

# More from Blackpool

**KATE CAVANAGH and PAUL REDFORD** present  
*further reports from the Annual Conference*

## Psychosis: Not that abnormal?

**CLASH RYDEN** reports on this year's May Davidson Award Lecture by Tony Morrison.

**S**INCE Aaron Beck first introduced his ground-breaking cognitive theory of depression in the 1960s, we have seen how this theoretical framework has successfully been applied to a range of other mental health problems. Psychosis, which represents a group of symptoms such as delusions and hallucinations, has until quite recently received little attention from psychologists. Traditionally, psychotic symptoms were thought to be qualitatively different from normal experiences and impervious to psychological interventions.

In the last 15 years a number of eminent British psychologists and psychiatrists have developed cognitive-behavioural models and interventions for psychosis. In collaboration with some of them, and with Beck himself, Tony Morrison (University of Manchester and Mental Health Services Salford) has developed an innovative cognitive model integrating existing models with his own ideas.

Morrison proposed that anxiety disorders and psychosis share many developmental and maintaining cognitive processes, such as dysfunctional responses to the symptoms and the misinterpretation of stimuli. Morrison gave an example by pointing out that a hypochondriac may be

convinced that an innocuous lump on the skin is deadly cancer, whereas a person with psychosis may think that the lump has been implanted by a foreign power. According to Morrison, the defining feature of psychosis, is said to be an inability to distinguish reality from unreality. This feature applies to both of the above interpretations, although only one qualifies as a psychotic symptom.

Given these commonalities, Morrison asked himself whether psychosis (like



depression and anxiety) lies on a continuum with normal experiences. He pointed out that there were many triggers that could elicit psychotic symptoms in the general population, such as severe trauma, drug abuse, bereavement and sleep deprivation. He cited studies that found that 35–40 per cent of students reported hearing voices, and that 70 per cent of the

general population endorsed 'delusional' beliefs (for example, telepathic communication and believing in power of witchcraft or the occult). In support of his model, he and his collaborators have found that people who hear voices also exhibit safety behaviours, such as suppression of thoughts, praying and distraction.

Morrison went on to describe the clinical implications of his model. As with anxiety disorders, potential targets for cognitive therapy are the safety behaviours and misinterpretations of stimuli hypothesised to maintain the symptoms. Other interventions included normalisation of symptoms and offering an alternative understanding of psychotic experiences.

In the latter part of his lecture Morrison discussed an application of his model to the understanding of developmental factors of psychosis. He and his colleagues have developed a psychological intervention to prevent the transition to psychosis in vulnerable people. He reported that the interim results were encouraging. On this positive note, Morrison left his audience in no doubt that his innovative work will generate a surge of new research that will further enrich our understanding and treatment of this often very distressing human condition.

## SPORTING EMOTIONS

MARC JONES reports on a symposium on the impact of emotion in sport and exercise settings.

**T**HE study of emotion in sport and exercise settings is an area of increasing research activity, a fact reflected in the very good attendance at this symposium organised by the Sport and Exercise Psychology Section.

To begin the symposium Jo Thatcher (St Mary's College) provided a succinct and clear overview of Lazarus's cognitive motivational relational theory of emotion, outlining how emotions may arise in sport and exercise settings. This provided a theoretical context for the presentations that followed.

Presenters focusing on emotion in exercise settings included Amanda Daley (Sheffield Hallam University) outlining how exercise was successfully used as an adjunctive therapy for clinical depression, and Simon Dalley (University of Luton), who considered how social comparison in exercise settings (e.g. health clubs) can generate emotions such as pride and shame.

Three presentations then considered different aspects of emotion in competitive sport settings. David Lavallee (University of Strathclyde) described a series of interviews with five athletes investigating their emotional responses to sport injury, highlighting the need to deal with the emotional as well as physical effects of injury.

The relationship between psychological skills and emotion was considered by Andy Lane (University of Wolverhampton). He reported that in a sample of 106 university athletes, psychological factors such as goal setting, imagery, self-talk, activation, automaticity and amount of negative thinking predicted emotional responses prior to competition.

The symposium concluded with Mark Uphill (Staffordshire University) revisiting Lazarus's theory of emotion. Uphill described a series of interviews with elite athletes that provided support for much of the theory's major tenets. Specifically, the data from the interviews highlighted the importance of cognitive appraisal and athletes' goal hierarchies in the elicitation of emotion as illustrated in the following from an Olympic sailor: 'Sadness is like never achieving your goals...the higher the goal and the smaller you miss it by, then the more sad you are.'

The discussion following the presentations was lively and informed and covered a range of issues, including the difficulty of distinguishing between mood and emotion and the need to adopt a psychophysiological stance in examining emotional responses in sport and exercise settings. Importantly, the discussion benefited greatly from the input of researchers who were interested in emotion but did not work specifically in sport or exercise settings, contributing to the eclectic feel of the symposium.



## Hormones and behaviour

Does testosterone really matter? MARK WETHERELL reports.

**A**NECDOTAL accounts lead us to believe that testosterone really does matter – that higher levels of testosterone are associated with increased levels of aggression in males. John Archer (University of Central Lancashire) presented evidence that aggression in animals is associated with both neonatal and pubertal testosterone secretion. However, aggression in humans appears to be facilitated primarily by neonatal, not pubescent, levels of testosterone. While there are marked sex differences in aggressive behaviour throughout childhood, there is no clear increase in aggression following pubescent testosterone secretion. Further, administrations of testosterone in adults (which could be likened to the surge experienced at puberty) are not met with a marked increase in any aspect of aggressive behaviour. These findings suggest that from early childhood, testosterone doesn't matter where aggression is concerned.

Testosterone is often linked with territoriality, as well as aggression. Sandy Wolfson (University of Northumbria) explored the potential similarities between such territoriality and the home advantage in football matches. The home advantage is a robust phenomenon present in many sports and has previously been explained in

relation to referee bias, familiarity with surroundings and an increase in home support. However, is it possible that there is a hormonal basis to the home advantage? Testosterone levels were measured in professional footballers prior to training and at matches played both home and away. It was the home matches that elicited the greatest rise in testosterone. Furthermore, these levels were further elevated when the home team was playing a known rival, where the issue of territoriality is likely to be heightened.

Stephanie Van Goozen (Cambridge University) presented research concerning aggression in children. It has been suggested that aggression might be more dominant in those individuals who have an elevated threshold for stress. Van Goozen tested the stress response of children during a competitive encounter with a stooge. In normal circumstances such a situation would be perceived as stressful and would elicit an increase in the stress hormone cortisol. However, the aggressive children did not demonstrate cortisol reactivity to the stressor. This absence of reactivity provides support for the notion that aggression is linked to an elevated threshold for stress; moreover, the pattern of reactivity is similar to that in adults who demonstrate antisocial behaviour.

# New research in sexual health

SIAN WILLIAMS reports on a symposium from the DCP conference convened by Jenny Petrak (Royal London Hospital).

**T**HIS interesting and informative symposium presented current research in sexual health and HIV that echoed contemporary values and beliefs regarding how people cope living with HIV, increasing incidence of date rape, sexual violence and the impact of health status on sexual functioning.

HIV research is a good example of how the changing face of a virus has spurred new directions in research. Twenty years ago HIV was regarded as a terminal disease that threatened society. Today, with the emergence of combination therapy, the course of the virus is no longer certain, and it is typified as a chronic illness.

However, despite improved treatments, HIV infection continues to be associated with adverse psychological outcomes for some people. Robert Watson (University College London) surveyed 70 people living with HIV, finding that higher levels of self-efficacy were significantly associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression, and better quality of life.

In the second presentation Erasmo Tacconelli (St Ann's Sexual Health Centre) spoke about a 'chronic illness' support group that aims to help people with HIV to live with the illness. The group runs for 12 weeks and emphasises goal planning and problem solving. The results are promising. Depression and anxiety reduced, and quality of life increased over the course. Tacconelli and his colleagues, who developed the group, are now looking at whether these changes are stable over time.

Another area of research has emerged with increasing rates of drug rape. Emma Russell (University College London) presented research



with victims, finding that an impaired fear response at the time of the crime (due to the features of the drug) was related to greater negative appraisals, fear and post-traumatic stress disorder symptomatology. Russell suggests that the drugs used in drug rape that affect cognitive and emotional processing during the assault could impede victims' coping processes after the event.

The psychological consequences of sexual assault are far-reaching. Jenny Petrak (Barts and The London NHS Trust) interviewed 11 men about their emotional and behavioural responses to an assault on their partner. The results showed that the majority of men described prolonged psychological and physiological distress after the assault, including feelings of uselessness and relationship and sexual difficulties. These findings support the existence of secondary trauma and help in building a therapeutic framework for partners of the victims of sexual assault.

The final speaker in the symposium, Claire Rockcliffe-Fidler (University of Wales, Bangor), discussed the effect of diabetes on women's sexual functioning. There are two main types of diabetes: Type 1 develops in childhood to early adulthood; Type 2 usually develops later in life and is

associated with metabolic problems. Rockcliffe-Fidler found that women diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes were

significantly less sexually preoccupied, and reported lower sexual enjoyment and desire than Type 1 women. These results could not be explained by body mass or body satisfaction and indicate a direct effect of diabetes on sexual functioning.

The research presented in this symposium indicates the diversity of work being carried out in the area of sexual health. It is promising to see that the diversity in societal sexual health concerns is well reflected in the research.

## IT'S GOOD TO TALK

SIMON J. BIGNELL reports on responses to trauma.

**L**AST September the world witnessed the graphic and disturbing terrorist attacks in America on their televisions. But for emergency service personnel who experience traumatic events first hand the psychological consequences can be long-lasting – post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can arise as a delayed response.

Avoidance can be one way of coping with this, but the exact nature of this is unclear. Police, fire, ambulance and coastguard personnel who had experienced traumatic events in their work were given a series of questionnaires and a specially devised measure of trauma-related avoidance strategies, developed by Leanne Andrews (University of Essex) and colleagues.

It appears that certain kinds of behaviour are related to PTSD whereas others are not. For instance, Andrews explained that following a traumatic event three types of behaviour might become apparent. Effortful avoidance involves strategies such as putting thoughts and memories out of mind, or deliberately trying not to get upset about the event. Automatic avoidance is characterised by emotional numbing or detached or dissociated feelings related to the event. A controlled approach also appeared, marked by willingness to disclose personal feelings about the event and to talk about what happened. Andrews commented that both types of avoidance are related to distress, whereas the controlled approach following a traumatic event was not.

A longitudinal study is in progress to determine whether there are particular types of avoidance that are maladaptive to psychological adjustment following traumatic experiences. Andrews also explained that a study is in progress with an eating-disordered sample; initial reports indicate a replication of the three types of behaviour seen following trauma.

If different types of controlled or automatic avoidance behaviours prove to have differing pathways to PTSD, then clinicians may need to use specific types of therapy and intervention for different types of avoidance.

## IN BRIEF

### A SATISFYING MEAL

In a diary study Katherine Appleton and D. Kerr (University of Surrey) found that participants reported feeling less irritated, sad and tense and significantly more relaxed after eating. These results were found among both 'emotional' and 'non-emotional' eaters, suggesting that eating makes all people feel better, irrespective of how food is used by different people.

### HOW TO GET ON WELL AT UNIVERSITY

Students who perceive themselves as good problem solvers are better suited to the adjustment required when starting university. Sarah Baker (Keele University) also found that students' adjustment, along with intrinsic motivation and social problem-solving appraisal, was a significant predictor of their overall academic performance at the end of their degree.

### TEAMWORK IMPROVES WELL-BEING

A study of post office workers found that those who worked in clearly defined teams reported higher levels of well-being (Joanna Bell, Aston University). Although this relationship was mediated by social support, the results showed that overall those individuals working in teams reported greater satisfaction with the support from their manager and from their colleagues.

### FEELING GOOD

Good eating and exercise are related to positive self-esteem in adolescents. Furthermore the psychological variables self-esteem, locus of control and self-efficacy are predictive of health behaviour in adolescents. Rob Burns (University of Brunei) argued that health educators could usefully target these self-beliefs among adolescents as one way of reducing the growing problem of obesity and diabetes within this population

# A healthy presence throughout

**DARYL B. O'CONNOR** reports on health psychology highlights from the Annual Conference.

**J**UST as Jimmy White and Ronnie O'Sullivan were checking into the Imperial Hotel in advance of their snooker exhibition match at Blackpool Tower, I was about to be put in the frame at a symposium examining sexuality and sexual health.

First up, Graham Bolding (Royal Free & University College Medical School) and colleagues reported an international investigation of HIV status, optimism and sexual risk behaviour in gay men. They found that HIV-negative men who were more optimistic about new HIV drug therapies were significantly more likely to engage in high-risk sexual behaviours, such as unprotected anal intercourse, with a casual partner. Interestingly, these findings suggest that such optimism may actually be used as a justification for high-risk sexual behaviour.

Another stimulating paper by the same researchers explored HIV and reproductive issues in pregnant and HIV-positive women. One of the major messages was the extent to which child-bearing issues have been neglected in HIV-positive women.

I was pleased that various facets of health psychology research permeated the scientific programme throughout the conference. On day two health psychology sneaked into the programme disguised as a symposium investigating 'The ageing person' (convened by

It was also interesting to see different approaches to health psychology throughout the conference. Joanna Leaviss (University of Nottingham) and colleagues presented their findings on risk communication and ear defence in foundry and mine workers. This work circumnavigated the more traditional health behaviour models (such as the theory of planned behaviour). Instead Leaviss and colleagues explored the relationship between the 'usability' and 'usefulness' of risk communication leaflets and intentions to follow safe practice.

Their findings revealed that the 'usability' of the leaflet (i.e. readability and comprehensibility) was the most important predictor of intentions to wear ear defenders (over and above other cognitive and emotional factors). In fact, exposure to the leaflets alone was found to be significantly associated with a 144 per cent increase in uptake of hearing protectors in the days immediately following exposure.

### Usability is key to effective risk communication

Kevin McKee, University of Sheffield). Several papers were presented from areas of health psychology (e.g. dementia and quality of life, caregiving). Of particular note was the work from Suzanne Skevington and Farah McCrate (University of Bath) on the development of a revised, cross-cultural measurement tool for the assessment of quality of life in the elderly (based on the World Health Organization measure). They hope that this more sensitive instrument will help identify factors central to successful ageing.

**Simon J. Bignell is at the University of Essex**

**David Booth is at the University of Birmingham**

**Marc Jones is at Staffordshire University**

**Daryl B. O'Connor is at the University of Leeds**

**Clash Ryden is at the Institute of Psychiatry**

**Mark Wetherell is at the University of Plymouth**

**Sian Williams is at the University of Sussex**

# How to build a research career

DAVID BOOTH reports on a modern-day problem in higher education.

UNIVERSITY research in the UK relies on short grants, and so research psychologists typically work on contracts of no more than three-years. They form a large minority of academic staff, and many published articles depend on their work and that of PhD trainees. Recognising this, the Division for Teachers and Researchers in Psychology set up this symposium on the careers of research staff, and how they can be retained.

Christine Atherton (University of Wales, Bangor) and Ming Wai Wan (University of Manchester) found that 74 per cent of their research student contacts were interested in a 'post-doc.' Every respondent was enthusiastic about research itself, but what most sharply distinguished the quarter who did not want to continue was a dislike of working in a university department. The biggest worry for those who wanted to go on was job insecurity, with low salary a close second, followed by poor career

prospects. Susan Blackmore recently left academic psychology, saying that researchers 'are exploited for what they love'. Peter Totterdell (University of Sheffield) detailed the advantages and disadvantages of 13 years as a 'serial contract worker'.

In a discussion involving all stages of a research career Toby Wall (Institute of Work Psychology) urged radical solutions. The concordat between the research councils and the universities on contract research staff has not worked well. Some conditions of service had improved, but too little money and effort is put into correcting inefficiencies arising from lack of continuity of employment for skilled staff.

Ian Donald (University of Liverpool) illustrated how research grants from industry can cover enough of the background costs to provide money to employ experienced staff during gaps between grants, while not excluding new

staff and the time they need to become fully effective. In contrast, the 'overheads' on grants from research councils, plus quotas from funding councils for even 5\* departments, provide substantially less than the real costs of high-quality research (quite apart from major equipment and buildings).

Immediate steps towards ideal outcomes were advocated. Exchange of information within and between departments on short-term availability of research staff could improve both continuity of employment and the effectiveness of funding, especially with distance working. Budget formulation practices in grant applications could be shared, to gain extra money for successful proposals without getting involved in the content of the research. Improving value for money in such ways could help argue more money into the system. Researchers at all levels could share good practice in departmental support of career development by short-term staff.

## EROTICISM AND PLASTICITY

JON SUTTON was at Roy Baumeister's closing address.

SATURDAY afternoon saw the final talk of the conference and the last of three well-received talks from Roy Baumeister (Case Western Reserve University, USA). He closed what he called the 'sex, war and death conference' by turning his attention to erotic plasticity. Is female sexuality shaped by culture to a greater extent than male?

Reasoning that if evolutionary psychology ideas are to prevail anywhere it should be with sex, Baumeister examined three sources of evidence: intra-individual variance, sociocultural causes, and attitude-behaviour consistency.

Dealing first with the impact of culture on changes in sexual activity within an individual over time, Baumeister referred to 'outlet discontinuity'. According to that old favourite

the Kinsey Report, women find that their total orgasms over a week are hit hard by the end of a relationship, whereas men just step the masturbation up a notch to compensate. Women are apparently also more likely than men to adopt new practices with age, and to experiment with homosexual sex if put in prison, supporting the theory that female sexuality is more dependent on their environment than male.

As for plasticity in response to sociocultural factors, Baumeister pointed to differences between the most educated and the least. People with PhDs are more likely to have oral sex (as Baumeister pointed out, one correlation where the reverse causal link appears unlikely), and sex education classes appear to have more effect on women

than men. Divorce has more effect on female sex, and male twins match more closely than female twins in terms of the timing of their first intercourse.

Baumeister then asked how many sexual partners we would like in the remainder of our lives (relationships and health no barrier). The average male answer is 64; females just 2.5. However, sheep are less choosy: male sheep raised by goats will only have sex with goats, but female sheep raised by goats will happily have sex with anything on the hoof. Baumeister suggested this was evidence of imprinting of male sexuality.

So what does this all mean? Baumeister claimed that though male strength and power was evident in many, if not all, domains, the sexual script was a female one. As

evidence, he referred to a study that showed that while a group of men liked pretty much any pornography, women gave much higher approval ratings to a film in which the woman didn't want to have sex but then changed her mind.

As for implications, Baumeister said that if there was indeed greater female than male erotic plasticity, we might expect women to adjust better to social change, but find self-knowledge about sexuality more tricky. Returning finally to the evolution vs. social constructionism debate, he suggested that the two camps are largely men on the one hand and women on the other. Perhaps, he opined, this adds fuel to a fire that should have burnt out long ago with an amicable 'it's a bit of both' conclusion.