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Society

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The Society has offices in Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow and London, as well as the main office in Leicester. All enquiries should be addressed to the Leicester office [see inside front cover for address].

The British Psychological Society

was founded in 1901, and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1965. Its object is 'to promote the advancement and diffusion of a knowledge of psychology pure and applied and especially to promote the efficiency and usefulness of Members of the Society by setting up a high standard of professional education and knowledge'.
Extract from The Charter



President's column

Gerry Mulhern

Contact Gerry Mulhern via the Society's Leicester office, or e-mail: thepresident@bps.org.uk

Having returned from Glasgow and our 'best ever Annual Conference', to quote one delegate, I must acknowledge the outstanding work of our Standing Conference Committee, its Chair, Ken Brown, our Conference and Events team, led by Ruth Raven, and the many other Society staff in attendance for their skill, professionalism and friendliness. From the outset, the mood of the conference was one of buzzing anticipation, collegiality and energy.

In addition to a strong programme, headed by a stellar cast of keynote speakers and award winners, we were privileged to have the Chief Executive of the ESRC, Professor Paul Boyle, to help launch the Report of the ESRC International Benchmarking Exercise for Psychology, carried out in partnership with the BPS, the Experimental Psychology Society and the Association of Heads of Psychology Departments.

If you have never attended a BPS Annual Conference, or have not done so recently, I urge you to give our 2012 conference a try. Held in London ahead of the 2012 Olympics, the conference is sure to build on the great success of Glasgow 2011.

In Glasgow we were also pleased to celebrate our recent journals publishing partnership with Wiley-Blackwell who, as well as jointly hosting the partnership reception, generously sponsored our Awards Gala Dinner. Four months into our partnership, colleagues from Wiley-Blackwell presented their first Publishing Update to the May Board of Trustees, which detailed a staggering level of activity in journal development, marketing and quality enhancement. All Trustees agreed that the benefits of the partnership were exceeding expectations, with the impact already evident in increased readership across all titles, digitisation and online publication of the archive of the *British Journal of Psychology* from 1904, and of the *British Journal of Educational Psychology* from 1931, highly productive engagement with journal editors and early stage career prizes for two journals. I believe we can look forward to a great future for our journals.

I am also delighted to report that our trial of free access for members to journals via EBSCO has got off to a flying start with impressive usage statistics. Our 'use it or lose it' message appears to have got through and, with continued

engagement at these levels, I am confident that Trustees will be happy to confirm this service to members for the long term.

In my Presidential Address in Glasgow I issued something of a rallying call to members, urging us to modernise our governance and administrative systems to meet future challenges in the post-HPC era. As the second largest and second oldest psychological society in the world, I argued that we should build on our outstanding legacy and seek to become a more modern, outward-looking organisation, both domestically and internationally.

Two of our greatest domestic challenges, I suggested, are our democratic deficit and the need to re-invigorate our Sections. Reform of

our democratic structures and processes is urgently needed to allow us to function more effectively, and some sacred cows may need to be sacrificed. Equally urgent is the need to breathe new life into Sections, especially in light

of our increased focus on promoting and enhancing psychological science. Internationally, I argued that we must abandon our customary reticence, demonstrate leadership and engage globally with fellow societies.

More provocatively, I suggested renaming the Society the Royal Psychological Society, and renaming one of our awards (e.g. the PPB Lifetime Achievement Award) the C.S. Myers Award. I also argued for further reform of our Fellowship grade, the need for Divisions to reinvent themselves post-HPC, and for greater investment in Branches.

My last official duty will be to chair the Annual General Meeting in June, so I reserve my final few words to say what a privilege it has been to have served as your President. I hope my monthly columns have ruffled some feathers and have provoked readers into greater engagement with issues affecting the Society and our discipline. Thanks to all who have taken the trouble to e-mail me with their thoughts.

Finally, thanks to all who have supported me throughout this year. To Sue Gardner, who is exiting stage left following her year as Vice-President, special thanks. As President I could not have functioned without the collegiality of fellow Trustees, our excellent staff and those members I have met during my term, so let me be among the first to offer my wholehearted support to our new President, Noel Sheehy.

"what a privilege it has been to serve as your President"



Obesity – a psychological report

It is generally accepted that obesity is a multifaceted issue that requires a biopsychosocial response. However, whilst cognitive behavioural therapy is briefly mentioned in the NICE (2006) obesity guidelines as the recommended way to address behavioural change, psychological issues are generally not receiving as much attention as sociological and diet issues as ways of tackling this growing epidemic. A new report, commissioned by the British Psychological Society, attempts to redress this with a cohesive approach between academic and applied work. Contributors are drawn from across Divisions within the Society; notably the Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology, the Division of Counselling Psychology, the Division of Health Psychology, the Division of Clinical Psychology and the Division of Educational Psychology. Private practitioners and those within the NHS have also contributed.



strain to the NHS and the cost to the wider economy are enormous given the associated health risks, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, some types of cancer, gout and gall bladder disease. Being overweight can also cause problems such as sleep apnoea (interrupted breathing during sleep) and osteoarthritis.

Obesity has received much media attention of late, and there is a great deal being done at local government and within the National Health Service to try to stem the rise of obesity.

The government's healthy-living messages permeate communities and NICE have set up a consultation group to address a whole-systems approach to obesity. Ongoing nutritional and sociological issues such as diet, transport, exercise friendly towns and available educational programmes for children and adults inform on ways to redress the growth of obesity.

The report

The first two papers in the report examine physical activity and exercise behaviour for the obese, from a psychological perspective. Obesity is defined, with examples and recommendations of ways in which physical activity behaviour change may occur. This is followed by an overview of research that highlights issues to do with physical activity and the obese individual. Next, the report offers insight from a health psychologist's perspective, examining ways of working with obese individuals within the NHS. The report goes on to examine weight-loss surgery and the psychological issues therein, followed by an examination of pharmaceutical interventions. The fifth paper provides an overview of childhood obesity. A paper addressing psychological issues with specific regard to emotional eating is followed by the conclusion.

Each section of the report is written by specialists in their field and offers recommendations for follow-up work and/or applied examples of ways in which to work with obese individuals from a psychological perspective. The aim is to offer a cross-discipline psychological perspective on ways in which to help individuals who may be struggling with weight problems and, in so doing, plug

the gap that the authors feel has not yet been fully addressed by current obesity interventions. Empirical evidence and applied practice intertwine to offer the reader a report that reflects the psychological perspectives from exercise and physical activity psychology, clinical psychology, health psychology, educational psychology, counselling psychology and therapeutic interventions.

Dr Julie Waumsley
(University of Northampton)
Chair, BPS Obesity Working Party

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- Scottish Government (2010). *Preventing overweight and obesity in Scotland: A route map towards healthy weight*. Scottish Government, February 2010.

Why now?

Obesity is a modern epidemic in the developed world. In England alone, one in four adults are currently obese, with more than half the adult population overweight or obese (NICE, 2006). This trend is set to double by 2050 (Department of Health, 2009). Obesity levels in Wales are predicted as higher than those in England, and Scotland has one of the highest levels of obesity in OECD countries, with over a million adults and over 150,000 children obese. This is predicted to worsen with adult obesity levels reaching over 40 per cent by 2030 (Scottish Government, 2010). In Northern Ireland 60 per cent of adults have a weight problem and as many as one in five are obese. Figures from 2006/07 show that approximately 22 per cent of Northern Ireland's primary school children are classed as overweight or obese (Northern Ireland Executive, 2008). It is also estimated that one third of children and young people in the Western world are overweight or obese, and this is set to rise by two thirds by 2050 (Reilly, 2009).

Obesity is not just a cosmetic problem for many but a serious risk to health. The

NEW BPS WEBSITE

The Society's new and improved website is now live at www.bps.org.uk. Members are invited to log on to the site, create a profile, and explore our new online environment. All visitors will have the opportunity to comment – just follow the links from the new site's front page banners.

SOCIETY NOTICES

- Annual Conference 2012** See p.413
- Funding for study visits** See p.421
- BPS conferences** See p.446
- Learning Centre courses and events** See p.447
- Welsh Branch Conference** See p.453
- Research Seminars Competition 2011** See p.453
- psychology4students events** See p.460



Doctoral award winners

The Research Board has once again been faced with the impossible task of judging between the two best nominations for the Award for Outstanding Doctoral Research Contributions. The 2010 prize will therefore be shared by Dr Thom Scott-Phillips and Dr Catherine Sebastian. They will each receive £500 and a commemorative certificate and will be invited to deliver lectures based on their research at the Society's Annual Conference in 2012.

Dr Scott-Phillips's PhD thesis at the University of Edinburgh, 'The social evolution of pragmatic behaviour', was passed in 2009 with no corrections, since when all elements of the thesis have been published as journal papers. Thom also holds two MSc degrees – Evolution of Language and Cognition (University of Edinburgh, 2005) and Mathematics (University of Sussex, 1998). He is currently a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences, University of Edinburgh. His highly interdisciplinary research integrates evolutionary theory with the cognition of communication.

Dr Scott-Phillips's doctoral research included the development of a novel experimental game to explore how, in the absence of any pre-defined channels, modes or forms of communication, humans might develop methods for signalling that a particular behaviour is communicative in nature. He also developed a general model of the evolution of communication, and used this as a way to determine between different theoretical approaches to the cognition of communication. These projects were published in *Cognition* and *Cognitive Science* respectively, and have already been widely cited.

Professor Martin Pickering (University of Edinburgh), nominating Dr Scott-Phillips for the award, described him as 'an extremely innovative and impressive young researcher' and expressed confidence that he would 'rapidly become a major figure in the field'.



Dr Thom Scott-Phillips

On being told of the award, Dr Scott-Phillips said: 'I am obviously delighted to receive this award, and honoured to share it with Dr Sebastian, who has clearly conducted some outstanding research. I am particularly gratified that the BPS have chosen to recognise interdisciplinary work with this award: this should act as an encouragement for others to pursue such research. There are many people without whom my PhD would not have been as successful as it was, but in particular I'd like to thank my two PhD supervisors, Professor Simon Kirby and Professor James Hurford, for all their support and encouragement. I'd also like to thank Professor Martin Pickering for the support he has shown me since my PhD.'

Sharing the accolade, Dr Catherine Sebastian's PhD was in the emerging field of developmental social cognitive neuroscience. It was completed in 2009, funded by a studentship from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council at the UCL Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience. The high quality of Dr Sebastian's work builds on earlier academic success, including a Congratulatory First at Oxford for her BA in Experimental Psychology in 2005.

Dr Sebastian's doctoral research combined multiple strands of psychological inquiry and methodologies as she investigated whether functional development in neural circuitry contributes to the hypersensitivity to social rejection often reported by adolescents. Her research with a range of different populations included large-scale behavioural studies, cognitive neuroscience approaches complemented by genotyping, and the study of developmental psychopathology; her methods included fMRI, novel behavioural paradigms, self-report, and imaging genetics. Despite this ambitious scope, her thesis was completed in under 36 months, and she has already published seven papers from the research in high-impact peer-reviewed journals.

PROPOSED SPECIAL GROUP

The initial proposal to form a Special Group for Independent Practitioners was approved by the Professional Practice Board in September 2010 and recommendations were made to the Board of Trustees that consideration be given to the formation of the Special Group.

The Board of Trustees have now approved the formation of Group in principle, having met the requirements of Rule 58(1) of the revised Charter Statutes & Rules. In order to meet Rule 58(2) and (3) the support of at least 1 per cent of Society Members is now required to take matters forward.

You are therefore now invited to express your support for the formation and membership of the Special Group at www.bps.org.uk/ipgroup.

This proposal is to establish a special group representing the interests of independent practitioners as a new member network of the British Psychological Society. The purpose of this group is to promote and maintain best practice, adequate content and levels of continued professional development and to represent this very diverse group of practitioners in the Society's policies and business by:

- | promoting and maintaining competence to practise independently;
- | representing the interests of independent practitioners on the BPS Professional Practice Board;
- | integrating the various areas of applied psychology;
- | monitoring and promoting best standards

- | of ethics and professional boundaries;
- | promoting best practice;
- | maintaining best practice; and
- | monitoring and maintaining best practice with respect to the legal position of independent practitioners.

This special group is proposed as an addition to the existing member networks as it reaches across diverse fields, rather than focusing on one area of applied psychology. Moreover, there does not seem to be an existing structure within the British Psychological Society that satisfies the need of independent practitioners to combine competently and ethically their psychological practice with the necessity to develop and maintain their business.

CONSULTATIONS NEWS

Full details of all consultations, including downloadable copies of consultation papers and the Society's responses, are available at www.bps.org.uk/consult.

Responses submitted

Responses were submitted to six consultations during April.

Measuring National Well-Being – The Society welcomed the development of an additional index of well-being by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) rather than a reliance on economic indicators alone. It was noted that well-being necessitates a focus on a wide range of domains of human life and that measuring these is difficult. It was also noted that well-being has both subjective and objective elements. The Society looks forward to working closely with the ONS as the programme develops.

National Curriculum Review – It was recommended to the Department for Education that core scientific concepts should be taught using whatever subject knowledge is most likely to aid students' understanding of the concept: psychology was suggested as an example of such a subject.

The remaining four consultations responded to during April were:

- Teenage and Young Adult Cancer Measures (Department of Health)
- Social Anxiety Disorder Draft Scope (National Institute for Health & Clinical Excellence)
- Tobacco Control Strategy (Department for Health, Social Services & Public Safety, Northern Ireland)
- Community Sentences Review (Department of Justice, Northern Ireland)

Impact of past responses

Admissibility of Expert Evidence – the Society responded to the Law Commission's consultation on this topic in 2009 and a number of the points raised have been taken into consideration, including those detailed below:

- The Society observed that many of the difficulties caused by expert evidence occur when, under examination, the expert is lured away from their areas of expertise into speculation and judgements not based on sound knowledge – as a result, the Commission has proposed that judges should be more proactive in intervening in examination and cross-examination in order to rein in such departures.
- Recognition of the difficulty, in practice, of distinguishing between opinion-based and research-based psychological testimony has led to the Commission proposing a generic test to be applied to both opinion-based and research-based evidence.
- The particular difficulties posed by psychological evidence illustrate the need for judges to have recourse to external experts to assist in differentiating between reliable and unreliable evidence – a clause introducing this procedure has been incorporated into the draft Criminal Evidence (Experts) Bill.

The full report and draft Bill are available from our website (www.bps.org.uk/consult).

The preparation and submission of the Society's responses to consultations are coordinated by the Consultations Response Team (CRT). All those holding at least graduate membership are eligible to contribute, and all interest is warmly welcomed. Please contact the CRT for further information (consult@bps.org.uk; 0116 252 9508).



Dr Catherine Sebastian

Nominating Dr Sebastian, Professor Sarah-Jayne Blakemore and Dr Essi Viding, her doctoral supervisors at UCL, said they were struck by her 'independence, clarity of thought and creativity' and were confident that she would become 'one of the future research leaders in the field of developmental cognitive neuroscience'.

On winning the award, Dr Sebastian said: 'It is a real honour to have been selected for this award. I am immensely grateful to my supervisors and collaborators at UCL

for the excellent training and inspiration they provided. I very much enjoy working in the fascinating and rapidly emerging field of developmental cognitive neuroscience, and look forward to learning more about the links between the developing brain and social behaviour.'

Professor Richard Crisp, chair of the Research Board's award committee commented: 'The committee was once again immensely impressed by the outstanding calibre of submissions to the Society's Doctoral Award. The work published by the two winners, Dr Sebastian and Dr Scott-Phillips, provides a superb spotlight on the rigour, vibrancy and innovation that characterises psychological research being carried out by UK doctoral students.'

IAPT training register

The Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme was created to provide improved access to evidence-based psychological therapies for people who require the help of mental health services, particularly those presenting with anxiety disorders and depression. Central to the delivery of the programme is the IAPT-trained workforce of psychological therapists, comprising two core roles – Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) and High Intensity Practitioner (HI). The IAPT workforce is specifically trained to deliver low- and high-intensity interventions for people with anxiety disorders and/or mild, moderate and severe depression in a system of stepped care.

In response to the IAPT programme and to support members engaged in this initiative, the Society's new register of IAPT trained members will provide an opportunity for members who have successfully completed IAPT accredited PWP or HI training to gain recognition of their skills. Registration is open to all members and application forms are now available on the Society website.

■ **If you need any help or advice, please contact the Membership Team (membership@bps.org.uk; 0116 252 9911).**