation has been taken differently far in different countries and by different researchers. Moreover, there have been many announcements of general research programmes for indigenous psychologies and the concrete implementations of these programmes in the future may well prove to be more distant from Western psychology.

Jahoda also argues that no convincing 'case' was made by the contributors to the special issue for the desirability of the indigenous psychologies. Although my contribution did not aim to discuss this issue, the indigenous psychologies, in my opinion, are desirable because, generally speaking, it is desirable to bring in more perspectives and empirical

domains into psychology. This will be an effect of the indigenous psychologies and is likely to lead to the discovery of new phenomena and insights. Furthermore, adapting one's research questions and methodology to the local conditions as is done in the indigenous psychologies will most probably increase the applicability of the results to the same context.

The political aspect is important for understanding the indigenous psychologies as it contributes to the conditions both for their initiation and for their development. This is well illustrated by the indigenous psychologies in India, the Philippines and in the Islamic countries, for example Iran. The importance of this aspect is not, in my opinion, sufficiently heeded by Jahoda when he writes about the status and desirability of the indigenised psychologies.

Finally, Jahoda's criticism of the idea of a universal psychology mainly deals with the suggestion presented by Berry and Kim (in Kim & Berry, 1993). I agree with most of Jahoda's objections to the Berry and Kim model and have previously expressed a similar critique (Allwood, 1998). In

QUESTION TIME

This month's question (taken from the Forum):

I often assume there is one ideal personality (rather extravert) and one good style of testing (very bouncy) that is the ideal way to test infants and young children. Is there any research to support this?

Katie Alcock

Department of Psychology
University of Lancaster

Post your answers to this and other questions on the Forum (go to www.thepsychologist.org.uk, click on 'Forum', click on 'Question time'), or post your own thought-provoking or offbeat psychological question there. The best questions and answers will be published in *The Psychologist*.

my contribution to the special issue I suggested that a 'light' version (or maybe more realistically: versions) of a universal psychology is a more appropriate goal. The conclusions of such a 'light' universal psychology would be moderated by the theories and findings in the different indigenous psychologies but basically it would remain on the, so to say, 'indigenous level'.

Carl Martin Allwood
University of Lund
Sweden

References

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- Kim, U. & Berry, J.W. (1993). *Indigenous psychologies: Research and experience in cultural context*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Editor's note: Also see our discussion forum at www.thepsychologist.org.uk for a reply from Kwang-Kuo Hwang.

If you read an article in *The Psychologist* that you fundamentally disagree with, then the letters page is your first port of call: summarise your argument in under 500 words. But if you feel you have a substantial amount of conflicting evidence to cite and numerous points to make that simply cannot be contained within a letter, you can write a 'Counterpoint' article of up to 1500 words, within a month of the publication of the original article. However, it is best to contact the editor about your plans, on jonsut@bps.org.uk. We hope this format will build on the role of *The Psychologist* as a forum for discussion and debate.

INFORMATION

■ I AM a counselling psychologist, in training, with a background in occupational psychology. I am undertaking research in the area of 'mid-life career changes' and would be very interested in talking to psychologists, of any specialisation, who have come to the profession from another discipline or profession.

William Trebinski

E-mail: trebinski@aol.com;
tel: 01753 853124

■ I RECENTLY graduated in psychology with a 2:1 and will be studying for my MSc in occupational psychology from September. I am currently looking for **voluntary work experience** with an occupational psychologist in London, Hertfordshire and surrounding area.

Claire Fix

Tel: 07814 470469; e-mail:
clairefix@hotmail.com

■ I AM a second-year psychology student at the London Metropolitan University, and am looking for information concerning the **effects of aspartame (Nutrasweet) on neurological function** for a possible dissertation topic. I am particularly interested in research on epilepsy or on memory deficiency. Any information will be appreciated, including personal accounts, though I am particularly searching for psychological and neurological research on this or related topics.

Caroline Finn

E-mail: CazJuliaFinn@hotmail.com

■ CHARITY conducting a nationally funded research project into **pregnancy resulting from an incestuous relationship** and possible effects on parenting, seeks input from agencies and survivors: strictly confidential, and support available.

Roslynn Selous-Hodges

Tel: 01925 246910; e-mail:
roslynn@healthyrelationships.org.uk

■ ARE you a psychologist? Stressed? Overworked? Need an assistant to reduce the load? Work in South Wales? I can offer you **40 hours each week, on a voluntary basis for the next six months**, if you can provide just 60–90 minutes supervision time per week. I am a

mature BSc student graduating in July. I have two years' experience in a multidisciplinary team working with families, children and challenging adolescents. I have wide experience with older adults with mental health problems, ethnic minorities. Advanced police check and excellent references are available.

Louise Pye

E-mail: louisepye@supanet.com; tel:
01656 74 44 55

■ I HAVE completed an accredited MSc in forensic psychology. I have been working in a forensic setting since October 2003 with Merseyside Probation Service. I am applying for full DFP membership on the pre-diploma route. Having completed the first stage of it, I would be interested to hear from a Chartered Forensic Psychologist who is full member of the DFP for a **fortnightly supervision on a contractual basis** to meet the BPS criteria.

Sonia Gavotti

Tel: 0783 337 5499; e-mail:
sonia.gavotti@btopenworld.com

■ I HAVE an almost complete set of the **Journal of Occupational Psychology 1976 to 2004** (*Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* from 1992). If any institution or individual, in UK or overseas, is interested in having them, please contact me. I can mail them if my mail costs are met.

Tom Carruthers

E-mail: Milnwood@btopenworld.com

■ I AM an undergraduate studying psychology. I had a double brain haemorrhage 13 years ago, which left me with no speech and paralysis down my right side for a year. I have now recovered but for my musical memory. **I cannot remember any music or words**, which I find very distressing as I used to be an accomplished musician and vocalist. Very occasionally I remember a song from the 1970s when it comes on the radio, I sing along, and then it's gone again.

Is there any neuropsychologist out there who would like to do research on me to help me regain my musical memory?

Mary Waddoups

E-mail: WADMI_04@worc.ac.uk; tel:
0788 754 5742

Student destinations and the application of psychology

I AM writing in response to David Duncan's letter (May 2005) in which he berates me for reportedly saying in a recent presentation at the Wessex and Wight Branch's Careers Day, that 'many psychology graduates move into non-psychology careers such as training, management, health and retail work'; his point being that many psychology graduates in these sectors are actually working as applied psychologists, rather than 'non-psychologists'.

I am accused of sheer academic arrogance, archaic academic attitudes and leading many academic psychologists not to join the BPS, which is 'all the more dangerous because it originates from those who train the psychologists of the future'.

I was very impressed by the level of ire I was able to excite, but unfortunately I did not mention 'non-psychology careers' in my talk, and would not have tried to belittle applied psychology – as I have been an applied psychologist myself for going on 20 years and a BPS member for even longer!

What I did say was: 'Overall it would appear that only about 40% of Psychology Graduates appear to take on jobs or training which might lead to professional psychology occupations as their first destinations' (from the conference abstract). Thus the point I was making was that 60 per cent of graduates are not on track to gain a professional psychology qualification. In fact, in my talk I tried to make the opposite point to that which I am charged, namely that in my opinion psychology graduates make the best candidates for general graduate jobs because of the wide mix of academic as well as applied

skills they are taught on their undergraduate courses. I am also sure that graduates entering jobs which do not lead to qualifications as a professional psychologist will not easily forget or lose their hard-won skills and become 'non-psychologists', whether they go on to think of themselves as applied psychologists or not.

As an applied psychologist working in an academic setting, I found myself agreeing with many of David Duncan's points (but not those which were rude about me!), and I am very happy to have been a founder member of the BPS's Division for Teachers and Researchers in Psychology, which has set out to recruit psychology teachers and researchers working in other areas who otherwise would not have had a route to becoming professionally qualified psychologists.

Darren Van Laar

Department of Psychology
University of Portsmouth

Take another look at *The Psychologist* website

We've made a few changes to *The Psychologist* website, at www.thepsychologist.org.uk. Please go there, make use of its many functions and tell us what you think. You can now:

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