

# The archaeology of the social brain

**T**O celebrate its centenary in 2002 the British Academy has awarded a £1 million grant to a team of psychologists and archaeologists from Liverpool and Southampton Universities. The unique 'Lucy to language' collaboration aims to fill in the gaps in human cognitive and social evolution that have been left by the long-standing focus of archaeology and palaeoanthropology on the stones and bones of human evolution. The project aims to draw on expertise from social psychology, neuropsychology, primate behaviour, social and cognitive anthropology, linguistics, and sociology in a seven-year programme of projects.

Project leader Professor Robin Dunbar

(University of Liverpool) says: 'Our focus will be the "social brain", the suggestion being that primate brains – particularly human – evolved to handle social rather than merely perceptual problems. The psychological emphasis will be on a multidisciplinary approach that integrates the discipline's cognitive, developmental, neuropsychological, and social perspectives within the unifying perspective of evolutionary psychology. Adding an archaeological perspective to this will make it possible to see the psychological features of the human mind in historical perspective.'

'While the evolution and function of language will inevitably be a theme of particular interest, the project aims at

a broad focus on core human social and cognitive capacities. Among the topics that will be explored are the collective action problem, cognitive and neurological constraints on social network size and dynamics, the phenomenon of pairbonding, the cognitive requirements of stone tool manufacture, the social nature of hearths, and the nature and function of musical and religious experience as mechanisms for bonding social groups. In short, we aim to explore the very nature of the human condition

as we now experience it – and how and why it came to be.'

□ *For more information, contact Robin Dunbar, Evolutionary Psychology Research Group, University of Liverpool. E-mail: rimd@liv.ac.uk.*

## ...work in progress...work

### Confidence in interactive decisions (ESRC, £121,563)

Andrew M. Colman (Professor of Psychology, University of Leicester, amc@le.ac.uk), Briony Pulford and Fergus Bolger

Work to be completed by August 2005. This largely experimental project, based at the Universities of Leicester and Wolverhampton, will tackle a number of interlinked questions about confidence in interactive decisions. One study, designed to model decisions of entrepreneurs starting up new businesses, will focus on confidence in market-entry behaviour. Another will focus on team reasoning, when people are motivated by the common interests of a group, and the extent to which this is affected by their confidence that the other group members are also motivated by the common interest. A third will test a new confidence-based theory designed to explain why decision makers tend to prefer risks with known odds of success to more ambiguous prospects in which the probabilities are unknown.

If you would like your recently funded research to feature in this column, contact Lisa Morrison on [lismor@bps.org.uk](mailto:lismor@bps.org.uk) with the funding body, amount awarded, period of funding, title, contact details and a clear summary of the project in under 50 words.

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

listed by deadline

### 14 November 2003

EPSRC. Senior Research Fellowships and Advanced Research Fellowships. Contact: Grants Administrator. Tel: 01793 444000; e-mail: [infoline@epsrc.ac.uk](mailto:infoline@epsrc.ac.uk); website: [www.epsrc.ac.uk](http://www.epsrc.ac.uk)

ESRC. Social Identity Research Programme. Contact: Naomi Beaumont. Tel: 01793 413054; e-mail: [Naomi.Beaumont@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:Naomi.Beaumont@esrc.ac.uk); website: [www.esrc.ac.uk](http://www.esrc.ac.uk)

### 1 December 2003

NERC. Research grants. Contact Dr J.H. Baker. Tel: 01793 411564; e-mail: [anad@wpo.nerc.ac.uk](mailto:anad@wpo.nerc.ac.uk); website: [www.nerc.ac.uk](http://www.nerc.ac.uk)

ESRC. CASE Studentships. Contact: Postgraduate Training Division. E-mail: [ptdenquiries@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:ptdenquiries@esrc.ac.uk); website: [www.esrc.ac.uk](http://www.esrc.ac.uk)

Cancer Research UK. Project grants. Contact: Dr Sarah Pierce. Tel: 020 7224 1333; e-mail: [project@cancer.org.uk](mailto:project@cancer.org.uk); website: [www.crc.org.uk](http://www.crc.org.uk)

### 15 December 2003

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Postdoctoral Fellowship. Contact: Grants Administrator. E-mail: [inquiry@afsp.org](mailto:inquiry@afsp.org); website: [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: Established Investigator Awards for research projects pertinent to depression, treatment and prevention of suicide. Contact: Grants Administrator. E-mail: [inquiry@afsp.org](mailto:inquiry@afsp.org); website: [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Standard Research Grants. Contact: Grants Administrator. E-mail: [inquiry@afsp.org](mailto:inquiry@afsp.org); website: [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

### 2 January 2004

National Institute of Mental Health. Affiliative Behaviours and HIV/STD Prevention – grant applications that span basic behaviour and social science, as well as subjective, expressive, autonomic and neuropsychological components.

## RESEARCH REQUESTS

■ I AM doing a doctorate in educational psychology. My research is looking at resilience and vulnerable children and young people. A major aspect of my research is analysis of the attributions of resilient youngsters in public care using the Leeds Attributional Coding System (LACS). I would be extremely grateful to hear from anyone who would be interested in taking part in some **inter-rater reliability using the LACS**. I would be able to offer a similar service to anyone also using this system of analysing attributions.

**Catherine Kelly**

*The Learning Trust  
1 Reading Lane  
London E8 1GQ  
Tel: 020 8356 8436;  
e-mail: catherine.kelly@learningtrust.co.uk*

■ I AM a trainee on the Plymouth course and about to embark on my research project. My area of interest is the **childhood experiences of Asian transracial adoptees**. I would hugely appreciate any information

and advice from people who have undertaken or are undertaking research, or have a particular interest within this area.

**Rachel Austin**

*E-mail: wriglet00@hotmail.com;  
tel: 0776 394 3284*

■ I AM a final-year student at the University of Surrey. I am conducting a study on what **psychodynamic-oriented therapists experience when they provide therapy** to their patients. I hope to interview therapists in the Guildford area at a mutually suitable venue. Each interview is likely to last about 40 minutes and will be fairly relaxed and informal. Names and addresses of volunteers are kept confidential. If you would like to participate, please contact me for further details.

**Mark Lambiris**

*Tel: 0787 627 6993;  
e-mail: nuorox@yahoo.co.nz*

■ I AM currently undertaking some **questionnaire research**

**into the use of the person-centred approach within a primary care setting**. I would be very interested to hear from any clinical, counselling, forensic or health psychologist who uses person-centred approach in their clinical work, and who would be prepared to complete a short questionnaire

**Ewan Gillon**

*Department of Psychology  
Glasgow Caledonian University  
E-mail: E.gillon@gcal.ac.uk*

■ FOR my MA research project I am interested in exploring how useful you have found your **experience of being in individual therapy as a client whilst you were or are in training** to be a psychotherapist, counselling or clinical psychologist. If you are willing to be interviewed for 50 minutes, please contact me. I am based in south London.

**David Parry**

*E-mail: davidparrypsy@hotmail.com; tel: 020 8764 0854*

Contact: Office of Communications.  
Tel: 00 1 301 443 4513

**9 January 2004**

Leverhulme Trust. Study Abroad Studentships.  
Contact: Jean Cater. Tel: 020 7822 6952,  
e-mail: jcater@leverhulme.org.uk;  
website: www.leverhulme.org.uk

**23 January 2004**

Alzheimers Research Trust. Research Fellowships.  
Contact: Rebecca Wood. Tel: 01223 843899;  
e-mail: enquiries@alzheimers-research.org.uk;  
website: www.alzheimers-research.org.uk

**1 Feb 2004 (ongoing)**

US National Institute on Aging. Research projects on higher order cognitive functioning and ageing.  
Contact: Linda Whipp. Tel: 00 1 301 496 1472;  
e-mail: lw17m@nih.gov;  
website: grants.nih.gov/grants/guide.html  
Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation.  
Dissertation Fellowships. Contact: Program Officer. Tel: 00 1 212 644 4907.

National Institute of Mental Health. Research grants on mental health illnesses in older adults and early detection and treatment of mental

disorders in children and adolescents. Contact: Office of Communications.  
Tel: 00 1 301 443 4513.

**14 Feb 2004**

British Occupational Health Research Foundation. Research Award. Contact BOHRF.  
Tel: 020 7317 5898

**17 Feb 2004**

Nuffield Foundation. Undergraduate Research Bursaries in Science. Contact: Vicki Hughes or Joanne Campbell. Tel: 020 7631 0566;  
e-mail: sciurb@nuffieldfoundation.org

**open date schemes**

See January and May issues.

**A searchable database containing full details of the various national and international funding opportunities for psychologists can be found on the Society's website at [www.bps.org.uk/careers/funding.cfm](http://www.bps.org.uk/careers/funding.cfm)**

*If you are a grant-awarding body, please e-mail Lisa Morrison (lismor@bps.org.uk) with details of your scheme for inclusion in this column.*