

Just give it a go

CHRISTOPHER GRIEVE (*University of Dundee*) shares his experience of the first annual *Scottish Psychology Undergraduate Dissertations Conference*.

WHEN I was introduced to the concept of presenting my work in front of both my fellow students and a number of strangers, the first thought that went through my mind was 'you must be joking'. Previous classes had the luxury of presenting only to their own classmates, but now that the BPS Scottish Branch has become involved the event includes students from a number of universities across Scotland. I'm a quiet student and this was a daunting task, but I was keen not to waste the only chance I had in my undergraduate career of presenting the work that I had slaved over for almost a whole year.

Although the day of the conference started with many negative emotions, such as fear and apprehension, when



eventually presenting all of these feelings disappeared and I actually enjoyed the experience. It felt good to finally present my work, and it also helped me to add the finishing touches to my dissertation. The questions I was asked were valuable points that I had not thought about.

The experience not only helped me overcome my fear of public speaking but also helped me strengthen my dissertation.

Between the time I was first introduced to the idea of the conference and the time the abstracts were to be submitted, my tutors tried – as I am sure your tutors will try – every trick in the book to persuade the class into participating in the event. With hindsight I can see why. Yes, it was a daunting experience, and yes, the day started with fear, nervousness and apprehension. But the day ended with a distinct sense of satisfaction. I had achieved something that I could never

have seen myself doing before. For those of you who do not believe this to be possible all I can say is that you will simply have to try it for yourselves.

☐ *The next student conference will take place on 17 March 2004 at the University of Strathclyde. Any final-year undergraduate student enrolled at a Scottish university is welcome to present their dissertation (subject to availability). If you are interested and would like further details, please contact Scottish Branch Secretary Kate Skellington (kskellingtonorr@mva.co.uk) or speak to your head of department.*

A MEMORABLE MOMENT

BY ELIZABETH LOFTUS

In the mid-1970s, with my newly minted PhD in hand, I spent a year at Harvard University. I sent a note to B.F. Skinner explaining that I was an experimental psychologist at Harvard for the year, and 'nothing would give me greater pleasure than to have lunch with you once this year'. A couple of days later my office phone rang: 'Hi, it's Fred Skinner. I'd be happy to have lunch.'

We met at a restaurant near Harvard Yard, and as we walked toward the front door, he said: 'Women's lib aside, let me treat this time.'

We talked about his multi-volume autobiography that he was currently working on. I could not believe that there I was, having lunch with the B.F. Skinner, and hearing about his autobiography before it was even finished.

From my teen years, my personal motto has been 'Nothing ventured nothing gained'. Sometimes it pays off.

■ *Professor Elizabeth Loftus is at the University of California, Irvine.*

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Articles, news, tips, quotes, cartoons and other contributions for the 'Students' page are most welcome. Send to: Nicola Hills, c/o the Society's Leicester office. E-mail: Nicola_Hills@hotmail.com.

Student Writer Competition 2004

The Psychologist, the Professional Practice Board and the Research Board are again co-sponsoring the Annual Student Writer Competition. High-quality, clear, effective communication is a key skill for all psychology graduates. There will be two categories – one for **undergraduates**; the other for **postgraduates** – and two winners, one from each group. The judges will be drawn from *The Psychologist* and the two boards.

The prize will be:

- your article will be published in *The Psychologist*;
- a certificate; and
- an expenses paid trip to either the Society's London Lectures or Annual Conference (travel, hotel and registration fee).

For further details of the competition and how to enter, see the October issue of *The Psychologist* (p.506) or go to www.bps.org.uk/publications/thepsychologist.cfm.

**Closing date for entries is
FRIDAY 30 JANUARY 2004**