

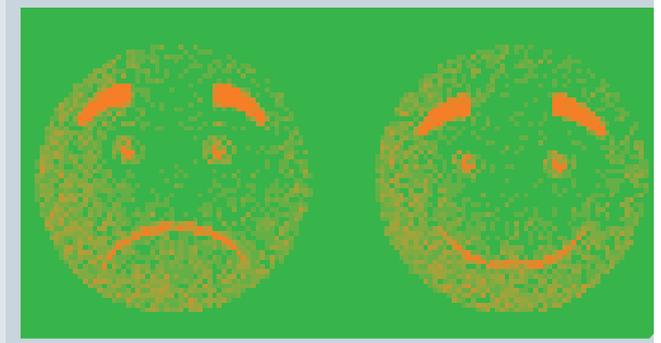
National well-being – help shape the din

Since the launch of the national well-being debate in November 2010, the UK's psychologists have made a valuable, and welcome, contribution to the discussion of how to measure the nation's well-being. Nevertheless, I would still like to encourage your readers to join the debate at www.ons.gov.uk/well-being, to provide both their expertise as professionals and their opinion as members of the public by answering the question 'What matters to you?'

To date more than 3500 people have already done so online, with health, family relationships, job security and freedom appearing as the priorities to the majority of respondents. Among the answers are also numerous contributions from clinical psychologists, counsellors, members of the Human Givens Institute and other mental health practitioners. Their responses have ranged from individuals commenting generally on the importance of mental health to specific suggestions about using measures and metrics that could feed into any final indicators. These include: Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

(SDQ), the World Health Organization Quality of Life instrument (WHOQOL-BREF), the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) as well as the Human Givens Institute's Emotional Needs Audit. We are following these up, including with the British Psychological Society Division of Clinical Psychology.

The online contributions have been echoed across the county at public meetings both large and small organised to support the online conversation and promote deeper discussion. This included a panel debate at the LSE in London in late January, at which the importance of an open discussion with the psychology community was again raised, specifically in relation to understanding eudaimonic well-being.



To help explore the issues around wider measures of national well-being, National Statistician Jil Matheson has convened an advisory forum. The list of its 40 members can be found, along with a calendar of debates and discussion events, on the ONS website mentioned above.

Our ultimate aim is to put together an accepted and trusted set of wider measures of how the country is doing,

Myths about psychology

I must commend Paul A. Howard-Jones ('From brain scan to lesson plan', February 2011) on an excellent article detailing the latest insights into neuroscience and learning. As a secondary school teacher, I have followed such research with interest while simultaneously witnessing the implementation of educational strategies that defy both science and logic.

Howard-Jones cites findings that 82 per cent of graduate trainee teachers believed that teaching children in their preferred learning style

could improve learning outcomes. While, as Howard-Jones quite rightly points out, research has found the concept unhelpful, many schools view the use of learning styles as grounded in scientific research. In fact, one school in which I taught included a section on learning styles in the student planner, informing pupils of the percentage of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners. Many schools insist that lesson planning should match the learning styles of individual children and ensure that all

staff are trained in such 'techniques'.

One major question we must all ask ourselves is why this kind of misinformation persists despite research to the contrary? It appears that while the popularity of psychology has increased so has the number of myths surrounding the discipline, and once embedded in the psyche of the public it becomes increasingly difficult to remove such misconceptions. I recently designed and delivered a series of introductory workshops in psychology aimed at adult

learners and quickly realised that the myths about psychology, common amongst my sixth-form students, were also prevalent amongst adults. This situation might well be compounded by the media and the self-help industry, who readily skew research findings or appear to think that no evidence is required. Such myths then permeate society and become embedded in the public consciousness, distorting society's image of psychology.

contribute

These pages are central to The Psychologist's role as a forum for discussion and debate, and we welcome your contributions.

Send e-mails marked 'Letter for publication' to psychologist@bps.org.uk; or write to the Leicester office.

Letters over 500 words are less likely to be published. The editor reserves the right to edit or publish extracts from letters. Letters to the editor are not normally acknowledged, and space does

not permit the publication of every letter received. However, see www.thepsychologist.org.uk to contribute to our discussion forum (members only).

Dimensions

beyond what can be understood by looking at GDP alone. These measures would be used to assess national well-being at points in time, and how life in the UK is changing over time.

After the UK debate on measuring national well-being concludes in April, the National Statistician will report during the summer of 2011 on how the debate has helped shaped the dimensions of national well-being, and how new measures will be developed. There will no doubt be much further debate about all of this, and about how we move to wider measures of national well-being for public and policy use.

So do make your contribution now to the debate at www.ons.gov.uk/well-being, by calling 0845 601 5075 or by following us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/statisticsONS.

Paul Allin

Director

Measuring National Well-being Programme



The public image of psychology is, indeed, an interesting conundrum. Although the public, in general, are favourable towards our profession, much of their knowledge appears to be less than accurate. How are we, as a Society, to correct such misconceptions when it's so often non-psychologists who have grasped the opportunity to 'educate' the public?

Marc Smith

Harrogate, North Yorkshire

Protecting the wrong title

I've been continually interested and bemused in equal measure regarding the continued debate between some of my fellow occupational psychologists and the HPC, such as 'HPC – not a professional body' (January 2011). The fundamental flaw, as I see it, is about the lack of protection of the title 'psychologist'.

Whether or not someone calls themselves an occupational psychologist is neither here nor there. If a person doesn't want to pay money to the HPC then they can simply set themselves up as a 'business psychologist', a 'work psychologist', 'industrial psychologist' so on and so forth. I know of practitioners who call themselves 'psychologists' in their businesses, some of whom may have a master's but not be chartered; and some who may only have a first degree in psychology. Whilst some of these are very

good, there are others I worry about doing work with the public (be that working for an organisation or otherwise).

Let's get real here and remember that the average member of the public just focuses on the word 'psychologist' – they're less likely to focus on the occupational, clinical, sport, counselling bit at the front. My concern is that there are a number of people out there who will, otherwise, fall through the cracks and avoid regulation as they come up with ways of avoiding joining the HPC whilst being able to continue to call themselves a psychologist. Therefore, isn't it the 'psychologist' title that we should ultimately be focused on protecting?

Hayley Lewis

Croydon

Surrey

Proposed Men's Section – entrenching dualism

Given the debate over sex differences between Baron-Cohen and Fine (Letters, December 2010, January, February 2011), Martin Seager's call for a 'Male Gender Section' (December 2010) is apposite and timely. While it is now common to talk of the Men's Movement and Critical Studies of Men (particularly in the domain of health: Crawshaw & Smith, 2009), we need to be persuaded that such a section will serve a useful purpose and that the amount of energy and time required to run it is justified.

Seager takes issue with the responses to his proposals that he has received from the Research Board, the Board of Trustees and the President. We have to be careful about assuming that these parts of the BPS are rational unitary others able

to provide leadership and responses that are evidenced, coherent and scientific. The responses Seager is so disappointed with have come from BPS members and it is such members that will run a Section on men and psychology. We would therefore want to know why a section is preferable to other forms of organisation, such as an online forum.

Most importantly, we are uncomfortable with the biological, dualistic and essentialist tone of Seager's suggestion. Feminists have arguably been the most influential in creating the conditions where it is possible for 'men' to be a subject of activism, research and policy. In particular, feminists politicised gender, pushing it into the social consciousness, creating an epistemic shift where men and women (and transmen

and transwomen, agendered, androgynous, and neutrosis people) started to recognise men (among others) as gendered beings. The plural term 'masculinities' helps to clarify that there are diverse ways in which it is possible to be 'men' (Connell, 2005). The idea that there are simply two sexes has long been entrenched in psychology and we see no reason why we should set up a Section to continue such a notion.

Peter Branney

Centre for Men's Health
Leeds Metropolitan University

Brett Smith

School of Sport, Exercise and
Health Sciences
Loughborough University

References

- Connell, R.W. (2005). *Masculinities*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Crawshaw, P. & Smith, J. (2009). Men's health: Practice, policy, research and theory. *Critical Public Health*, 19(3), 261–267.

A question of perspective

Cordelia Fine's excellent work (see *The Psychologist*, November 2010, and subsequent correspondence) is as much an exhortation to elevate standards of psychological science as a meticulous critique of research concerning brain-based gender differences. This rallying cry has resonated with others who have raised issues such as pragmatism in science, universal truths and individual variability, and the relationship between science and politics. One issue that is rarely discussed, however, is the field's point of view.

Astronomy has demonstrated the importance of one's point of view. The planetary orbital paths seemed mysteriously complex when the planets were believed to be orbiting the earth. What rectified this problem was not more sophisticated gadgetry but coming at the problem from a different angle by recognising that the planets were orbiting the sun and not the earth.

A similar problem may exist in psychological science. Currently, the focus of investigation is behaviour. While behaviour might appear relevant from an external observer's perspective, the behaving entity knows nothing of its behaviour other than what it senses. Behaviour, to the behavior, is the means to the end, not the end in itself. It is the case that behavior achieves constant ends through variable means (a process known as 'control').

The way in which behaviour varies to ensure that internally specified outcomes are maintained has been described in a theoretical framework (perceptual control theory; see www.pctweb.org) that provides a foundation with the phenomenon of control as the focus of study rather than behaviour.

In some ways we are intuitively aware of the functional

YOUR DEADLY SINS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

It must be 'bullying' in all its pernicious forms.

The dictionary defines a bully as: a person who hurts, persecutes or intimidates weaker people. It used to occur in the school playground and other closed communities like the Army. Workplace bullying is in open debate and an excuse for weak or insecure managers. There is also a strong overlap with sexism, racism, and so on. You could also construe the actions of the banking fraternity as financial bullying because they have the power to do what they like. There is the saying that 'Making small of people is wrong', and that neatly sums up this despicable behaviour.

Peter Murphy
Basingstoke

A very entertaining issue last month, particularly the piece about the deadly sins. I understand you're one short, so I'd like to nominate... smugness.

We're constantly being told that times are hard but there are certain people who, far from suffering, seem to ooze yet more

smugness with each new calamity. You know the sort I mean: bankers, politicians, DJs, celebrities who Tweet, people who front inane BBC 'reality TV' competition shows, chat-show hosts. In some ways, it's an 'icing on the cake' deadly sin, often coming on top of several others. More frighteningly, it provokes the darkest reactions in other people, complete innocents who have just accidentally stumbled upon some instance of smugness at its most horrifying. It is when encountering the truly smug that we all know we are capable of murder. Or is it just me?

Stamp out smugness now is what I say. It won't be easy, but it'll be oh so satisfying. Properly satisfying. Not in a smug way.

George Sik
*Epsom
Surrey*

Editor's note: for 'sin week' on the Society's Research Digest blog, including seven 'confessions' from psychologists, see tinyurl.com/sinweek

Psychology in schools

I thought readers might be interested in a new OFSTED report (see tinyurl.com/6e5wyy5) which evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of science in primary and secondary schools and colleges. OFSTED highlight an improving trend in the provision of science education, especially in secondary schools, and the importance of good-quality subject-specific professional development as a key factor supporting excellent learning in the sciences.

I am proud that the Science Learning Centres' programmes are singled out for praise. Nonetheless, the national network of Science Learning Centres needs to do all it can to promote teacher engagement, in an increasingly challenging environment. One powerful support is our bursary schemes, including the ENTHUSE Awards. These are provided by industry, government and the Wellcome Trust, to ensure that finance is not a barrier to teachers joining our courses. Our website www.slcs.ac.uk gives more information.

For psychology, we complement the support available through the BPS, the Association for the Teaching of Psychology and elsewhere for post-16 learning. We also help pre-16 science teachers introduce psychological methods



and thinking to younger learners. Our residential courses for psychology at the National Science Learning Centre have been well received, but they need to reach a wider audience. The identification of psychology as a science subject is only slowly growing at school level, and part of my role is to work with other stakeholders to support this. We are very grateful to our partners, including the BPS, for helping us reach out to psychology teachers and spread the word that the Science Learning Centres are for them too.

Jeremy Airey
*Senior Professional Development
Leader
National Science Learning Centre
York*

importance of behaviour beyond the behaviour itself. In studying driver behaviour, for example, it would be more common to investigate drivers' intentions such as how fast they like to travel and how far behind the car in front they prefer to be than it would be to study the placement of drivers' hands on their steering wheels. In other ways, however, we seem oblivious to this. Psychiatric classification systems of psychopathology (such as the DSM), for example, are groupings of behaviour. While clinically it might be appreciated that the meaning and experience of depression (or social phobia or schizophrenia, etc.) are different for different individuals, this is not reflected in diagnostic criteria.

Investigating controlled perceptual input rather than the production of behavioural output might help to reduce some of the current complexity and mystery of behaviour. Understanding behaviour from the perspective of the behavior in terms of the experiential world they are creating for themselves could provide new directions for researchers and new options for practitioners working with either individuals or organisations. Through no great advances in statistical or technological knowledge the standards of psychological science could be elevated by approaching our work from a different angle. A new perspective may be what is most needed to improve the accuracy and precision of our field. The possibilities raised by this notion suggest, at the very least, a hypothesis worth testing.

Timothy A. Carey

Centre for Remote Health and Central Australian Mental Health Service

Deadly normalisation?

I read with interest the article written by Mark Sergeant (Media, 'Healing hearts and minds', January 2011). Sergeant describes a seminar held by the British Psychological Society (BPS) in conjunction with other governmental bodies on 2 November 2010. The meeting apparently explored ideas for improving the mental well-being of UK armed forces.

I encourage psychologists to think as broadly as possible when considering this issue, which is of vital national interest. For example, how about suggesting a *preventative* approach? Perhaps we could recommend that the government stop sending British citizens to participate in imperial violence in Afghanistan? Wars inevitably cause unimaginable suffering, and any attempt to discuss this suffering while ignoring the political causes arguably borders on complicity. I suggest that psychologists put every effort into helping

UK service personnel suffering from mental health problems, but this *must* ultimately include speaking out against the institutions that are morally responsible for their misery, as the Ministry of Defence.

Recruitment 'adverts' for the Royal Navy (e.g. page 60, same issue) raise some of the same ethical problems. I believe that such pieces, published in an uncritical context, serve to normalise the mechanisms of state violence. This piece portrays the Navy as 'another interesting career option'. The government and right-wing media invest heavily in domestic propaganda, much of it designed to fill the public consciousness with this sanitised image of the military. There is a danger that the latest issue of *The Psychologist* inadvertently contributed to this process of deadly normalisation.

Alexis Makin

University of Liverpool

FORUM THE REAL WORLD

Towards the end of January Hosni Mubarak sat in comparative security and those who opposed him refrained from expressing themselves for fear of repression. As we write this at the beginning of February, a new cabinet combined with a commitment to stand down in September no longer suffices, and protestors beat effigies of Mubarak with their shoes. We don't know how things will turn out. But we do know that momentous transformations have already occurred.

So what exactly has changed in the Egyptian population and in Egyptian society? We doubt very much that people have discovered anything about Mubarak that they didn't know before, or that they revile him any more today than they did a fortnight ago. It is much more that they now know that they are not alone in what they think. More importantly, they now know that others feel as strongly as they do and will be prepared to act on it. If they shout 'Mubarak must go' they will not face the security forces alone. They will not speak as individuals but as – and with – 'the people'. Before the 'voice of the people', the international community, the army, and even the tyrant must pause and take stock.

And why has this change come about? Three terms stand out: Tunisia, social media, Tahrir Square.

The collective protests that swept Ben Ali from office in another North African Arab country provided a tangible model to Egyptians. It allowed them to imagine the possibility of solidarity and of victory. In Henri Tajfel's language, it provided a *cognitive alternative* which is essential to any process of social change.

The burgeoning use of Twitter, of Facebook and of YouTube gave people the virtual experience of solidarity and encouraged them to believe that, if they came down on the streets themselves, they would have the support and the safety of thousands – if not millions – of others.

Then, in the squares of Cairo and Alexandria and Suez and other cities besides, people had the lived experience of solidarity – of people sharing their feelings and fears and food with others. Those who started as strangers came to stand together, to dance together, to laugh and to cry together. Shared experience generated strong solidarity.

So when Malcolm Gladwell asserts in the *New Yorker* that 'the revolution will not be tweeted' (because social media cannot generate the strong ties necessary to produce social change) he is only partially right. For we are witnessing a remarkable reversal. After nigh on a century where developing media technologies have isolated us and rendered us passive in the face of someone else's message, we are now seeing technologies that can bring us together in order to make our own stories.

Certainly, these technologies are insufficient on their own – and, if our attachment to computer screens substitutes for the company of others, then they might actually stand in the way of progress. But when social media allow us see that our views are shared, and when they give us the confidence to assemble with others, and when they lead us to be part of living, breathing *embodied* communities, then we are transformed from spectators into actors on the stage of history.

Steve Reicher is at the University of St Andrews. **Alex Haslam** is at the University of Exeter. Share your views on this and other 'real world' psychological issues – e-mail psychologist@bps.org.uk. An archive of columns can be found at www.bbcprisonstudy.org.

Disaster, crisis and trauma psychology

Following the proposal to form a Section on Disaster, Crisis and Trauma Psychology (Trauma Psychology for short) we have received positive interest from those who wish to support the formation of the Section. However, in order to comply with the Charter Statutes & Rules, we do need 1 per cent of the membership to express their support.

By establishing a forum for the discussion of issues in trauma psychology, the Society will facilitate growth in this area of current need. A well-organised section can be a port of call when the Society is called for advice by government departments. It can also help ensure good liaison with the EFPA Standing Committee. Above all, it can organise meetings to develop cross-society research in this area.

Forming a new Section in Trauma



Psychology will:

- | promote cross-disciplinary research better to understand reactions to crises: this will involve neuropsychology, cognitive psychology and social psychology, and in turn this impacts on the types of basic research and understanding of psychological processes;
- | help develop teaching in this area at both introductory and advanced

professional levels;

- | through meetings, symposia and webpages, facilitate discussions among psychologists of all Specialisms who have important roles to play both in planning for disaster management and in mitigating effects of disasters and terrorism;
- | maintain the Society's Database of Disaster Resources with the aim of helping members gain access to relevant resources in their work;
- | liaise actively with the EFPA Standing Committee on Disaster Crisis and Trauma Psychology;
- | liaise closely with the Policy Support Unit to ensure that psychological findings influence public policy.

Please consider supporting the formation of the Section by visiting: www.bps.org.uk/traumasec

Professor William Yule
Institute of Psychiatry

prize crossword

no 56

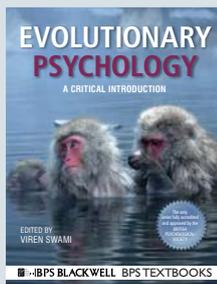
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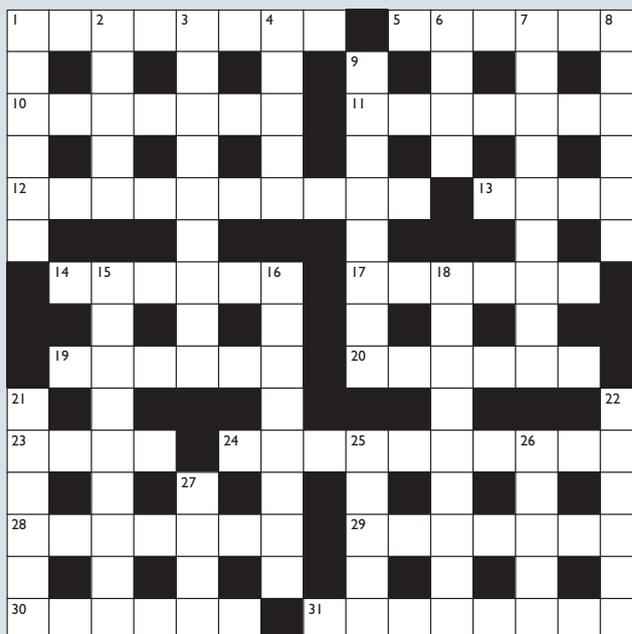
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Send your entry (photocopies accepted) marked 'prize crossword', to the Leicester office (see inside front cover)
deadline 11 april 2011 Winner of prize crossword no 55 Declan Hanna, Lisburn, Co. Antrim

no 55 solution Across 1 Reinforcement, 8 Point, 9 Eon, 10 Skimp, 12 Tail-ender, 13 Roomy, 14 Elevate, 15 Lambeth, 17 Ganders, 20 Candida, 22 Storm, 24 Shop floor, 25 Agent, 26 Ire, 27 Stoic, 28 Dysfunctional. Down 2 Edifice, 3 Notre Dame, 4 Overdue, 5 Central, 6 Miser, 7 Noisome, 8 Pathergasia, 11 Psychiatric, 16 Manifesto, 18 Neoteny, 19 Session, 20 Closest, 21 Ipomoea, 23 Motif.

Mental health services

I know I won't be the only one, but I can't help wondering what impact David Cameron's radical NHS reforms are likely to have on psychology and mental health services, as well as health care in general. I read recently of Mind's chief executive, Paul Farmer, expressing his concerns about how GPs' limited specialist knowledge on mental illness (his words, not mine!), could lead to many mental health services and skills being disrupted or closed. Being employed by an NHS foundation trust that specialises in mental health provision, I have always been confident in their understanding of how invaluable good-quality psychological services are.

I wonder whether such services in the future might find themselves in a bun fight with other health services to win over the approval of those GPs who will be handing out the kitty. If Mr Farmer's suppositions about the level of GPs' knowledge of mental health are accurate, my concern is that good-quality mental health and psychology services could be overlooked in favour of cheaper alternatives. Mr Cameron tells us these reforms will lead to a 'better-performing' NHS. I just hope he measures performance in the same way as most health professionals; in terms of effectiveness not efficiency.

David Turgoose

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust

across

- 1 Evident in short policy statement (8)
- 5 Computer user's graphical representation of woman with sailor (6)
- 10 Carer has limits of responsibility for children's room (7)
- 11 Old exercises managed to start conditioning (7)
- 12 Trees exhibiting enduring popularity? (10)
- 13 Symptom shown by soldier returning between poles (4)
- 14 Youngster rejected kitsch articles in decree (6)
- 17 Frightened monk needing outside assistance (6)
- 19 Ward fee (6)
- 20 Longs for periods around north (6)
- 23 Amount due for having base turned over on time (4)
- 24 Heads for quiet occupants (10)
- 28 In French, return bit of southern catches (7)
- 29 Bloomer, one with name confused before (7)
- 30 Make appealing with final attention (6)
- 31 Dad beset with problems on mattress support (8)

down

- 1 Chaps led around by geneticist (6)
- 2 Front neuron (5)
- 3 Warplane carrying sappers to cargo vessel (9)
- 4 School term (5)
- 6 Compete with prospect (4)
- 7 Idiot's confused with rant about custom (9)
- 8 & 25 Psychological measure gets cranial disorder (6,5)
- 9 Jump over a line – that's the limit! (8)
- 15 Retarded and self-conscious (9)
- 16 Conjecture that gold is accepted by you once (8)
- 18 Study attire to confront again (9)
- 21 Observe before ADHD shortly gains precedence (6)
- 22 As about to finish 25 (6)
- 25 See 8
- 26 Not a soul administered drug after midday (2-3)
- 27 A small amount put up for information (4)

FORUM PSYCHOLOGY AT WORK

In the current economy getting a job is tough, but getting the right one to kick start your career is even harder. Current employment data indicates that 20 per cent of recent graduates are out of work for six months to one year, and this is an underestimate of those not in their ideal job. The same concerns are experienced by psychology graduates. Last year 55,000 A-level students studied psychology, and the trend is towards more competition with demand outstripping supply. But do not despair! There are ways to stand out from the crowd. Recently, Society President Gerry Mulhern highlighted the challenges facing students in relation to the employment agenda. The next step is to expand on this with practical advice and support.

Jo Garsden is a good example of breadth of thinking by a psychologist looking for role. After her MSc she worked in a temporary post supporting the roll-out of change management projects across BMI Healthcare, and coupled this with careers coaching on a voluntary basis. She highlighted her skills in project management and communications. She now works coordinating the MICRA research network on ageing at the University of Manchester, working with academics, practitioners and policy makers. This trend towards using the versatility of a psychology degree coupled with volunteering and networking is critical to job success.

The BPS Division of Occupational Psychology, through the Career Development Working Group, is active in supporting and providing advice to applicants in their job search. Although there are differences for specific disciplines within psychology, there are commonalities and lessons to be drawn. As Angie Ingman says: 'We encourage occupational psychologists to develop their knowledge and skills and to acquire more rounded business acumen. This ensures that occupational psychologists remain the best qualified group to advise and improve the effectiveness of individuals and organisations.' So here are 10 top tips for success:

- 1 Don't wait for the ideal psychology job with that 'title'. Look to roles in related areas which will enhance your skill set.
- 1 Highlight your USPs – the skills or experiences that are 'unique' and different about you. Be self-aware and show initiative.
- 1 Value all types of work experience, paid or voluntary, and look at what you have learned from that experience. Helping others is a good way to develop yourself.
- 1 Highlight your competencies, skills, talents and motivation. Think about all areas of your life that show the essential you. Think about transferable skills in leadership, teamwork, social skills and decision making.
- 1 Be resilient: if at first you don't succeed, try again. Persistence pays.
- 1 Keep positive: a balanced sense of hope is important. Do not appear desperate. Value yourself and your skills. Create opportunities and be adaptable.
- 1 Network and learn from others. Work shadowing can be powerful. Think about possible internships.
- 1 Volunteer with the BPS in working groups, in Branches, Sections or the Divisions. This is a good way to build project management and interpersonal skills and to expand your network.
- 1 Engage with others in related fields such as education and business.
- 1 Seek out a mentor and seek support and resources from the Society.

Most of all, remember to have confidence, adaptability and persistence. Career paths can take people in all sorts of new and exciting directions. *Carpe diem!*

Hazel Stevenson is Chair of the Division of Occupational Psychology. Share your views on this and other workplace-related issues via psychologist@bps.org.uk.