



TO THE EDITOR...

Letters should be marked clearly 'Letter for publication in *The Psychologist*' and addressed to the editor at the Society office in Leicester. Please send by e-mail if possible: psychologist@bps.org.uk (include a postal address). Letters over 500 words are less likely

to be published. The editor reserves the right to edit, shorten or publish extracts from letters. If major editing is necessary, this will be indicated. Space does not permit the publication of every letter received. Letters to the editor are not normally acknowledged.

Dignity at the end of life

PAYNE and Haines ('Doing our bit to ease the pain', November 2002) provided a detailed view of the possible role of psychologists in palliative care services. However, I am disappointed that they made no reference to the issue of voluntary euthanasia.

They might justify this omission by saying that good palliative care reduces the likelihood of distressing and undignified death. This may well be true, but even in an ideal hospice such deaths will sometimes occur unless the dying person is allowed to



choose the time of their death and to accept drugs that will bring about death in a peaceful manner.

Alternatively, Payne and Haines might argue that their article deals only with the role of

psychologists in current services, in which of course voluntary euthanasia is prohibited. Even now, however, drugs are often given which, while alleviating pain, are also expected to accelerate the process of dying. In practice this may happen in circumstances where the dying person's wishes have not been fully ascertained. In any case, psychologists should be at the forefront of developing services

rather than simply acceding to existing practices, particularly where the wishes and personal dignity of service users are at stake.

I would therefore hope that Payne and Haines would be willing to add to their list of 'clinical issues' that need psychological services a responsibility to enable people to die in a dignified manner. In addition, given the arguments in favour of voluntary euthanasia, the fact that most people in Britain support it, and the favourable experience gained in countries that already permit it, psychologists working within palliative care services should be campaigning for its introduction.

Stephen Fisk
7 Barquentine Place
Cardiff

TESTING TIMES

I AM prompted to write by a recent article published in the *Catholic Herald* – 'Rome to forbid ordination of homosexuals', where it is indicated that 'new psychological tests could be introduced to screen out gays from the seminaries'. As psychologists, we are bound by our code of practice, which indicates that psychologists 'shall hold the interest and welfare of those in receipt of their services to be paramount at all times'. Is there not a grave danger here that such abuse of psychological intervention may be used to reinforce prejudice and bias in direct contravention of the Human Rights Act? Whose interests would psychologists be promoting in the development of such a test, particularly where no clear aetiology on the determinants of homosexuality has ever been established?

As an occupational psychologist this fills me with deep concern that the skills and knowledge we have as psychologists may be used in direct contravention of our code of practice, raising serious ethical concern for our profession. Whilst I realise this is only a proposed way forward (as indicated by the article) we must all be aware of the implications such a development may have on our profession and ensure that our focus remains solely on the welfare of the individual. Clearer ethical guidelines on the use of psychometric tests in the selection process would help us to maintain this focus at all times.

Darren Perks
13 Oakfield Road
Croydon

IT was terrific to read the overview of psychology's role in palliative care by Sheila Payne and Rebecca Haines. It is certainly fitting that psychologists are becoming increasingly involved in an area that affects so many people – one in three of us will develop cancer, while bereavement and death are inescapable. The authors are also right to point out that oncology and palliative care are rich and stimulating fields that offer exciting opportunities for psychologists both in research and clinical practice.

The only detail that the authors failed to mention is that a DCP Special Interest Group in Oncology and Palliative Care (SIGOPAC) has recently

formed and is open to new members. As membership secretary, I would be delighted to provide details about joining SIGOPAC, as well as information about our next meeting, which will be held in Bristol on 14 March and which will focus on psychosocial rehabilitation. [See subsystem notices p.41 – Ed.]
James Brennan
Bristol Haematology & Oncology Centre
Horfield Road
Bristol

DEADLINE

Deadline for letters for possible publication in the March issue is **31 January**

Judaism and homosexuality

AS Ian Rivers says in his article on homosexuality ('A bridge too far?', November 2002), Leviticus unequivocally condemns intimacy between men. The condemnation in the Torah of such behaviour, common among polytheistic peoples in the biblical era (together with being tattooed, wearing clothes of mixed fibres and other seemingly random and oddly specific activities), can be seen as part of the quest to form a separate and uniquely monotheistic Jewish identity.

Orthodox Judaism has always perceived the Torah to be the record of God's revelation to the embryonic Jewish nation. Only Jews are expected to abide by all 613 precepts. According to ancient rabbinic sources, non-Jews to be considered righteous need

only adhere to a much smaller number of rules, none of which relates to homosexuality (or to any of the other prohibitions that Ian Rivers mentions).

Across the millennia the interpretations of Jewish law (*halacha*) have been varied, sophisticated and humane, showing consideration of such matters as the idiomatic use of language, local customs and changing cultural variables. The vast corpus of commentaries and debates that is the Talmud and periodic modifications of *halacha* were, and still are, driven by the rabbinical wish to make it intelligible, relevant and practicable.

Since the Enlightenment various denominations have emerged, leading to an unprecedented diversity of belief and practice. Clear attempts are being made within more liberal-minded

communities to be more inclusive, as shown, for example, by the idea that the biological determinants of homosexuality must be divinely created and by wedding ceremonies that recognise that procreation is not the sole purpose of Jewish marriage and that homosexuals in monogamous relationships are as entitled to love, companionship and physical gratification as heterosexuals.

These views, however, are not necessarily shared by 'modern orthodox' Jews and are unlikely to be endorsed by strictly orthodox communities.

I shall be very pleased if any of this material is of use to the Lesbian and Gay Psychology Section.

Elaine Angell
Eastvale Adult Resource Centre
130a Stonelaw Road
Rutherglen
Glasgow

Better late than never

I FOUND John Rook's letter ('Defining moments', November 2002) very pertinent concerning the present-day 'widespread ambiguity and misconceptions' about the study and practice of psychology.

I am a lay mature student of

the subject (an affiliate member of the BPS) and a member of the local branch of the international organisation known as the University of the Third Age, which encourages and promulgates further education for retired members of the community. I act as group leader for some 60

INFORMATION

■ I AM a Chartered Psychologist in private practice. I would be grateful if anyone could direct me to research on the **consequences of placing school-age children in the custody of their secondary as opposed to primary caregiver.**

Martin Strous

P.O. Box 924

Gallo Manor 2192

South Africa

E-mail: mstrous@xsinet.co.za

■ I AM a second-year undergraduate at the University of Exeter. I am looking for **voluntary clinical experience in the Hertfordshire/London area** during the 2003 summer vacation and would be very grateful for any help in finding a placement.

Alison Trundell

E-mail: A.Trundell@ex.ac.uk

■ THE following **publications are available free to anyone who will collect them** from the address below (near Baker Street station): *British Journal of Psychology* 1995–2001; *The Psychologist* from 1990; *British Journal of Clinical*

Psychology 1997–2001; *Clinical Psychology Forum* 1995–2002; *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy* 1990–2000; *Sexual and Relationship/Marital Therapy* 1996–2000; *British Journal of Criminology* 1994–1997; *Issues in Forensic/Legal and Criminological Psychology* 1982–2000; *Forensic Update* 1994–2002; *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health* 1991–1992; *Criminal Justice Matters* (Journal of the ISTD/CCJS) 1992–2001; *Criminal Justice* (Howard League magazine) 1994–2002; *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 1995–1998. Not all sets are complete.

Also miscellaneous publications, offprints, etc. relating to clinical, forensic, CBT and sexuality issues, also restorative justice, youth justice and the referral orders.

Charmian Bollinger

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■ WE are a **group of 'associate' psychologists working in clinical psychology**

in southwest Wales. We are graduates with a range of post-basic qualifications and experience. We carry an independent caseload and are involved in the full range of activities undertaken by our psychology department. We are keen to network with other psychology graduates in a similar position.

Sue Hoddell

E-mail: psychology.dept@Bromor-tr.wales.nhs.uk

■ I WOULD like to gather **feedback from people who have been on CPD courses for training qualified staff in the supervision of others.** Please e-mail me if you have recently completed such a course. What were its time requirements? What was the location and cost? Would you recommend the experience?

F.M. Smith

Research Fellow

St James's Hospital

Leeds

E-mail: mrfms@stjames.leeds.ac.uk

■ AS part of my PhD in psychology with the University of

York I am undertaking research into the **assessment and treatment of victims of crime.** I am near completion of a systematic review on treatment effectiveness with this client group. Please contact me if you know of any recent or ongoing research in this area. I would also like to hear from any psychologists who have worked with victims of crime in a clinical setting.

Rania Marandos

London Probation Area

71–73 Great Peter Street,

London SW1P 2BN

E-mail: O.Marandos@psych.york.ac.uk;

tel: 020 7960 1123

■ WE would like to hear from researchers who have investigated **Kamin blocking, in either animals or humans** and in any field of psychology. We wish to trace all studies, unpublished or published, unsuccessful or successful, in order to conduct a meta-analysis.

Annie Crookes

School of Psychology

University of Leicester

E-mail: aec7@le.ac.uk

regular students. The ongoing course 'Psychology of Everyday Life' is treated as an element of social psychology. I am guided on my talks by the 'teachings' of the like of Dr Richard Gross, Dr Nicky Hayes, *et al.*, via their latest texts. The learning sessions are on a very interactive basis, informally structured but held in a formal lecture-room setting in a local college.

I have found that my own enthusiasm for the subject spills over to the extent that the class gets a very full and comprehensive appreciation of many areas of human nature and behaviour. To date, such topics as crime in society, stress management, gambling, aggression and violence, and so on, have been comprehensively studied and discussed, whilst visiting guest speakers have spoken on such subjects as

leadership (Dr Sidney Jones), graphology (Eric Rees), and the paranormal.

I feel this is just one way to bring the understanding of psychology to an interested section of the community, albeit rather belatedly in their lives.

In this connection, may I take this opportunity to extend an open invitation to any of your readers living in the Pinner/Harrow environs who might be generous enough to give up a couple of hours to give a presentation to my group on any psychological topic that would be of interest to a keen lay audience?

Any volunteers can contact me by phone or fax on 020 8866 7181.

David Beck
637 Uxbridge Road
Pinner
Middlesex

Funny you should say that

ON reading John Rook's letter ('Defining moments', November 2002), I was particularly struck by the passage: '...there is a need for large-scale empirical research to pin down the exact nature of these misconceptions and their extent in comparison with other scientific disciplines. One could then seek to clarify particularly ambiguous areas (e.g. mental health). It may also help to produce a consensual and comprehensive definition of psychology that is accessible to laypersons.'

I found myself wondering if such research might provoke others, laypersons or otherwise, into coming up with their own definition of psychologists which might read something like: 'A group of individuals with a chronic fear of the unknown, who find it important to repeatedly attempt to reduce complex, unique, and dynamic systems (e.g. people, mental health, psychology, etc.) into

common denominators that apply to exactly no one, under the guise of 'scientific development', but more likely as an effort to justify themselves to the world and compensate for an innate insecurity. In short, a bit of a joke.'

And that wouldn't be a laughing matter. However, there certainly seems to be something funny going on here, as when I showed the letter to colleagues of various professions at my place of work to canvas opinion, they all seemed to find it hilarious.

I was hurt. Mind you, I guess the idea of a profession that is over 100 years old, and has made huge contributions towards an increased understanding of humanity, spending time and money trying to define itself is quite funny.

Adam Burley
Clinical Psychologist
5 Brandon Street
Edinburgh

ALAN RICHARDSON (d. 2002)

MANY readers will be sorry to hear of the death of Emeritus Professor Alan Richardson, who died last June at the age of 78. He was born at Letchworth and spent his early years helping his parents run a holiday camp in Devon. After the war the family emigrated to Perth, Western Australia, where he took a first degree as a mature student, and where he ended his career with a personal chair in psychology, the first to be awarded by UWA. He spent the years from 1953 to 1957 at Bedford College, London, where he took a PhD with a study of the psychological changes in migrants as they move from one society to another.

He became well known for his pioneering book *Mental Imagery* (1969) and for his work on mental

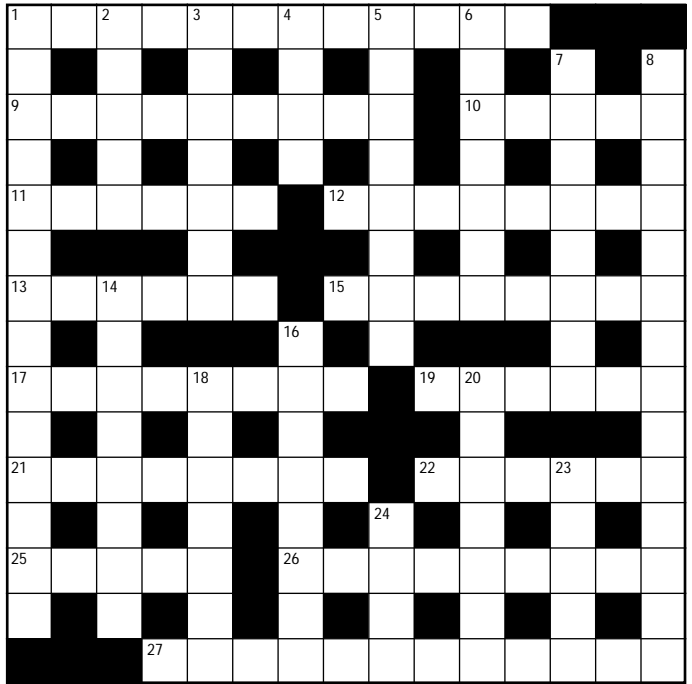
practice in improving skilled performance. His interest in the varieties of conscious experience led to the publication in 1984 of *The Experiential Dimension of Psychology*.

He was a very active man, loving sport, travelling widely, and giving many conference papers; but at heart he was a teacher, continuing after his retirement to supervise student projects and theses, the last in the week before he died. His enthusiasm, wide interests, and kindness marked him out as an exceptional individual and a valued friend.

He is survived by his wife Faith, also a psychologist and a distinguished actress, and by his two daughters and four grandchildren.

Derek Forrest
Trinity College Dublin

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 7



Across

- 1 Revealing accident by word of mouth? (8,4)
- 9 Separateness a feeling of psychological estrangement for Jung? (9)
- 10 Plane used for adjustments to board (5)
- 11 Took notice of ambassador leading newspaper bosses (6)
- 12 Theoretical scholar (8)
- 13 Meal taken by father during relaxation (6)
- 15 Director fiddles entry in accounts (8)
- 17 More chilling to see Native American on jetty (8)
- 19 Bill I'd received in charge for tart (6)
- 21 Bring up remainder to take into custody again (8)
- 22 Flies in the morning to see goods thrown overboard (6)
- 25 Muse's period of books rejected (5)
- 26 Each Liberal taking in reader in church describing cross selection? (9)
- 27 Pack up article on sort of wood toy (4-2-3-3)

Down

- 1 Series of steps made on musical instrument with black box (6,8)
- 2 Elicit sanction during the previous day (5)
- 3 Sliding compartments for underwear (7)
- 4 As team enters into partnership between Italy and Germany (4)
- 5 Mathematical function applied to curve missing five in easy position? (8)
- 6 Got in the way of mischievous child doing bad deed (7)
- 7 Aid meant to be distributed so look lively! (8)
- 8 Choose artist with difficult fixation (7,7)
- 14 Paternal problems occurring before birth (8)
- 16 Information reaching maximum in Orwell's ambiguous language (8)
- 18 Public face revealed by individual with article (7)
- 20 Fraudster mentioned big cat (7)
- 23 Scour wasteland (5)
- 24 Lament found to be sharp (4)

Solution to Prize Crossword No.6

Across: 1 Lobotomy, 5 Placid, 10 Clifton, 11 Hackney, 12 Narcolepsy, 13 Lido, 14 Aspire, 17 Manual, 19 Instep, 20 Nugget, 23 Adam, 24 Archetypes, 28 Episode, 29 Reactor, 30 Annual, 31 Internet.

Down: 1 Lacuna, 2 Brier, 3 Tattooist, 4 Mange, 6 Luck, 7 Candidate, 8 Dry rot, 9 Chessman, 15 Sensation, 16 Exporter, 18 Nightmare, 21 Camera, 22 Esprit, 25 Heron, 26 Piton, 27 Toga.

Winner: Dawn Adams, Exeter

Send entries (photocopies accepted) to: Prize Crossword, The Psychologist, St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR. Deadline for entries is 2 January 2003. A £25 book token goes to the winner, drawn at random from all correct entries.

Name.....

Address.....

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