

Portraying ourselves

LAST month at the National Portrait Gallery an exhibition of photographs was opened, titled 'Portraits in Mind: 100 Years of British Psychology'. This exhibition was assembled by Halla Beloff for the Centenary Subcommittee. Halla had the tricky job of synthesising an exhibition of photographs that would simultaneously satisfy intellectual, historical and aesthetic criteria. You cannot just hang any old photograph in the National Portrait Gallery; moreover, you cannot hang a photograph at all unless you have one – considerable time was spent trying to hunt down photographs of some of those we might have included, or recovering the negatives of prints deemed suitable but which were damaged in some way.

The hardest job of all, however, was in trying to satisfy the most subtle criteria – to assemble an exhibition in celebration of psychology and its history that would reflect key trends in and historical influences on the discipline, while still projecting an appropriate image of psychology today, for both psychologists and the general public.

Portraits serve multiple functions. They depict individual identities, but also roles and attitudes. Family resemblances emerge strongly from portraits of different generations. An assembly of portraits has the potential collectively to send strong messages, both visually and conceptually. We were concerned, for example, that the exhibition should not be too dominated by men. Psychology has always been well represented by women in prominent roles – for example the first meeting of the Psychology Society had one woman (Sophie Bryant) among the ten, and Beatrice Edgell became professor of psychology in 1927 and was the first woman President of the Society as early as 1930. It was important that such key female influences were included in the exhibition.

We were also concerned that an exhibition today should not just reflect images of the past, but display our contemporary face to the world as well. In addition to the historical photographs the Centenary Subcommittee agreed that some of its budget should be allocated to commissioning a small set of photographs of contemporary psychologists. We

commissioned the photographer Louise Bobbé to produce these; but which psychologists should we choose? Our decision was to commission portraits of the winners of the year's (central) Society awards. We liked this idea. This set of awards (see box) spans the career stages of our members, from graduate through to experienced professional, and it encompasses science, practice, education and policy.

Having made this decision in 1999, we then sat back and waited for the next year's announcements of winners, somewhat anxiously in case the set delivered would be too skewed in one or other direction. Would

'You cannot just hang any old photograph in the National Portrait Gallery'

they all be male? (they are not). Would they all be based in London? (no). England? (no). Phew! It's not perfect though – I'll leave readers and visitors to judge for themselves what dimensions are missing from, or overrepresented in, the picture of contemporary psychology that emerges from our group of award winners (see inside front cover for details of the exhibition). Moreover, ironically in these circumstances, no challenging inequality award was made last year. Happily, though, the professional practice award generated multiple winners, and these are depicted in a group portrait on the steps of UCL, site of the first-ever meeting of the Society.

Our experience in thinking and worrying about our images of ourselves got me thinking about how the Society has

projected or reinforced images in the past. As recently as 1979 the Welsh Branch facilitated a hugely and rightly influential volume titled *Models of Man* (edited by Tony Chapman and Dylan Jones). While 'man' is of course a technically appropriate term for our species, this book title reads oddly today, as do the chapter headings, which include such as 'Images of man in contemporary behaviourism' (D. Blackman), 'The structure of effective psychology: Man as problem-solver' (C.I. Howarth), 'Man as scientist' (Fay Fransella), 'Is man an ape or an angel?' (R.L. Reid) and even the plural 'Men the magicians: The duality of social being and the structure of moral worlds' (John Shotter).

The language we use is important – it reflects our thinking and may limit our imagination. We understand that exclusion by word or image, even where unintentional or conventional, can create inappropriate impressions or reinforce outdated stereotypes. Halla Beloff's chapter in the *Models of Man* book was titled 'Are models of man models of women?'; and this was a timely query in the 1970s. This year we are building and projecting many images of ourselves through our various exhibitions, public lectures and conferences surrounding the centenary. It will be interesting at the end of this year – and then again in some 10 or 20 years' time – to reflect upon how successfully we have portrayed ourselves.

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THE MAJOR BPS AWARDS

- Award for Challenging Inequality of Opportunity
- Award for Distinguished Contributions to Professional Psychology
- Award for Distinguished Contributions to the Teaching of Psychology
- Award for Outstanding Doctoral Research Contributions to Psychology (see invitation for nominations on p.317)
- Book Award (see invitation for nominations on p.317)
- Presidents' Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychological Knowledge
- Spearman Medal



RAE PARITY FOR NHS PSYCHOLOGISTS

CLINICAL psychologists employed by the NHS in England will be counted as researchers in the psychology unit of assessment in this year's Research Assessment Exercise. This means that psychology will now be treated on the same footing as medicine and professions allied to medicine.

BRAINRESEARCHBOOST

THE Department of Cognitive Neurology at University College London has been awarded a share in a £24 million grants handout announced by Science Minister Lord Sainsbury. The department is being given the money towards improved brain-imaging scanners, which will be used to research conditions such as schizophrenia, autism, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, and memory decline in the elderly.

SCHIZOPHRENIA AWARDS

THE UK Lilly Schizophrenia Reintegration Awards recognise and reward outstanding achievement in helping people with schizophrenia to overcome the barriers to reintegrating into society. Any individual or team involved in developing and implementing activities and clinical practice designed to achieve these aims is eligible to enter. Closing date is 1 August 200.

For details telephone the Eli Lilly Awards Secretariat (01256 315686).

PUBLIC LIFE OF THE BRAIN THEORIST

SUSAN Greenfield, presenter of last year's BBC2 series *Brain Story*, will soon be sitting as a peer in the House of Lords. She is one of 15 new non-party-political appointees selected from a list of 3166 nominations.

New NHS standards welcomed

ON 27 March Health Secretary Alan Milburn announced new national standards of care for the treatment of older people in the NHS. The National Service Framework for Older People sets out standards under eight headings, including mental health and age discrimination.

Alan Milburn said: 'This is the biggest national effort there has ever been to improve health care for older people. These tough new standards will root out age discrimination. Older people should be treated according to their clinical needs not their age.'

Reaction from agencies working with older people has been welcoming. Gordon

Lishman, Director General of Age Concern England, said: 'This is a vital step forward in improving health and social care for older people. The document must become the cornerstone for promoting and improving the health of older people, but must also ensure that older people are treated as individuals, not simply as a group.'

Ruth Lesirge, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation, commented on the inclusion of mental health within the new standards. 'We need to acknowledge that mental health is not just a matter for adults of working age, and that it has a huge impact on people's lives. The National Service Framework

should go some way to ensuring that we no longer assume that depression in older age should be expected and tolerated, or that people with dementia receive second class services.'

The government has promised to support implementation through independent monitoring by the Commission for Health Improvement, the Social Services Inspectorate and the new National Care Standards Commission (NCSC). The 13 board members of NCSC include Professor Jim Mansell, who is currently Chair of Applied Psychology of Learning Disability at the University of Kent at Canterbury.

System failing autistic adults

ADULTS with a late diagnosis of autism are not getting the support they need from government agencies and so are 'left hidden at home with their parents', according to the National Autistic Society. As a result, over half of adults experience depression, a further 11 per cent a nervous breakdown and 8 per cent are left feeling suicidal.

The NAS report, entitled *Ignored or Ineligible? The Reality for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, was released to coincide with National Autism Awareness Week in May. It shows people with autism and their families are currently excluded from employment and social activities.

The overall picture shows that people with autism are constantly falling into gaps in the statutory services, and that

as a result they are excluded from the care system.

Vernon Beauchamp, Chief Executive of the NAS, said: 'The report highlights that adults with autism are not getting the support and services they need and deserve. We need the government to take action on our findings and for the issues facing these adults to be addressed.'

The NAS carried out the research with parents of 1200 adults with autism or Asperger's syndrome. The survey revealed that though people with disabilities have a right to have their needs assessed by their local authority, only 38 percent had a community care assessment. Less than half of these were actually receiving the services specified. People with autism or Asperger's syndrome were also found to have very little choice in where they live, what work

they should do and who looks after them.

One parent commented: 'Social services, employment and medical bodies have failed and are still failing my son. Because my son is borderline, social services say he will always have to fight for any service due to his vulnerability and for not being obviously disabled and needing care and support.'

Copies of the full report are available free of charge until the end of September from the NAS Communications Department (tel: 020 7903 3539), or in downloadable pdf format at www.nas.org.uk.

DEADLINE

We welcome news items from members for possible publication; deadline for the August issue is 29 June

Turning standards into practice

SUE WATTS on what the National Service Framework for Older People (see opposite) means for psychologists.

HAVING spent much of my career working with a client group too often described as a 'problem' in terms of their need for services and as a 'demographic time bomb', my general feeling is that there is much to welcome in this NSF.

Given effective implementation, the NSF brings an opportunity to challenge some underlying problems, first and foremost through Standard 1: 'Rooting out age discrimination'. There have been a number of recent media reports highlighting inequity in treatment of older people, particularly in relation to resuscitation. My own experience of the health service has long confirmed a range of entrenched, if frequently unconscious, forms of discrimination. 'It's natural to be depressed if you're old, especially if you're ill' and 'Older people are too set in their ways to respond to psychological therapy' are much more commonly held beliefs than one would wish. This situation can be exacerbated by the anxieties of many older people about making many demands of services. Importantly, in addition to general principles aimed at ensuring fair access, Standard 1 also addresses specific audit and review procedures aimed at investigating potential areas of inequitable provision: many services currently operate with age limits, some appropriately, others not so.

Standard 2: 'Person-centred care' also adds a more holistic perspective to care (including psychological care) and effective information, communication, and advocacy for older people. Other standards on intermediate care, general hospital care, falls, and promotion of health and active life in old age include varying levels of direct or indirect reference to psychological issues, but are disappointing in the limited integration of the psychological element of thinking outlined in Standard 2. Specific recognition of the importance of psychological factors and the role of clinical psychology is really only made in relation to Standard 5: 'Stroke', which has the specific objective to achieve specialist, multidisciplinary stroke teams by 2004, with major resource implications for clinical psychology.

Standard 7: 'Mental health in older people' represents a move away from a predominantly medical model of the



Time to challenge the idea that getting older is an underlying problem

mental health care of older people. It gives clear recognition to the role of psychology and psychologists. Depression and dementia are highlighted as areas for improvement in services. Furthermore, this standard identifies a range of psychological therapies as appropriate for depression, including cognitive behaviour therapy, interpersonal therapy, brief analytical therapy, and counselling for milder conditions. The specialist role in the management of behavioural and psychological symptoms in dementia is also acknowledged. Thus psychologists are identified as core specialist team members.

So, what are the challenges of the NSF for clinical and other psychologists? There are no up-to-date figures on psychologists working with older people across the country, but regional surveys suggest that the numbers are woefully small in comparison with the needs and numbers of older people in the population. Many districts in the Northwest possess no dedicated psychology posts at all, and the situation nationwide has challenged the capacity of clinical psychology training courses to provide experience in older adult work. There is potential for this issue to be addressed via the DoH Workforce Action Team, but there are also implications for the profession in terms of response to demand. Many posts have disappeared after a protracted history of non-recruitment.

A simplistic solution, at least for some older people's needs, would appear to be to expand all existing adult psychology services to accommodate the over-65s.

However, this could prove a token exercise unless significant numbers of older people are referred to and effectively treated by such services. For many adult psychologists this would require a significant change in working practices and contractual arrangements. Many lack skills in adapting existing therapeutic methods if older clients are to be successfully engaged with treatment and would need specialist support. Irrespective of developments in this area, a significant proportion of work will require specialist older-adult practitioners to address other aspects of work, including training and dissemination of skills.

One final area of concern: proof of the pudding is in the eating. Good standards need to be turned into good practice. This does require resources, and psychology is only one of the areas with a conspicuous shortfall. For many older adults effective services need integration between disciplines and agencies. Without effective resources all these changes in clinical psychology practice can have little impact.

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Centenary events

7, 14 and 21 June
5, 12, 19 and 26 July

Public lectures at the National Portrait Gallery, London (see last month, p.229)

1-6 July

VIth European Congress of Psychology hosted by the BPS at the Barbican Centre, London. (See advertisement on inside back cover.)

Ongoing

Exhibition and psychology trail at the Science Museum, London.

Exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. (See advertisement on inside front cover.)

For details of further Society centenary events and merchandise contact Libby Langley on 0116 252 9585 or e-mail: elilan@bps.org.uk



Only a game?

With the football season over and a summer of sport beginning, **SANDY WOLFSON** and **DAVID LAVALLEE**

comment on the psychological ups and downs of supporting your team.

WATCHING the agony and the ecstasy of football supporters in recent cup finals and relegation or promotion battles recalls a quote from the legendary Liverpool manager Bill Shankly: 'Some people believe football is a matter of life and death. I'm very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more than that.' Media discussions have even recalled links between previous England football performances and election outcomes to suggest that the World Cup qualifying match against Greece on the day before the election could have a critical impact on public mood. The performances of the British Olympic and Paralympic teams in Sydney have also been described as having a profound impact on national pride. What can psychology say about these links between sport and both individual behaviour and national identity?

Over the past three decades, studies have shown that sports fans' attachment to their teams can affect their self-esteem, impart a sense of belonging, and even act as a buffer to depression. This research also suggests that the prestige of successful teams can be incorporated symbolically by their fans and stir a spirit of group identity. Cialdini *et al.* (1976) identified the basking in reflected glory (BIRG) effect, which they described as the feeling of well-being a fan gets from identifying strongly with a winning team. Following important sporting events on university campuses in the United States, they showed that students were more likely to wear university-affiliated apparel after their teams had won. These researchers also found that fans were more likely to use the pronoun *we* when describing a victory and

they after a defeat. It is therefore conceivable that a positive result over Greece the day before the election could produce a *we* mentality, constituting a deeper level of affiliation with England and even with the current government.

BIRGing reminds ourselves and publicises to the outside world that we are linked with success, thus enhancing pride and self-esteem. It also appears to make people feel more confident and optimistic about the future. Hirt and Zillman (1992) found that basketball fans who watched their team win gave higher estimates for their own likely performance on mental, social and motor skills tasks than those who saw their team lose or not play. The latter groups also gave more pessimistic predictions for the future of their teams. Further evidence supports the view that the vicarious experience of defeat can give way to negative affect: football supporters reported increased levels of depression, anger and disappointment following England's 3–2 defeat by Portugal in Euro 2000 (Wakelin and Wolfson, 2001).

So why do people remain fans? Research by the first author during Euro 96 suggested a number of psychological benefits such as tension reduction, improved avenues for social interaction, and the opportunity to ponder strategy and team selection. But one of the most

important factors is undoubtedly social identity: whether or not your team wins, it can be reassuring to know that you are a part of a group. In-group identification in the form of allegiance to a team provides many rewards, such as increased comfort, perceived security, and a sense of belonging. For some the role of fan is so integrated into their identity that even in times of misfortune they maintain their faithfulness to their team. Thus when they encounter disappointing results, they may try to restore their dented self-esteem through aggression towards and denigration of their rivals. Newcastle fans witnessing an overwhelming defeat at Anfield last month modified the Liverpool football song and taunted 'Sign on, sign on, with hope in your heart, and you'll never get a job.' A sense of superiority and self-aggrandisement is achieved by evaluating fellow fans more positively than those of other teams (Wann & Branscombe, 1995).

Theory and research in this area, then, provides evidence that sports fans vicariously experience the thrill of winning and the misery of defeat, but that the social rewards of being a fan appear to outweigh the costs. Regardless of results, competitive events such as the Olympics offer people the advantages of association with a larger group. Indeed, Bairner (2001) has recently suggested that sport can play a significant role in the construction of national identity worldwide. Increases in productivity in Brazil and satisfaction with life in Germany have also been found following important sporting victories. It could very well be that in the coming months, events such as the World Cup qualification games, Wimbledon, the Ashes, and other sporting competitions will give British fans the opportunity to experience a surge of patriotism, national identity and optimism, even if their heroes do not emerge victorious.

DAVID GIBSON/PHOTODISCION

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