



## 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](mailto: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.

## Incredible visual illusions

**N**ORMAN Wetherick's article ('Against cognitive psychology', January 2003) filled me with absolute incredulity. I found his exposition to be confused, inaccurate, out of date, and at times preposterous.

I say confused because on the one hand Wetherick supports the concepts of 'real science' and 'pure psychology – the science', whilst on the other hand he admonishes contemporary psychology's emphasis on empirical data collection and experimental

robustness. Wetherick argues that the important thing about science is to answer 'significant' questions. But who is to judge which questions are significant? After all, it was only through asking questions seen in his lifetime as ridiculous that Darwin formulated his evolutionary theory.

There are numerous reasons why I claim Wetherick's piece to be inaccurate. He suggests visual illusions are 'almost never' encountered in the environment, but are instead



seen only in two-dimensional (2-D) representations, that, he claims, have only existed for 20 to 30 thousand years. Two potent environmental illusions immediately come to mind. The waterfall illusion: if, after staring at a waterfall for a few minutes, you shift your gaze to some nearby rocks, these will appear to move in the opposite direction to the waterfall. The flash-lag effect (recently rediscovered by Romi Nijjwhan, by accident, in a natural setting): a flash, occurring in alignment with a moving object, will appear to the observer to lag some way behind that object. Both these illusions have contributed significantly to our understanding of visual perception. And, anyway, of his claim that 2-D representations have only existed for tens of thousands of years – has Wetherick never noticed his own 2-D reflection in the water?

I say Wetherick's piece is out of date because whilst he asserts with nostalgic pride that the 'central executive' is what, in the good old days, they called the 'mind', Victor

Lamme in a recent article draws on the latest evidence to show just how 'attention' (cf. the central executive) and 'awareness' (cf. the mind) are distinguishable (Lamme, 2003). Later on Wetherick says 'no account is given of who or what evaluates [perceptual] models'. Yet recently Chater and Vitányi (2003) have drawn on mathematical theory, computational results and empirical data to argue that it is 'simplicity' that drives the brain's choice of different representations of the same data.

Finally, I found Wetherick's article preposterous because he asks questions like 'Why is that?' in relation to cognitive psychology's continued interest in short-term memory. Is he suggesting that we know all there is to know about the workings of short-term memory? Or is it that he does not consider it a worthy topic? Until such a time comes that people no longer suffer memory difficulties due to age, dementia or injury, I think both such assertions can be emphatically rebutted.

Perhaps some redressing of the balance in psychology is needed, but atavistic articles like Norman Wetherick's will surely only entrench cognitive psychology's dominance.

**Christian Beresford Jarrett**  
*Department of Optometry and Neuroscience*  
*UMIST*

Chater, N. & Vitányi, P. (2003). Simplicity: A unifying principle in cognitive science? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 7(1), 19–22.  
Lamme, V.A.F. (2003). Why visual attention and awareness are different. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 7(1), 12–18.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

**G**RAHAM Davey doesn't think that medical students are taught enough psychology ('President's column', December 2002). But then biochemists don't think they are taught enough biochemistry, immunologists are concerned that they aren't taught enough immunology and histopathologists definitely don't think they are taught enough of that.

Professor Davey labours under the common delusion that doctors can be all things to all men and all women, when in fact they are medical scientists predominantly from a scientific background working in a scientific discipline. It is our job to detect cancer and treat it, to immunise the community against terrible diseases, to research and manage diabetes, and also to treat and nurture patients in times of great distress using empathy, experience and common

sense. This is learned in a grinding life-long educational programme and I'm not completely sure how his course in psychology would help, whatever the bemused GMC might say.

For those of our patients who need specific psychological help there are clinical psychologists, and from my own knowledge I would suggest that Professor Davey could profitably spend his time teaching some of them the hard facts of medicine in a world of five-minute appointments, high expectations and the high cost of failure, particularly for the patient. Somebody has to be the last resort, the bottom line, and occasionally the thin red line between this life and whatever. I think that's the doctor.

**Ken Hambly**  
*General Practitioner*  
*Stewarton*  
*Ayrshire*

## Publishers brought to book

**I**n the August issue of *The Psychologist* I was particularly interested in the problems Cara Flanagan reported with her publisher (Letters, August 2002) because I dealt with similar problems when I served as Chair of the Committee on Research, Teaching, and Publication of the American Association of University Professors.

In one case a major publisher had published three very successful editions of a book on adjustment. They told the author that they had decided to have the next edition written by another author. The original author protested, but the publishers pointed out that the contract gave them that authority.

In another case a history professor was asked to produce a major volume which was to be the sixth in a series. He spent his sabbatical and summers working on it. When he turned in the manuscript, the publishers told him that since the first volume did not sell well, they had decided not to publish the other volumes in the series.

Our committee asked one of the top professors of law specialising in contracts to look at the contract and advise us. His advice was to take the publishers to court, since the standard publisher's contract is not a valid contract because it binds the author to everything and the publisher to nothing. As a result we were able to get substantial monetary compensation for each of the authors.

I rewrote the contract for my book *Teaching Tips*, so that in every sentence which gave the publisher power to make a decision, my contract says that the decision will be made jointly by the publisher and author and submitted to arbitration if we disagree. Fortunately we've never had occasion to go to arbitration.

It may be that publishers' contracts in the UK are not so one-sided, but I do advise my students and friends who are writing

books to read the contract to be sure that it is fair to them as well as to the publisher. Too often young authors are so happy to get a book accepted for publication that they don't want to make a fuss.

**W.J. McKeachie**

*Department of Psychology  
University of Michigan*

## You have to work at it

**I**n response to the article by Michelle Brown ('Feeling like a fully fledged psychologist', December 2002), whose university built a mandatory 30-week placement into its course, it disheartens me that not all undergraduate departments highlight the importance of work experience prior to graduating. Placements not only provide the clarity Michelle Brown mentioned with regard to one's career path but, more importantly, offer precious work experience often necessary to secure full-time posts after graduating.

As for my own wobbly steps into the working world, I am a nursing assistant in a mental

health unit, a post I am sure would have been unreachable if not for the nine months I spent as a volunteer with a similar team during my final year at university. Currently, I am in the process of applying for various assistant psychology posts, but so far have been unsuccessful due to my 'limited relevant experience'. Many professionals I have spoken to, clinical psychologists included, have acknowledged my problem of how to acquire relevant experience without being given the opportunity to work in order to obtain it, but suggested little to resolve my problem! How bizarre!

With the prevailing concern that psychology should encompass a larger research

## INFORMATION

**I** AM a postgraduate psychology conversion student with a BA in business studies (first class) and an MA in design studies. I am looking for a **voluntary clinical work placement for one day a week in London in any specialism**. Previous experience in befriending and learning disabilities.

**Susan Cottam**

17 Milton Road  
Highgate  
London N6 5QD  
Tel: 020 8348 6588; e-mail:  
scottam67@hotmail.com

**H**AVE any readers working in the NHS had **experiences of their clients/patients being refused travel insurance**? There seems to be an increasing problem of people being denied insurance or incurring unreasonable loadings for simply receiving psychological care or taking a course of antidepressants.

Please write to me if you have come across difficulties in this direction.

**I. Berry**

*Clinical Psychologist  
Lancashire Care NHS Trust  
Clinical Psychology Service  
Parkwood  
East Park Drive  
Blackpool FY3 8PW*

**I** AM a psychology graduate with a passionate interest in brain injury rehabilitation. I am currently working at the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust as a rehabilitation support worker. My career objective is to become a **clinical neuropsychologist**. With this in mind I would like to **shadow such a practitioner or be a voluntary assistant psychologist** on my days off. If anyone could offer a relevant placement I would be for ever grateful. I am available three days a week, usually between Monday and

Friday. I live in the Midlands, but would be prepared to travel further afield.

**Ian Simandl**

*44 Orchard Rise  
Yardley  
Birmingham B26 1QT  
Tel: 0121 784 4955 / 0796 184  
5211; e-mail:  
psychology\_student\_rep@hotmail.com*

**I** AM a second-year trainee clinical psychologist conducting doctoral research on the experience of refugee interpreters who work with refugee clients. Thank you to everyone who replied regarding my initial request for help with this: I hope to respond to you all in time! In addition to this request, I would like to hear from **clinical psychologists and counselling psychologists who see refugee clients for mental health assessments and therapy**. I would be very pleased to hear

from any professionals in the East Midlands as I hope to conduct my research in this region.

**Kirsty Williams**

*Department of Clinical Psychology  
Ken Edwards Building  
University Road  
Leicester LE1 7RH  
Tel: 01773 829721; e-mail  
williams@kirstyvj.freemove.co.uk*

**I** AM a graduate (English and psychology) student doing a psychology conversion diploma at the University of East London. I am seeking **unpaid work experience in a clinical setting in the London area** for one day a week. I have experience of working with children with severe special needs.

**Lisa Malone**

*54 Ledbury House  
Pytchley Road  
London SE22 8AN  
E-mail: lisaemilymalone@hotmail.com*

component, I feel as a graduate-fledgling that psychology as a taught degree should appeal to the applied aspect too. After all, psychologists ultimately work with people, whether in a research or applied context. On my own path to clinical stardom (I wish!) experience in any setting, be it directed towards health care, the prison service, marketing, or anything else, is just as paramount as conducting research and should be given more attention by university departments.

Although 10 months' voluntary work may not, and probably will not, automatically fire you into shortlisting for interview, it will provide clarity for those whose career paths seem rather hazy. Furthermore, it will look good on application forms, and hopefully it should push jobseekers further up the career ladder earlier than having no experience at all in their preferred field.

**Laura Dugdale**  
4 Lina Street  
Accrington

## From professional misconduct to fitness to practise

I AM stimulated to write after reading the report on statutory regulation by Professor Geoff Lindsay (January 2003). I am privileged to have served on the Society's Disciplinary Board since 1993 and as its chair since 1999. Hence my close interest in this subject.

I had come from many years' experience as a member of the statutory regulatory body of the General Dental Council, its Professional Conduct Committee. The most significant difference that struck me very forcibly then, and still does, is the lack of any statutory regulation for psychology. I do not want to imply that members of the BPS or even those who practise psychology outwith membership are any better or worse than members of any other caring profession, or for that matter the public at large. In a Utopian world rules and regulations would be superfluous. The sad truth is that there are always some among us who are not whiter than white. Thus it must be proper to have an enforceable regulatory mechanism for the better protection of the majority, of the public and of the profession.

During my period of

involvement I have seen the charges brought against professionals move from professional misconduct dealt with as a disciplinary matter, through misconduct dealt with as a conduct matter, until we have reached 'fitness to practise', in the case of the BPS still dealt with by a disciplinary committee (a title that should be reviewed). This enlightenment is welcome and proper.

There will be times when the actions taken by the regulators, whoever they be, will seem unfair even draconian to the profession. Or not harsh enough to the lay public. There will be groundswells of resentment from members of the Society and the public. This is the price that must be paid for statutory regulation in the 21st century.

It will be the unenviable task of those entrusted with administering statutory regulation to make grave and far-reaching decisions and at times harsh determinations. If members of the fitness to practise committees are unable or unwilling to stand up and be counted, the profession will lose more than it gains by having statutory regulation.

**Louis D. Kramer**  
33 Court Road  
Southport

## Forensic opportunities

I FOUND Emma Christie's 'So you want to study forensic psychology?' (January 2003) an interesting insight into the possibilities of a career within the exciting field of forensic psychology. This summarised the wide variety of areas that the title 'forensic' encapsulates. However, I think its important to highlight a few additional points to bear in mind, especially when embarking on the long and winding road to Chartership.

There are new Society guidelines with regard to the route to Chartership, with the diploma route or the MSc and supervised practice routes available. I would encourage all those who are considering a career in this field to find out as much as possible through the BPS itself and through people who work in this field. I would also advise individuals to explore their interest in this field wherever possible, for example through undergraduate dissertation research.

Going back to the article itself, it listed 12 universities where an MSc in forensic

psychology is available. Please be aware that more and more universities are offering MSc in forensic psychology; however, not all are accredited (which could have further implications in the future, e.g. having to study additional modules) therefore it is important to check that Society accreditation has been achieved.

Opportunities in this field are vast, as Christie touched upon, it is important to realise that the prison service employs a huge number of people in this field, not only psychologists but also psychological assistants. Being a psychological assistant can help gain valuable experience, such as working with offenders, tutoring on accredited offender behaviour programmes, and so on, whilst also being paid. However, securing such a post is becoming more difficult because of competition due to recognition of these positive attributes, but this could be considered worth its weight in gold. The prison service is not the only employer offering experience in forensic psychology. The NHS Forensic

**F**OR a place on a forensic psychology MSc course Emma Christie ('So you want to study forensic psychology', January 2003) tells us that relevant experience is mandatory. But what counts as relevant experience?

For educational psychology we have all been to school, for occupational psychology we have all been 'occupied'. Knowing the difficulty of getting into clinical psychology, I was delighted to see Alice Knight has written *How to Become a Clinical Psychologist* (advertised in the same issue on p.45). Does she, I wonder, include under work experience having been beset by mental health problems?

If so, for forensic psychology presumably relevant experience will include having been beset by legal problems. Jonathan Aitken recognised he was a sinner and so changed career direction by enrolling for theology. Perhaps the forensic psychologist advising Jeffrey Archer on his post-prison career choices could recommend...thus guaranteeing that his next novel will give us all a cracking new image.

**Joshua Fox**  
129 Croydon Road  
London SE20

Services and agencies such as Victim Support offer opportunities for research, experience and career development.

Bearing all this mind, I would recommend any undergraduate to explore all avenues as much as possible,

when considering a career in forensic psychology, or any kind of psychology discipline for that matter. It is hard to decide what to do with your life especially when you know you want it to contain some kind of psychology but are not quite sure what. I would recommend

the more investment you do now, the less heartache later when you've invested four or five years in a career which is not for you!

**Helen Copeland**  
19 Meadow Rise  
Consett  
Co. Durham

## Welcome development

**T**HE BPS must be proud of *The Psychologist*. The material published in it covers a fascinating spectrum of topics of interest, with a laudable diversity of opinions. It shows me that psychology has grown and matured in a very remarkable way since I was an Edinburgh undergraduate in the 1950s.

The topics in the October issue – especially the McGaw and Lewis debate ‘Should parenting be taught?’ – reminded me of discussions of my undergraduate days. The idea was that, rather than formal teaching of ‘parenting’, many parents (and their children) would benefit from exposure to other parenting processes in kindergartens. There might be a government-supported system of kindergartens, each with a small staff of professionally trained workers, at which parents (female and male) would be required to work, say, one day a week each. The parents would learn by doing, and watching how others took care of children (not to mention seeing the widespread incidence of ‘problems’), suitably monitored by the professionals.

Parents would require release-time from their regular jobs; and who would pay and how much, and so on, would have to be worked out.

You can see that those discussions were ‘mere’ theory then. Who was available with the correct contacts to persuade the government? How many

SHOUT/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

employers would be receptive to the concept? Was the British public ready for this ‘contribution from psychology’ – not to mention government readiness?

But, as I said at the beginning, the times have changed tremendously, and psychology's place in the public mind now seems more secure.

The need for a programme such as that above may now be greater than ever. Is there a case for reviving some of those old ideas as part of ‘Bringing psychology to society’?

**Robert S. Rodger**  
412-10 Regency Park Drive  
Halifax  
Nova Scotia  
Canada

If you read an article in *The Psychologist* that you fundamentally disagree with, then the letters page is your first port of call: summarise your argument in under 500 words. But if you feel you have a substantial amount of conflicting evidence to cite and numerous points to make that simply cannot be contained within a letter, you can submit a ‘Counterpoint’ article of up to 1500 words – but we need to receive it within a month of the publication of the original article. We hope this format will build on the role of *The Psychologist* as a forum for discussion and debate.

## Reprocessing

**T**HE news analysis article on disaster planning from a psychological viewpoint in the December issue (‘Healing the wounds of the mind’) described EMDR as ‘eye movement desensitisation and reprogramming’. The correct name is of course ‘eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing’ – reprogramming has no place in this procedure.

**John Spector**  
Consultant Clinical  
Psychologist  
Watford General Hospital

## INSPIRATIONAL SPIRIT

**I** AM writing to say how sad it is that Michael Argyle died so prematurely on 6 September at the age of only 77. In today's society of longevity and excellent health well into the 90s, it was a shock to hear of his death.

Michael Argyle's contribution to the profession was outstanding, and I recall with great affection our first meeting when I was a psychology undergraduate. His mentorship (along with Dr Mansur Lalljee who was also in the Department of Experimental Psychology at Oxford University at the time) and generosity of

spirit is remembered by me to this day. He always had time for people and was a truly inspirational character with a loving spirit informed by his desire to mentor others (myself included!).

I hope his inspirational spirit in people's memories and through the sheer volume of his work will never be forgotten.

**Venus Kullar**  
43 Hollywood  
Great Bar  
Birmingham