

Journals – a question of collegiality

Members of the Society will by now be aware that the Society has entered into a commercial partnership with Wiley-Blackwell who will publish the 11 scientific journals currently published by the Society. The apparent benefits of such an arrangement have been heralded in *The Psychologist* [see August, p.659] and in electronic news releases.

What has not been reported is that the decision to take this step was undertaken without the full, transparent and appropriate consultation that we would have expected of a collegial learned society. The Journals Committee expressed serious reservations about the process of negotiation to the Trustees who, at the time of writing, have not responded to the issues raised. The Journals Committee regrets this and hopes that future actions of the Trustees will be mindful of the need to retain the goodwill and trust of those who voluntarily devote substantial time and resources to the Society.

Stephen Morley
Chair, Journals Committee

Response from Graham Powell:

I am replying on behalf of the Society as Chair of the Publications and Communications Board. As set out in the Members' Update we are delighted that the journals now have the global platform that they deserve to the benefit of both the Charter objectives of the Society and the membership. The licensing agreement

with a global publishing partner contributes to the Society's strategic aim of developing and increasing its standing as a learned society. The journals operation is no more and no less commercial than before; the Society had in fact already outsourced most of the operational aspects of the Journals process to a variety of providers and the

Keynes on Freud

At a meeting at the Freud Museum, Professor Pick is reported to have claimed: 'John Maynard Keynes read Freud in the 1920s and was very interested in the links between money and sexuality' (Psychology and the financial crisis, August 2010, p.624). However, it would be a mistake to think of Keynes as an enthusiastic Freudian. This is what he wrote in a letter to *The Nation and Athenaeum*, under the pseudonym Seila, in 1925:

I venture to say that at the

present stage the argument in favour of Freudian theories would be very little weakened if it were admitted that every case published hitherto had been wholly invented by Professor Freud in order to illustrate his ideas and to make them more vivid to the minds of his readers. That is to say, the case for considering them seriously mainly depends at present on the appeal which they make to our own intuitions as

containing something new and true about the way in which human psychology works, and very little indeed upon the so-called inductive verifications, so far as the latter have been published up to date. I suggest Freud's partisans might do well to admit this, and, on the other hand, that his critics should, without abating their criticism, allow that he deserves exceptionally serious and entirely unpartisan consideration,

if only because he does seem to present himself to us, whether we like him or not, as one of the great disturbing, innovating geniuses of our age, that is to say as a sort of devil.

It seems that on this matter, as on several others, Keynes was ahead of his time.

Nicholas Humphrey
London School of Economics

new relationship with a single partner is in part an important rationalisation of that. The Society retains full ownership of the journals and retains all editorial arrangements for which the Journals Committee (JC) has been responsible.

The JC were consulted at an early stage and the Chair of the JC was invited onto, and agreed to join, the steering group, expressing his views fully. Later, the Chair of JC could not continue as a member of that steering group, having declined to sign a confidentiality agreement that all other persons had signed up to, the competitive tendering process and contractual negotiations being strictly confidential. However, the steering group considered all issues raised then and subsequently by the JC and the Trustees explicitly assured themselves that all issues had been addressed.

The Trustees are mindful of their responsibility to the membership, particularly to those who give their time freely to the Society. They are also mindful of their legal responsibility to ensure that all operations run as effectively and efficiently as possible, and to allow them to reach their full potential. The Society is therefore delighted to see this exciting and important development.

A level playing field?

As an undergraduate student just starting second year, I have been following the debate regarding the necessity of having an A-level in psychology prior to undertaking a degree with interest.

Having just turned 33, I took A-levels 17 years ago (in classics, history and art). After leaving college I worked in a high street bank until I began my degree last September. Despite having no psychology background whatsoever, I achieved an average mark of 80 per cent in my first year exams, and received a letter in July informing me that I had won the first-year psychology prize for academic excellence. This seems to suggest that an A-level in psychology is not necessary to succeed at degree level.

At 18 I had no idea what career path to go down, but through life experience

now know I want to become a clinical psychologist. Because I know exactly what I want, and how hard it is to achieve, I take my studies very seriously. I also find every aspect of my course fascinating, which obviously helps.

It is hard enough for older people to switch careers, mainly due to financial commitments. I would imagine that many cannot afford to give up one wage to re-train for another career. Had I been forced to undertake a two-year A-level course prior to beginning my degree, I doubt I could have done it. I personally feel if the commitment is there, an A-level is not essential.

A solution could be that mature students have different entry requirements to those straight from sixth form. Would this be fair to younger students though? Perhaps universities could judge each case individually, rather than assuming that students do not have the

right or the ability to take a degree in psychology if they do not hold an A-level.

Suzanne Nightingale

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It is hard enough for older people to switch careers

Psychology degree – fit for purpose?

Psychology is one of the most popular undergraduate degrees in the UK and produces over 12,000 graduates each year. But is the psychology undergraduate degree fit for purpose? What changes might be needed to ensure that the undergraduate psychology is in good health in, say, 2015? This is the theme of a national consultation now taking place. It is designed to collect the views of a wide range of stakeholders including members of the British Psychological Society, employers, practising psychologists, alumni, students and lecturers.

Many, if not most, psychology graduates will have studied psychology for at least two years at pre-tertiary level yet the articulation between pre-tertiary and tertiary psychology education is poor. Again many, if not most, will embark on their degree programme with expectations of becoming a professional psychologist. But there are insufficient training places for this to be a reality and it is estimated

that 80 per cent of graduates are unable to, or choose not to, continue into professional training or academic careers as experimental psychologists.

In an increasingly competitive environment, departments are considering ways in which they can add value to their undergraduate psychology programmes, through, for example, work-placements, specialised third years relating to areas of professional psychology or specialised final-year research-based modules. Departments are also becoming more interested in finding ways to ensure that graduates are able to apply their psychological knowledge to everyday situations. Further afield, psychology educators are discussing the extent to which undergraduate programmes can nurture 'psychologically literate citizenship' – described as 'a way of being, a type of problem solving, and a sustained ethical and socially responsive stance towards others' (McGovern, 2010).

The results of the consultation will be

published as part of a report with recommendations in early 2011. The online survey is available during October on the website of the Higher Education Academy Psychology Network (www.psychology.heacademy.ac.uk).

This is a great opportunity for readers of *The Psychologist* to make their views known.

The work is being led by the Higher Education Academy Psychology Network in collaboration with the British Psychological Society and the Association of Heads of Psychology Departments.

Annie Trapp

Higher Education Academy Psychology Network

Reference

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Constructing theologies

In his response to my article 'The naturalness of weird beliefs' (July 2010) Paul Morris (Forum, August 2010) criticises 'pop' evolutionary psychologists for being seduced by the enhanced credibility that goes along with being aligned to the theory of evolution by natural selection. Rather ironically, this 'prestige bias' invoked by Morris is itself a well-documented phenomenon studied by evolutionary psychologists (see Henrich & Gil-White, 2001). Although a complete understanding of something as complex as humans must necessarily take genetics and biology into account, as Morris rightly implies, there is still a lot of work to be done at all levels before we can accurately construct the human journey from gamete fusion to death.

Morris raises some of the standard criticisms of evolutionary psychology. These pages are not the place to settle such drawn-out debates, but given that he admits that 'any sane person would count themselves as an evolutionary psychologist' I think our disagreement is more a matter of detail. I also suspect that use of the term 'hard-wired' elicits a knee-jerk response from many scientists, and perhaps I was too casual in using it, even if it does have heuristic value. Despite Morris's statements to the contrary, the extent of human cognitive universals and what they tell us about 'innateness' is still up for grabs (see Norenzayan & Heine, 2005). Language acquisition is one (lazy?) example (see Kirby, 2007), as are the various psychological 'kinship' responses that appear to be invariant across cultures (see e.g. Jones, 2003).

Morris also takes issue with the 'cognitively lazy' explanation for religious (and other) beliefs, by pointing out that describing

Aquinas' theological thinking in this way is a bizarre claim. I agree that it would be bizarre, but this is not what I was trying to say. My point was that *prior* to any theological system being developed, a collection of psychological phenomena conspire to make it completely natural to believe in (say) supernatural agents who have an interest in human moral actions. Once this tendency towards belief has taken root, then a theology can be built upon it, and much intellectual rigour can go into that project. The article was focused on the natural foundations of religious belief rather than what happens once that foundation has been laid. To think deeply about theological issues requires, at the very least, a considerable time investment, something which remains in short supply for modern traditional cultures where individuals must work hard just to exist. Presumably the problem is only amplified as one travels back in time. As a result, most religious beliefs emerge from the 'gut-feelings' that arise from the sorts of psychological mechanisms I discuss in the article. This is further evidenced by the finding that people's 'reflective' (i.e. theological) beliefs are often at odds with their non-reflective (i.e. intuitive) beliefs about supernatural agents (see e.g. Slone, 2004).

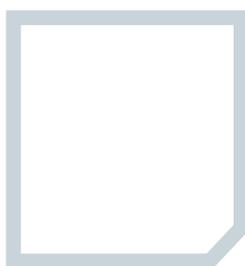
This confusion is also at the heart of the other commentator's response (Gabrielle Maughan, Forum, August 2010). Yes, religious systems are ways of creating social systems. Yes, moral codes are a part of these systems. The bigger the society, the bigger the 'gods' are that act as 'policing' agents. Very few people would disagree with this. The question is why religious systems are so successful at doing these things compared to other ones? What is it about human minds that makes some ideas and concepts more likely to become part of a system that is so adept at binding social groups together? Why is it that, amongst the many potential ideas that human minds can have, some of them are successful at engendering devotion, promoting morality and influencing behaviours, whether under Islam, Christianity or Brian-worship? Again, the development of the respective theologies is not my concern; I am more interested in how human minds get to the point where theology construction is possible.

Stuart Wilson

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There is a lot of work to accurately construct the human journey from gamete fusion to death

POETRY CORNER

Aspiring Clinical Psychologist, by Anna Price

Psychology, the game, the push to publish and succeed
Too many people, not enough places, over-subscribed indeed
Can I make it? The race is on and the odds are not in favour
Do I even wish to be a part of this frenetic sort of behaviour?

What of that urge, naive, absurd, to help another person?
Will it remain without disdain in my trained professional version?
Would I do well to cease to dwell on any such lofty goals?
Focus instead on the laid out tread of ascending clinical roles?

The challenge it seems is to go for gold and keep true the aims in mind
Join in the dance of a training farce whilst remaining 'nice and kind'
Compete with the rest, live with the stress and look for wiser values
Hoping one day to enter the fray at one with the working world.

What I am now is what I will bring to the work I chose to do
The courage to give with innocent love my heart and soul quite true
To remain sincere and openly here in a place of much aspiring
Whilst learning once more, my depth of resource as I shoot for a chance at a hiring!



Happy daze?

The Research Digest blog entry reprinted in the August issue ('Good, bad and the garden of language') informs us that according to recent research by Paul Rozin and his colleagues life is like a garden in which flowers vastly outnumber weeds, but that there are more types of weeds and they are more powerful – in life 'positive events outnumber negative events, but negative events are more varied and potent' – and that this asymmetry is reflected in language.

At least one linguist doubts that the alleged asymmetry in language (for example, the far greater use of positive words than negative ones in samples of written and spoken English – and 20 other languages!) has been validly demonstrated (see tinyurl.com/26bpc8e), but the other half of the claim, that in life positive events outnumber negative ones, seems to me even more problematic.

The summary does not tell us how the authors know that in life positive events outnumber negative events. I would think this could, in principle, be investigated empirically, but the likelihood of getting it right in practice seems to me remote.

Definition is one problem. Even at the level of the garden simile there are difficulties – one gardener's weeds are another's prized wildflower patch – and the problems of subjectivity are exacerbated when we get to the broader world: do sado-masochists, for example, get a vote on the classification of events as positive or negative?

Then, if we can get agreement on definitions, what about counting? For example, was my enjoyable breakfast one positive event, or five (bacon, egg, tomato, toast, coffee)? Was the Holocaust one negative event? Five million? Fifty million?

Since the only support for the claim that 'positive events outnumber negative events, but negative events are more varied and potent' seems to be the (alleged) asymmetry of language, is the claim that asymmetries of language reflect asymmetries of life events not completely circular?

Rozin's paper may provide good journalistic opportunities. But whether it can be considered good psychological research is another matter.

Justin Joffe
London

FORUM WEB CHAT

The blogosphere raised a collective eyebrow in August when it was announced that the biologist Marc Hauser, renowned for his work on morality and animal cognition, was guilty of scientific misconduct (see News, p.795).

Mass frustration followed at the lack of information released by Harvard University (Hauser's host institution) but The Chronicle soon came to the rescue publishing details from the 2007 letter that had triggered the whole affair. The document contained allegations by a research assistant that Hauser had inaccurately coded the behaviour of cotton-top tamarin monkeys, and that he had resisted attempts by others who sought to correct his mistakes.

On his Neuron Culture blog, the science writer David Dobbs expressed surprise that the monkeys' behaviour wasn't coded 'blind' (i.e. with raters kept ignorant of the stimuli the monkeys were exposed to on any given trial), although a credible contact later informed Dobbs that a blind protocol was followed.

Notwithstanding that detail, Dobbs was unforgiving: 'I think it's clear to everyone that this looks really bad. If this account [in The Chronicle] is accurate, Hauser either saw things that weren't there – a spectacular case of expectancy bias – or reported things he did not see. Which latter action is known as data fabrication and a huge sin.'

Greg Laden, an anthropologist and former colleague of Marc Hauser, wrote on his blog about the 'Hauser effect' – Hauser's knack of demonstrating abilities in monkeys that other experts only believed apes were capable of. Laden's always felt there were two possible explanations for the Hauser effect: either monkeys really are cleverer than is commonly believed or Hauser is a smarter than the average experimenter, able to get animals to do whatever he wants.

But Laden never entertained the possibility of fraud or misconduct. Now he feels like the proverbial neighbour who's asked about the guy down the street who's just been arrested for some outrageous crime. 'Marc kept to himself, in his lab. He produced his papers, got on with his job. Nobody ever thought he would carry out misconduct. He wasn't the type. I can't believe this is happening. – That's what I think.'

Other commentators have attempted to understand Hauser's motives. Linguistics professor Derek Bickerton asked on his Strange Tongue blog for *Psychology Today*, 'Hauser is a still relatively young yet already world-famous scientist who appeared to be at the top of his game. Why on earth would he do it?'

Bickerton's theory is that Hauser fell victim to a dominant but 'soon-to-be outdated' view among evolutionary biologists that language and other human behavioural adaptations (just like physiological ones) must have precursors in non-human animals. Hence Hauser's attempt to show monkeys are sensitive to pattern changes in sound. 'When you're sure something must be there,' Bickerton wrote, 'you're liable to see it, whether it's really there or not, and at whatever the cost to your career.'

So what happens next? Invoking the classic trolley-based moral dilemmas so often deployed in Hauser's own research, Christopher Kelty on the Savage Minds blog said there were several possible scenarios: 'Should one pull a lever to save Hauser? Should one push an unnamed (fat) graduate student or post-doc onto the track to save Hauser? Should one divert the trolley onto a track containing five other researchers who work on moral cognition, or leave it on the track towards Hauser to save those five? Should one derail the trolley and risk destroying a building (cognitive science at Harvard) that might contain sleeping researchers, etc. etc. etc.'

Christian Jarrett is staff journalist on The Psychologist. Share your views by e-mailing psychologist@bps.org.uk.

FORUM THE REAL WORLD

As we write this piece, the attention of much of the world's press is focused on the San José mine in Copiapó, Chile where 33 miners remain trapped three-quarters of a kilometre underground. The fact that they are alive is a miracle in itself, but now much of the coverage concerns their psychological state and the question of how they will cope with months of entombment in a state of chronic privation. The scenario is indeed nightmarish, and the psychological literature is replete with terminology, theory and case studies that would give little cause for optimism. If ever there was a situation guaranteed to crush a person in body and spirit, this surely would be it.

In recent years, however, researchers have started to develop a psychological narrative that moves beyond the idea that humans succumb passively to those forces (whether natural or social) that subjugate and imprison them. One of the first researchers to chart this alternative trajectory was Peter Suedfeld, whose work with Holocaust survivors and polar explorers alerted him to the phenomenon of *salutogenesis* — a term coined by Aaron Antonovsky to describe the human capacity to rise to adversity and to overcome it.

In this context, it is interesting too that whereas once the psychological literature was dominated by a view that members of subjugated groups could only ever succumb to their role, increasingly researchers have articulated a psychology of resilience and resistance in which the subjugated fight back.

The work of John Drury and colleagues at the University of Sussex is emblematic in this regard. Looking at survivors in a range of contexts — most notably the London bombings — this has shown that in the most appalling of circumstances, people are capable of coming together to turn individual vulnerability into combined strength. Ironically, the belief that people are vulnerable and that they panic under extreme circumstances can lead the emergency services to intervene in such a way that they disrupt this self-organisation and hence undermine collective resilience.

In all this work, one key psychological ingredient stands out as having particular protective properties: the social group. In particular, this is because where people feel bound together by a sense of common fate, their shared identity proves to be a powerful resource on which basis they can both give and receive social support. This in turn leads to an enhanced sense that one has the resources to cope with hard times and hence reduces stress. But, as a group, people are also better able to imagine a positive future and to see that they have the collective will to bring it about.

Deep in the bowels of the Chilean earth, a strong collective identity is undoubtedly the miners' greatest psychological resource. The best way to protect their psychological well-being is to help build this sense of identity. The best way of protecting vulnerable individuals is to ensure that they are not isolated from the group. Of course, collective identity alone will not guarantee a happy ending. But it does ensure that they will not yield helplessly to nature, and that, however it turns out, their struggle will be a source of both inspiration and celebration.

Steve Reicher is at the University of St Andrews. **Alex Haslam** is at the University of Exeter. Share your views on this and other 'real world' psychological issues — e-mail psychologist@bps.org.uk. An archive of columns can be found at www.bbcprisonstudy.org.

AP/PHOTO ASSOCIATION IMAGES

A foothold in the psychiatric domain

It's welcome news to see that four psychologists have been granted 'approved clinician' status and will now be responsible for the overall care of 'patients' detained for assessment and treatment under the Mental Health Act (News, September 2010). I'm hoping this will be a pioneering move within the mental health system where psychological disciplines will begin to strongly influence how mental distress is viewed and treated. I wonder if we will now see the beginnings of a transition away from the concentration on bio-psychiatry and the medical model, where mental illness is mainly viewed as disease-based, with the administration of drugs appearing to be the main catalyst to resolving an individual's personal crisis.

If the ethos and perspectives of psychology are permitted to be upheld, maybe now individuals who are detained will experience a new approach to their care, where environmental, emotional and social aspects will be considered as a major part of their 'psychological' assessment rather than placing causation directly at the doors of a genetic or chemical abnormality in their physical brain and, accompanied by a label to match this 'diagnosis'. And again, based on 'psychologically informed decisions', perhaps now new

standards will be set, seeing the introduction of a more holistic viewpoint when it comes to care options for clients, taking into account individual lifestyle patterns, familial influences and social aspects, etc.

As a result, it would be appropriate to provide care plans for those in distress that offer greater choice and independence, with opportunities to discuss, explore and resolve personal crises within an autonomous environment. Consequently, if more psychologists are to establish a foothold in psychiatry, equal to psychiatrists, then perhaps this will enable more clients to access psychological therapies, psychoanalytical psychotherapy and counselling sessions, etc., rather than this overreliance on drugs to treat mental distress and trauma.

Maybe I am appearing overly optimistic and idealistic here, with regard to the changing status of psychologists, but if our views of mental distress and the causes of such distress are to begin a cultural shift, then it's imperative that psychologists become agents for change (and now is their opportunity), in what was once ultimately considered the domain of psychiatrists.

Julie Leonovs
Gateshead

Mindfulness vs. Christianity?

Since participating in a mindfulness-based cognitive therapy group, I have no doubt that my life has changed for the better. Mindfulness involves intentionally bringing your complete attention to the present moment's experiences in a non-judgemental or accepting way via the use of meditative exercises (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Although mindfulness originates from a Buddhist philosophy, the fact remains that mindfulness- and acceptance-based treatments are intentionally secular. Yet within the belief system of certain fundamentalist Christian denominations are zealous opinions that state that any type of meditation practice is an 'evil' or pagan practice through which the devil may enter the mind, introducing evil thoughts or experiences (Kristeller, 2010).

For example, Groothuis (2004) argues that underlying the meditative practices is a worldview in conflict with biblical spirituality. He mentions that, despite being currently used to promote better physical health and well-being, yoga (one of my favourite meditative exercises) was originally designed to bring a sense of oneness with Brahman – the Hindu word for the absolute being that pervades all things. He explains that this is an example of pantheism, a concept driving Eastern meditation that is in direct conflict and completely at odds with Christianity. He goes on to claim that suspending our critical capacities through meditation opens the soul to deception.

However through mindful meditation, I have come to understand that my thoughts are not always 'reality', which has essentially freed me from the distorted reality that thoughts often bring, allowing for liberation, clear-sightedness and a greater sense of manageability in my life. Yet as I delve further into the Bible, I find it states: 'Hate what is evil; cling to what is good' (Romans 12:9), but what I have learnt through mindfulness that by

wishing to 'hold on' to pleasant experiences we can get them to last, but this pleasure is only momentary, and our attempts to make it last or happen again can actually spoil it or drive it away.

After reading similar criticisms of mindful meditation, I felt torn between being a psychology assistant and of Christian faith – something I never envisaged I would experience in my psychology career! However, though some individuals may find that their religious backgrounds lead to concerns that may be resistant to discussion, I am not as constrained by my faith, and I have now

come to the conclusion that I will continue to embrace mindfulness despite its Buddhist orientation. Within the field of psychology we are privileged to draw upon different models, and adapt our approaches to suit our clientele. Why should I not transfer this quality to my religious ideals? I remain convinced that if I were to disembark from mindfulness and revert to my old unhelpful automatic ways of thinking in order to become a better Christian, my life would be significantly less fulfilled. Anyways, does it not say to 'get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along

with every form of malice' (Ephesians 4:31), and that 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...' (Galatians 5:22)?

Robert Searle

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NOTICEBOARD

Did you **graduate in psychology from Reading University in 1980**? Were you on the staff (academic, research, postgrad, admin) there at the time? We are organising a **reunion** on Saturday 23 October, beginning 1pm at the Students' Union on Whiteknights. More details can be found at <http://rdgpsych1980reunion.blogspot.com>. We do hope you can make it!

Jon Harvey
Drew Alcott

I am writing to invite participants to take part in my thesis study entitled '**How do British clinical psychologists talk about their experiences of considering religion and spirituality in therapeutic sessions**'. I am looking for clinical psychologists working in Britain, with NHS experience, who feel that issues of religion and spirituality are relevant to their clinical work.

Participation involves completing a brief preliminary questionnaire, and you then may be invited to be interviewed. This interview will be recorded and transcribed. If you would like to take part or have any questions, please e-mail me. The study has ethical approval from the University of East London Research Ethics Committee.

Aayesha Mulla
psychandreligion@hotmail.co.uk

Author seeks a publisher for a psychological novel – A CBT psychologist has a phobia. He tries to cure himself. He conceals his problem from his wife – she has suffered a trauma he could aggravate. Married with three children, their apparently minor problems worsen and start to erode their relationship. Over time, insights from his diverse cases meld and contrast his own behaviour. Can what he has learned from his patients help him?

This novel is primarily an easily accessible read for a general audience. Many events and incidents are based on the author's own experiences, in both life and in practice as a psychologist. The narrative is based on these but like all the characters is totally fictional.

A covert marker connects episodes. It is intended to act subconsciously. It reflects the author's respect for deeper psychologies like Freud and Jung's. No doubt many professionals will note it – it is likely to be subliminal for most people. (The author would prefer to reveal it after a reading to confirm it works.)

Interested parties or anyone who might help find a publisher, please contact me.

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