

Your studies in your life

To tie in with this month's special issue, we asked for your views on how a knowledge of psychology had made a difference to your life of work, rest and play. Here's a selection of the responses.

Reading psychology has broadened my whole outlook on people in general and the potential effects of their behaviours in everyday life. In addition, it has opened my eyes up to the variety of ways in which the workings and interactions of the human mind and body can be studied and interpreted. Since studying the degree, people have only become more fascinating to me and I can't seem to resist a little behavioural analysis here and there. Overall I've really enjoyed the degree but it has definitely made me more self-conscious and more aware of others' behaviours and what they might imply. In particular,

I feel very sorry for my boyfriend who has become my own personal case study!
– **Cassandra Jones**,
University of Plymouth

Psychology has definitely made a positive impact on my life, primarily in the way I now view the world, my life and the people around me. Having developed the skills to analyse psychological research and theories, and understand them in a particular context, I now possess the confidence to ask questions and challenge certain aspects of my own life that I probably would have simply accepted if not for my course. As Timothy Jones pointed out in his well-written article 'Citizenship with added psychology' (May 2003), psychology provides an awareness, a deeper comprehension of factors such as culture, gender, identity, and so forth, all of

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which have important implications for behaviour, beliefs and practices.

In addition to a more wholesome, mental 'framework for life', psychology has given me a goal: to continue and improve my personal development with a view to eventually contributing to this ever-expanding discipline and ultimately to help improve the lives of other people.

– **Laura Dugdale**,
Leicestershire Partnership
NHS Trust for the CAMHS
Learning Disability Team

Studying psychology and being involved with the BPS Student Members Group has without doubt enhanced my life at all levels. As a mature student with a family this enhancement has been most influential with regard to the interactions I experience with them on a day-to-day level. In short, I am a better wife, a better parent and indeed a much better person... would that have come naturally with life experience? That is a difficult question but I personally believe my studies and experiences relevant to

WHAT THE STUDENT MEMBERS GROUP CAN DO FOR YOU

When you join the BPS under the reduced student subscription rate (just £13), you automatically qualify as a member of the Student Members Group (SMG). This is a group run by students for students.

This year we are celebrating our 10th anniversary. We have grown from strength to strength during that time – and we still have plenty of ideas. We are keen to keep the momentum going and we aim to get as many students on board as possible.

Not only is your involvement good for the SMG and the BPS, you benefit as well. Apart from being part of an official recognised body, receiving the monthly editions of *The Psychologist* and all the other benefits of the BPS, membership of the SMG is tailored towards students' needs;

- You receive *Psych-Talk* – the student magazine, five times a year. A lively read full of information and articles written by students.
- You can also contribute to *Psych-Talk* by writing articles. By the time you get round to applying for jobs, this will look good on your CV, and it's great to see your name in print.
- You are able to attend and present at the SMG Annual Conference which runs alongside the main BPS Annual Conference, again another good addition to your CV.
- There are also lots of networking channels – be it through *Psych-*

Talk or attending conferences – that can put you in touch with renowned psychologists and other students.

- As SMG committee members reach graduation, they leave the committee. You can apply for positions as they become vacant.
- You can become a Student Rep for your university and help to promote the BPS.
- The BPS also has various other Sections and Divisions. You are also able to apply to the Sections that interest you, again for a reduced student rate. You can attend their own conferences and receive their newsletters.
- You can also make use of the SMG committee. E-mail us if you have any queries regarding your studies/career – we can try to help answer them or point you in the right direction. The BPS also offers careers advice and has lots of helpful leaflets on hand.

As you can see, there are many benefits in joining the BPS. We are lucky to have such a strong and active student base. You can use this in many ways, from using it as a support network, to keeping up to date with topical happenings in the psychology world to furthering your career and building vital contacts – and all for the price of a round! Come and join us – see www.bps.org.uk/smg/index.htm for more details.

them have had a significant role to play in the continuing processes of my development ...empirical study anyone?

– **Angela McNeilly**, recently graduated from Glasgow Caledonian University

Community psychology taught me that research needn't be a voyeuristic enterprise – it can be participatory and include others as equals, and as experts in their own experience. It showed me how to look for the bigger picture, how to evaluate a situation and how to look for solutions rather than obstacles.

– **John Goldring**, NHS Research Fellow at the University of Salford

To achieve the 'best student experience possible' I would advise students to adopt a multilayered but holistic approach to personal development. This approach magpies from many

psychological principles: maintaining homeostasis, developing meta-cognition, exploring introspection, realising empathy, conceptualising relational ontology, ever-improving interpersonal skills, developing effective study techniques, always networking and adopting a 'can do' approach to good self-management.

– **Karen Duggan**, Manchester Metropolitan University

Psychology – a life changer, or just an education? An education, in my opinion is the acquisition of information, which gives the ability to think analytically about your given subject. It provides the basis for thought, knowledge and employment. Psychology is all this but much more. The day you have your first lecture, you start to question the very foundations of the human species, and the basis of human life. You soon become four years old all over again – more questions running through your

mind than you ever thought possible. I thought research would help here, until I realised that research produces more questions than answers!

So how does this affect you and me? Knowing psychology can help you learn, and assist with interaction. You are more aware of what to do and what not to do during a job interview. When you sit to revise, you know that six hours of straight revising will not help. You know that familiar surroundings make for good studying – and that TV and talking in the background will give you a fail. You probably know that 'chunking' works better than dark chocolate, and that caffeine does nothing but confuse.

But knowing something doesn't always mean you'll put that knowledge to use. During the 1970s one of the leading experts on the bystander phenomenon sat on a commercial airliner, and watched with the other

passengers as their drunken pilot introduced himself and then staggered off to the cockpit ready to fly. Despite knowing the 'symptoms' of bystander effect, the expert looked around to others and did nothing.

So knowing psychology does not guarantee a pass, nor does it necessarily make you a 'better' person. But it does answer some of those 'why' questions we all have.

– **Clive Chandler**, University of Wolverhampton

I have been studying psychology since February and it has already made a huge impact on my life. Psychology has begun to influence my way to think and behave, and I have had comments from my family about immediate changes. My views on prejudice are different – particularly the way I accept refugees and their culture. The way I understand and interact with my parents has changed, and I have become much more

confident about my potential, believing that I can make things happen.

I also attribute some other changes to subjects that I would never have encountered if I were not a psychology student. One of my first modules, Social and Developmental Psychology, has caused tremendous development in my personal life by giving me an understanding of the needs of the family and child in its early years. Some of this was very relevant to me, and by comparing the facts against my personal life, I opened doors to new thoughts.

– **Antonio Guedes**, Thames Valley University

WHAT PSYPAG CAN DO FOR YOU

PsyPAG is a national organisation for all psychology postgraduate students and is run voluntarily by postgraduates, for postgraduates. PsyPAG has no official membership scheme – anyone carrying out postgraduate studies in psychology is automatically a member. Its aims are to provide support for postgraduate students, act as a vehicle for communication and networking, and represent postgraduate interests (including within the BPS).

What we do

Our Annual Workshop is an opportunity to explore issues of general interest surrounding your research and also gives you an opportunity to meet other postgraduates working in different areas of psychology. The PsyPAG Annual Conference is an opportunity for postgraduates to give a paper in a friendly, informal, appreciative atmosphere. This is a brilliant opportunity for giving a first paper, as well as networking with other students. The *PsyPAG Quarterly* is delivered to all psychology departments within the UK and contains papers submitted by postgraduates, including conference reports, a list of events, department profiles and other interesting articles.

How we are organised

PsyPAG is run by an elected committee, which anyone can be voted on to. The committee includes representatives for most subsystems within the BPS (Divisions, Sections and Branches). Their role is to represent postgraduate interests and problems regarding that subsystem or the BPS generally.

How you can become involved

PsyPAG is continually growing and seeking ways in which to expand and improve the framework which allows for effective communication and organisation. The membership is constantly changing due to the turnaround in postgraduate students (currently over 2000 psychology postgraduates), allowing many people the opportunity to become actively involved in PsyPAG events and to sit on the committee.

□ For further information about PsyPAG and how to be elected to the PsyPAG committee please visit the PsyPAG website at www.psy PAG.co.uk. Please direct any queries to the PsyPAG Information Officer at a_siddiquee@hotmail.com.

CONTRIBUTIONS WANTED

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.