



## LETTERS

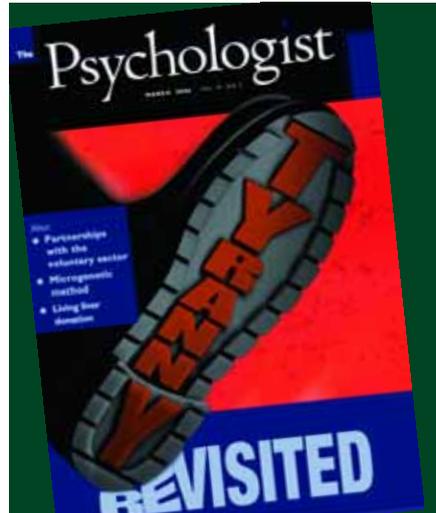
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# Groups and power

**R**EICHER and Haslam argue ('Tyranny Revisited', March 2006) that unlike Zimbardo they set up their 'prison' experiment without imposing their expectations of behaviour onto the participants. Yet this is not really the case. If you set up this situation with prison officers and prisoners, aren't these people probably aware of how they are expected to behave even if they have not been instructed? And the lack of clear instruction is still a form of instruction in that it is non-directive and confusing.

People look for cues as to how to behave, and in a vacuum will try to form their own 'laws'. But it is hard to get consensus, it is hard to run a democratic process when everyone has a continuing say – usually things harden into accepted practice. In Reicher and Haslam's study a more headline approach was going to be taken because 'being soft' just had not worked. So in the future (if this was a real situation) any call for a softer approach would be answered with 'But look what happened back in '65 when we took that line – it was a disaster'.

So from an initial position of everyone thinking for themselves, something happens that makes a group decision necessary. From then on all individual thinking is constrained by this group consensus. In this case, instead of balancing power, the prison officers group decided, out of fear or frustration, to take away the prisoners' own



sense of power to make themselves feel better. How often does that happen in reality? Look at men and women, look at minority groups of all kinds.

But the message Reicher and Haslam seem to want to glean from their experiment is that groups give 'choice' – they state that 'shared social identity creates social power, and where people are willing to become effective social agents to deploy that power they become effective social agents who shape their own worlds'.

What do they actually mean about groups giving choice? What they seem to be arguing is that groups give power and that individuals alone are relatively

powerless. This is probably true, but are they saying that everyone belongs to some group and must struggle with that group to maintain their sense of themselves in relation to other groups? This is actually pretty much how society does appear to operate, but 'choice' seems a funny word. Some groups have much more power in the first place; for example, prison officers, men, white people, America, etc.

So are Reicher and Haslam arguing that women or black people, and so on, simply do not exercise their right to choose to have more power by failing to organise? This is close to saying it is the victim's own fault; while the victim does obviously play a role, you have to look at the broader picture. The broader picture is that some groups have more power and the 'choice' about how to wield it.

The reality of life is that groups have leaders, people naturally get to know the power structures that are in place, they see who is listened to and who is not, who is deferred to and who is not; and underlying it all is who has the physical and psychological prowess to dominate. Of course, there are people who have great 'power' and who have no wish to dominate, but others will abuse that position.

**Lennox Savage**

*Killanena*

*Caher*

*County Clare*

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## Whose groupthink?

**T**OWARDS the end of a useful article on diversity and conflict ('Difference and the psychology of conflict', March 2006) the authors say: 'As one recent example [of groupthink], the 'like minds' of Bush, Blair and their foreign policy advisers in the days leading to the invasion of Iraq are now described by some commentators as an archetypal example of groupthink at work (see [tinyurl.com/dlnvcv](http://tinyurl.com/dlnvcv)).'

The tinyurl turned out to be

Melanie Phillips's carefully researched article 'Group-think on Iraq' of 20 July 2004. However, this article ends:

*Tony Blair was wrong to press intelligence in aid to shore up the case he was failing to make successfully to the public. But that does not mean the war was wrong, or that the case he made for war was wrong. And it does not mean that*

*Saddam was no threat. On the contrary, the evidence continues to mount that he did indeed present exactly the lethal threat that made those UN resolutions necessary in the first place. But this isn't reported. Instead, the media makes a leap – from 'there were no caveats' to 'there were no WMD'. That's real group-think for you – and of all the weapons against*

*the west, it could prove the most lethal of all.*

Somehow, between what Ms Phillips had written on groupthink in the media and what the authors had read (groupthink among Blair, Bush and the neocons), some groupthink had taken place!

**Martin Turner**

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## PTSD in Iraq

**T**HE article 'London bombings trauma victims still being found' (News, March 2006) is a timely reminder that the 56 deaths caused are simply the acute 'front-end' of the dire chronic psychosocial effects of military or paramilitary violence. Over 1000 people have developed post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of being caught up in these events, as witness, bystander or helper. It should also be noted that there are more diffuse and long-term effects of loss of trust between different sectors of the societies affected, defined

along ethnic and religious lines. One bombing incident can, thus, indirectly hurt millions.

While it is admirable that British psychologists are playing a leading role in providing professional assistance to those psychologically wounded by 7/7, it is worrying that questions about the effects of Britain's role in bombing innocent civilians in Serbia, Afghanistan and Iraq seem of less interest.

Data collected by [www.iraqbodycount.org](http://www.iraqbodycount.org) shows that on average 35 innocent civilians in Iraq have met

violent deaths every day since March 2003. During the three-week invasion phase of March–April 2003, the daily civilian death rate (almost all caused by coalition bombs and bullets) was 315. By now, the Iraq violent death toll exceeds the death toll of 7/7 by over 600:1. This suggests, on a conservative estimate, that there are at least 600,000 Iraqis who are suffering post-traumatic effects, a very large proportion of them directly caused by coalition military aggression, or indirectly by coalition failures to restore and maintain security.

Britain shares with the United States the responsibility for providing the resources for

Iraqi people to recover from the psychological traumas caused by our actions. And, on the basis that every human being is equal, the financial and human resources that the UK and US psychological communities should be jointly supplying to Iraq should be 600 times greater than that being given to the British victims of 7/7. Our guess is that the actual ratio is probably reversed (i.e. closer to 1:600). Are any other UK psychologists as concerned about this as we are?

**John Sloboda**

*Keele University*

**and 16 other signatories**

(see forum thread via

[www.thepsychologist.org.uk](http://www.thepsychologist.org.uk) for full list)

## Torture – Participation and dissent

**I** HAVE recently completed some research in which I interviewed some counselling psychologists about their professional identity. Ethics emerged as key, permeating not only professional identity but also personal life. Making the world a better place was underlined. So on the release of yet more torture photographs from Abu Ghraib, and the UN Commission on Human Rights report on the situation of detainees at Guantanamo Bay, I have wondered whether psychology could place more emphasis on studying the processes by which people get involved in torture and injured to the suffering of others.

Interrogations at Guantanamo Bay are overseen by the Behavioural Science Consultation Team (BSCT) (Bloche & Marks, 2005). This unit has included at least one psychologist (Lifton, 2004). BSCT operatives have prepared psychological profiles for use by interrogators. It has been noted that 'since late 2002... psychologists have been part



AP/EMPHICS

of a strategy that employs extreme stress, combined with behaviour shaping rewards, to extract actionable intelligence from resistant captives' (Bloche & Marks, 2005, p.6).

In its 2005 declaration on torture, the BPS condemned the use of psychological knowledge and techniques in the design and enactment of torture. If a psychologist serving in the BSCT were a member, would they be disciplined? How ethical are the rationales commonly used to justify personal involvement in such situations? Could it be argued that it is better to have some

involvement from a professional psychologist to ensure some semblance of humanity?

As well as studying the processes of involvement in torture, we also need urgently to study the processes of dissent. How is it that a few individuals are able to stand up for their beliefs in the face of immense pressure? Nelson, the investigating psychiatrist for one of the official inquiries into Abu Ghraib (the Taguba Report) describes the atmosphere there as one of 'danger, promiscuity and negativity, the worst human behaviours came to the fore and a perverse dominance came to prevail' (in Greenberg & Dratel, 2005, p.448).

There is one ray of hope. A witness account contained in another official inquiry (the Fay-Jones Report: see Greenberg & Dratel, 2005) sheds some light on an instance of resistance. In November 2003, Navy dog handler William J. Kimbro was summoned with his dog to a cell block at Abu Ghraib. He thought he was being requested to conduct an explosives

search, but it became clear that he was expected to use his dog to terrorise an inmate. He left and, despite hearing someone call after him, did not turn back. After discussing the incident with the three other Navy dog teams present at the prison, they adopted the strategy of always enquiring about the purpose of a request for dog use. If it was 'for interrogation', they refused the request. This form of resistance urgently requires further research; and, given what we now know about the situation at Abu Ghraib, William J. Kimbro deserves a medal.

**Dee Danchev**

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## Helping people who self-harm

I'M writing to seek views from the psychological community about an article in the *Sunday Times* (5 February) by medical correspondent Sarah-Kate Templeton, entitled 'Self-harmers to be given clean blades'. The Royal College of

Nursing (RCN) is suggesting that clean 'sharps' should be provided to people who self-harm in an attempt to prevent infection and make the act of self-harming safer. Is this a step in the right direction or a waste of time, money and

resources? Jeremy Bore of the RCN's prison forum is proposing to provide a safe environment for people to self-harm, a place where there are nurses for people to discuss their issues with before, during and after self-harm. There is

perhaps an assumption here that all self-injurers do so through the method of cutting: they are not going to let a person overdose in the presence of a nurse. Other people use blunter instruments, and they could receive serious injuries if

## HARRY KAY (1919–2005)

**H**ARRY Kay, a former President of the British Psychological Society, died on 14 December 2005 after a long illness. He was 86. From Rotherham Grammar School he went up to Trinity Hall, Cambridge in 1938 to read English. With the outbreak of war in 1939 he joined the army and fought with the Royal Artillery through the campaign in North Africa and Italy. At the end of the war he held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

In 1946 he returned to Cambridge to complete his degree choosing to read moral sciences in Part II of the tripos. As a schoolboy and an undergraduate he was an accomplished athlete, breaking many school records and gaining a half blue for hockey. He retained his interest in sports and games, especially cricket and tennis, throughout his life: in tutorials he often used examples from sports to illustrate a point of psychological interest. On graduation he remained in Cambridge to undertake postgraduate work in the Nuffield Unit for Research into Problems of Ageing.

While in Cambridge he was much influenced by Sir Frederic Bartlett who believed that progress in psychology would come from addressing real-world problems that would in turn

lead to theoretical insights. This general approach was adopted by Harry, who throughout his scientific career worked on applied problems and encouraged others to do so. During this period in Cambridge he also served as psychologist to the Naval Arctic Expedition in 1949.

In 1951 he was appointed lecturer experimental



psychology at Oxford. The 1950s was the decade during which he carried out much of his own experimental work. His investigations into learning and memory in adults and the effects of ageing were completed and successfully submitted for a PhD. The same period also saw the publication of further work on motor skills. On his appointment to the foundation chair of psychology at Sheffield in 1960 he immediately set about building a firm research base. His own research efforts were now focused primarily on occupational psychology.

An early success stemming from his work in Cambridge was programmed instruction and teaching machines. This work attracted interest from industry and led ultimately to the establishment of the National Centre for Programmed Instruction for Industry. Around this time he was awarded the Vernon Prize for his work on industrial training. In the mid-1960s the MRC, seeing the need to build up the research base in industrial psychology, responded positively to a proposal to establish a research unit in the area in Sheffield. In 1968 the Social and Applied Psychology Unit began work with Harry as honorary director. The broad theme of the Unit's work was applied cognitive psychology. Alongside the development of the research programme a postgraduate training course in occupational and organisational psychology was introduced. By the time he left Sheffield, work psychology, as it is now known, was firmly established.

During the 1960s he became increasingly involved in university administration and particularly in academic planning. He served as Pro-Vice-Chancellor in Sheffield and in 1973 he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Exeter University, where he

remained until his retirement in 1984. He worked on many committees, some specialist scientific (MRC, SRC, SSRC, NATO Human Factors), others concerned with general educational matters. He chaired the UCCA, the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, and served the GMC as a lay member. In 1981 he was appointed CBE. He was President of the BPS, the Experimental Psychology Society, and the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Section J (Psychology). Sheffield and Exeter Universities awarded him honorary degrees.

Harry Kay was a kind and deeply tolerant man, always courteous in his dealings with others and always prepared to give time to students and young research staff. He believed passionately in the central importance of education at all levels for any civilised society. He never lost his interest or commitment to psychology; after his stroke he made careful observations of his symptoms and disabilities in the belief that psychology had much to inform neurology.

He is survived by Diana his wife of 64 years, a son, a daughter and a grandson.

**Kevin Connolly**  
Sheffield University

given new 'sharps' they are unfamiliar with. There is also the fear that people will inflict worse injuries on themselves to justify being in a hospital environment. And I wonder who will make use of the service: for most people, self-harm is a very private episode. Many are ashamed of what they do and don't want others to see their scars, so would they willingly go somewhere so that they can self-harm in front of another person?

Self-injurers need help to break the cycle of self-harm, but perhaps free dressings and information about safer areas of the body to injure would be a better idea than providing people with the tools to do it. Even this kind of information could be reversed and interpreted by some as which

parts are the most dangerous to cut, leading to more serious injuries in more severely affected individuals.

In my opinion, it is great to see that self-harm is becoming more accepted by professionals as a maladaptive coping mechanism used by many people, and not purely the activities of teenage attention-seeker stereotypes and those who are mentally unstable. However, I do not believe that handing out free tools for people

to harm themselves with is the answer; it could be interpreted by many as a way of accepting that it happens, as encouraging the act, or as professionals giving up on those that self-harm, rather than as an attempt at finding a solution.

**Jennifer Heath**  
*University of Nottingham*



## Certified to make sense

THERE used to be a story about a notice, said to have been erected in Hyde Park during the Second World War, which read: 'Notice: It is forbidden to throw stones at this notice'. It was a joke, of course, perhaps best appreciated by philosophers of the Cambridge school.

Today I have received my practising certificate, which reads: 'This is to certify that the above named Chartered Psychologist has been issued with this Practising Certificate'. Is this also a joke? (If so, it is a joke of long standing which has worn thin.)

The certificate ought to read something like: 'This is to certify that the above named person has met the

requirements of the British Psychological Society to practise as an Applied Psychologist'. No doubt that could be improved upon but at least, I suggest, it is on the right lines.

**Christopher Macy**  
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**Editor's note:** We passed this letter to the Membership and Professional Training Board, who agreed that the wording of the certificate should change. Future reprintings will bear the wording: 'This is to certify that the above named has met the Society's requirements to practise'.

## College of Applied Psychology - Lessons from the past

PETER Kinderman ('The applied psychology revolution', December 2005) has stimulated some widely varying views (Letters, February 2006). There are, however, some caveats to be borne in mind if training in applied psychology is to make sense and be accepted by our colleagues in related professions and, more crucially, by consumers and legislators who need to use our knowledge and skills. Later specialisation will be understood when it clearly caters for different fields of application, but only if it follows a common root training. It would be a mistake to portray the several fields of applied psychology as using fundamentally different methodologies.

In this it might well make sense to consumers if there were a College of Applied Psychology. A medical officer at the then DHSS, which had direct responsibility for what were then the 'special hospitals', expressed incredulity that our Society had a Royal Charter yet did not have a Royal College of Psychologists. He was still puzzled when I explained that, unlike the medical Royal Colleges, whose concerns are services for patients, the BPS also caters, in fact largely, for academic psychologists whose main concerns are teaching and research.

I doubt whether the original project for a College of Applied Psychology (I was also a steering committee member with Douglas Conochie) would have much to contribute today. The few key documents I have kept show that the concern was with its status and relationships within the BPS, not with what functions it might fulfil vis-à-vis the outside world. It was a 'given' that its function would be to look after the growing

proportion of Society members who were concerned with applied issues and how to accommodate this growing group within the Society. In the steering committee's winding-up report over May Davidson's name, 25 January 1980, it was noted: '...it was felt to be wise to postpone further discussion until the Society's plans for the legal registration of psychologists had matured.' We are still waiting.

If the history of a possible College of Applied Psychology tells us so little (so we can think again about creating one, untrammelled by past considerations), there are other historical BPS records which might tell us more. These, however, are difficult to unearth, for until recently, when Society reports began to be put on our website, they were not listed and publicised as BPS books have been. The work, time and cost of working parties is squandered if their reports are not kept on record and under the noses of the ministers and civil servants who need to be reminded of them and who are constantly changing office. Peter Kinderman also shares responsibility for our submissions on the Mental Health Act but the Society's report *Psychology and Antisocial Behaviour* (1993) was apparently not available to him. It goes back only half as long as the shelved College of Applied Psychology. What other past work and documents might still exist to inform new endeavours?

**Tony Black**  
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## DEADLINE

Deadline for letters for possible publication in the May issue is **10 April**

## NICK BARLOW (1945–2006)

**A** LAST conversation with Nick was about the need to safeguard vulnerable children and adults, outlining ways that we, as psychologists, could influence the process of achieving this outcome. Significantly, Nick was thinking of others at a time when he was seriously ill and should have been concerned with his own well-being. Curiously, there is a bill before Parliament about safeguarding vulnerable people. Nick was ahead of his time. His focus on the use of psychological approaches as a means of addressing societal inequalities was, and still is, innovative in the field of social care.

Portents of his eclectic style were evident in his choice of a stint in repertory theatre at his home town of Eastbourne, followed by a year teaching English, drama and biology at Bishop Stortford College. On a different tack, Nick gained his first degree from Coleg Prifysgol Gogledd Cymru (University College of North Wales) and subsequently trained as a clinical psychologist at Liverpool University.

From his first professional post in the North Wales Child Guidance Service he established the North Wales Branch of the BABP becoming its first chair. His lifelong commitment to multidisciplinary working emerged at this time. Moving to Birmingham, he connected with educational psychologists, a move that enabled another first in the provision of psychological input to the social services department. While at Birmingham he also led the establishment of a young male secure unit that was run on psychological principles. A further move saw Nick working with children at Rugby NHS Trust and ultimately at Leicester Royal Infirmary as head of paediatric psychology.

Within the British Psychological Society Nick was ever active. He saw the need for a pan-Divisional alliance of psychologists and founded the Special Group of Psychologists working in Social Services as a response. He served on Council and numerous committees including latterly the Ethics and Disciplinary Committees. In these activities he was dedicated to ensuring that the voices of vulnerable people were both heard and responded to. Nick was iconoclastic in his approach to the 'established order'. The mantra of *ultra vires* did not chime with Nick, as he continually sought to extend the influence of the Society into many different contexts. Nick was passionate about everything that he engaged in and scrupulous in the detail of documents and projects. Nick often used his wicked sense of humour to good effect in alleviating tedious committee syndrome, thereby achieving action from what appeared to be an impasse.

His wife, Irene, and children have both our deepest sympathy and thanks for sharing Nick with us.

### The PASS Committee

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 write a 'Counterpoint' article of up to 1500 words, within a month of the publication of the original article. However, it is best to contact the editor about your plans, on [jonsut@bps.org.uk](mailto:jonsut@bps.org.uk).



ROY PETERS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

**A**S a teacher of A-level psychology, I read with interest Jon Sutton's report on the event organised by the Society and the Higher Education Academy (News, February 2006). It appears that pre-degree level psychology is in a state of enormous transition as it rapidly heads towards the mainstream science curriculum. Psychology teachers (especially those teaching A-level in schools) appear to have all but been excluded from such a transition.

The current state of A-level psychology is far from ideal. At present there exist three exam boards offering A-level psychology in England and separate boards for Wales and Scotland. Although each syllabus appears similar in many respects, each contains an element peculiar to that particular board. It seems that now is the ideal time to overhaul the entire A-level psychology syllabus – a task that cannot be achieved successfully without the cooperation and support of both the universities and the BPS. Psychology teachers have to teach within the constraints of their chosen exam board, and much of what we do teach must then be 'unlearned' at undergraduate level. A-level centres are partly responsible for the growth in interest of psychology, and each year more of our students go on to

study psychology at university. We are therefore intrinsically connected to the university psychology departments – whether they like it or not.

I recently heard Martin Conway (University of Leeds) make two suggestions, both of which appear to strike a chord with many psychology teachers. First of all was the suggestion that universities should make A-level psychology a prerequisite for studying psychology at degree level. Secondly, that the BPS should begin a programme of accreditation of A-level psychology. This could have the effect of ensuring that A-level psychology is taught by subject specialists, instead of the current situation whereby any teacher with a few hours free on their timetable is recruited to teach it. It may also go some way to sorting out the mess with regard to psychology graduates and teacher training. Making it more straightforward for schoolteachers to gain chartered status would also add more credibility to an area constantly in danger of losing it.

What is clear is that psychology teachers are demanding a say in how their subject is taught and recognised in a climate where the media, and hence public opinion, views our subject as substandard and soft.

**Marc Smith**  
Guiseley School  
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## Maths and stats

**T**HE myth-debunking article on statistics by Toni Brennan on the February 'Students' page was a positive contribution in many ways. Statistics is an important tool in psychological inquiry, and it is important to be clear about the capabilities of the tool. It was with a tinge of disappointment, therefore, that I discovered the first myth to be debunked concerned the relationship between mathematical proficiency and statistical proficiency.

Statistics can be thought of as 'a science that employs mathematical methods of collection, organization, and interpretation of data' (Gullberg, 1997, p.962). Statistics is maths, and mathematics is 'one of the keystones of the scientific endeavour' (Stewart, 1996, p.x). Stewart goes on to explain: 'Mathematics is about ideas... It is not just a question of getting the right answer; more a matter of understanding why an answer is possible at all, and why it takes the form that it does' (p.2).

So the association between mathematics and statistics is fundamental. It is perhaps not necessary to be able to recall from memory things like the equation for the standard error of the mean, but, for legitimate scientific inquiry to occur, it is necessary to understand conceptually what is happening to quantities, categories and relationships when statistical

procedures are applied. An ability to conceptualise relationships mathematically, for example, might help to avoid making causal conclusions from correlational analyses or to appreciate that regression models *describe* data but do not *explain* the underlying causal mechanisms of the data.

The definition and assessment of psychological distress is one area where a greater understanding of mathematical concepts is needed. Currently, much psychological distress is sliced into categories of apparent disorders, such as depression and anxiety. Responses to items on standardised questionnaires are added to give, for example, a depression score. But just because these scores *can* be added, doesn't mean that they *should* be added. Numbers don't care what we do with them so, it is important to understand, mathematically, what is happening.

The numbers from these kinds of questionnaires only provide information about order, not magnitude. 'Applied to me a considerable degree, or a good part of the time' cannot be said to represent twice the inability to experience positive feeling as 'Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time' represents, so it makes no sense to add them together. These types of numbers are useful in some situations but they are not useful when

mathematical procedures such as adding and other types of calculations are required. A depression score of 8, for example, is a silly number to talk about from a mathematical perspective.

Since it is not appropriate to add these numbers, it is also inappropriate to create average scores and to involve them in the conduct of various statistical tests. These facts have serious implications for a large area of psychological research. Currently, however, these implications are being ignored and numbers are being used as though they have properties they do not possess. Perhaps the practice of using numbers of one type as though they were numbers of another

type has impeded the progress of scientifically understanding the nature of psychological distress.

When the only tool one has is a hammer, there is a danger that every problem might look like a nail. In order to understand what the tool of statistics can and cannot do, it is important to have an understanding of mathematical concepts. Proceeding without such an understanding can see the inappropriate hammering of psychological phenomena and the obstruction of the progress of knowledge.

**Timothy A. Carey**  
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## Crowds in a crisis

**C**OCKING and Drury are tackling a straw man if they are indeed taking as the premise of their research an idea that current emergency planning is based on an assumption that 'crowds of people are unthinking and prone to panic' (News, March 2006). UK taxpayers can rest assured that the nation's professional emergency planners have been a good deal more sophisticated than that for a long time.

During the 1990s I worked with Home Office colleagues on contingency plans for dealing with disasters, and our work included research into crowd management and escape behaviour. Admittedly a good deal of the work was never published in academic form, but it did inform the writing of codes of practice and other publications. Also such thinking has long underpinned teaching at the Emergency Planning College near York.

The professional emergency planning community is well aware of the substantial



DUNCAN PHILLIPS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

**Emergency evacuation from Bank tube station**

research background that has built up since 1954, when Quarantelli showed that people caught up in a disaster rarely panic (for a good review see Tierney *et al.*, 2001). Certainly there is a great deal more to be done to refine our models of how various groups might behave under different crisis conditions; also to feed such knowledge into training for incident commanders, who face the daunting task of predicting what might happen next under incredibly stressful conditions. Thus I am pleased to read that Cocking and Drury are looking to develop a training tool.

## ON THE FORUM THIS MONTH

Go to [www.thepsychologist.org.uk](http://www.thepsychologist.org.uk) and click on 'Forum' for more readers' letters. Topics under discussion include training, plagiarism, A-level psychology teaching, education and the care system, psychobabble, microgenesis, and positive psychology.

You can use our online forum to discuss and debate psychology, seek information and work experience from the psychological community, and ask any serious or offbeat questions.

However, it would I suggest be better to start from where the potential recipients of the research actually are.

In an earlier article in *The Psychologist* ('No need to panic', March 2004; see [www.bps.org.uk/tiny/12gq8o](http://www.bps.org.uk/tiny/12gq8o)) Drury suggested that the potential of crowds to behave irrationally was a factor in the government's proposals for new legislation that on 18 November 2004 became the Civil Contingencies Act. Contrary to Drury's line, it is widely held that government thinking as to the need for this

legislation was largely shaped by problems experienced in dealing with the fuel protest and widespread flooding in 2000 and foot and mouth disease in 2001; the fuel protesters were organised and their blockades were planned and executed very rationally!

**Roger Miles**  
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#### Reference

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## Psychoanalysis and literature

**P**AULA Jean Manners is certainly correct in saying that psychoanalytic perspectives on the creative arts are not new. Since the time that Freud famously analysed *Hamlet* in terms of the Oedipus theory, psychoanalysis has developed a non-therapeutic and somewhat disreputable life in departments of literature,

where it survives to this day in a deluge of secondary texts which do little service either to psychological theory or to the books being studied.

The recent occasional pieces on fiction in *The Psychologist* may be good fun, but they are bad lit. crit. Frodo and Holden Caulfield are not real people, and treating them as if they are

fails to illuminate them. Similarly, being bound by the confines of the plot of a book restricts what can be said about, for example, the theories of Klein, and it involves people making generalisations which are incorrect (e.g. the overemphasis of the good-bad split in the treatment of Tolkien; it is precisely Tolkien's avoidance of this that makes the book worthwhile).

In a few modern cases an author has read Freud, Jung or Lacan, and so, for example, it is useful to bring Freudian analysis to bear on the knowing novels of Angela Carter. Otherwise, you are advancing neither psychology nor literature. I would much prefer to have seen two pages on the main strengths and weaknesses of Kleinian theory with some recommended further reading than an article which was neither flesh nor fowl.

While applying any psychological theory to fiction is little more than a game (I am happy to supply *The*

*Psychologist* with endless articles on group processes in *Lord of the Flies*, gender identity in any Shakespeare play you wish or social control in 1984), applying psychoanalytic theories to creative texts does at least highlight the dependence on story in both genres. Psychoanalysis seems to me to be largely fictional and thus perhaps well matched with famous novels or plays. The problem, of course, is that outside the imagination of a master storyteller like Freud, most psychoanalytic theory pales in comparison with the fictions it is being used to analyse; so give me Tolkien over Klein any day.

I may well be wrong about this, but by eschewing a clear presentation of Klein in favour of a hybrid Klein-Tolkien commentary you have missed an opportunity to persuade me.

**John Flood**  
Department of English  
Bishop Grosseteste College  
Lincoln

## INFORMATION

■ **CONSULTING rooms required to hire** on hourly/sessional basis for two clinical/counselling psychologists in London – Wimbledon/Wandsworth/Clapham area.  
**Anna Rowe**  
[psychology@fsmail.net](mailto:psychology@fsmail.net)

■ **THE Transpersonal Psychology Section of the BPS** wishes to establish effective networks of communication for all those with professional interests in our discipline. We are seeking to compile a **list of higher education psychology departments in which transpersonal psychology is taught as part of the formal curriculum or is otherwise promoted**. I shall be grateful to hear from heads of psychology departments.

I shall also be pleased to hear from any staff who are themselves

currently supervising research degrees in transpersonal psychology or related fields. Please contact me too if you know of other academic departments in UK higher education establishments in which transpersonal psychology is featured on a taught lecture programme (e.g. religious studies or anthropology).

**Anthony C. Edwards**  
Transpersonal Section Treasurer  
Division of Psychology  
University of Northampton  
Northampton NN2 7AL

■ **WERE you directly affected by the 2004 Asian Tsunami?** The National Audit Office has commissioned the Zito Trust to carry out a national survey looking at people's experiences of UK agencies in the aftermath of the tsunami. The survey is available over the internet or as a hard copy, and we are inviting all those who were

in the affected areas or who were in the UK with loved ones in the affected areas to take part. The survey will close on 30 April. The government has to respond to the recommendations from the review so it is anticipated that the findings will significantly influence developments in the field. For more details go to [www.zitotrust.co.uk](http://www.zitotrust.co.uk) and follow the link to Tsunami Review.  
**Vivien Norris**  
[zitotrust@btinternet.com](mailto:zitotrust@btinternet.com)

■ I AM interested in finding work as an assistant educational psychologist. I currently work as an assistant psychologist in a clinical psychology department and have in the past worked with children aged between 8 to 18. I am under the impression that these posts only exist in a few local education authorities. I wonder whether anyone could let me know of any **LEAs who currently recruit**

**assistant educational psychologists** and/or where these vacancies are generally advertised.  
**Catherine Burcham**  
194 Cheney Manor Road  
Swindon  
[catherineburcham@hotmail.com](mailto:catherineburcham@hotmail.com)

■ I AM a psychology graduate, graduating with a 2:1 from Liverpool University. I am intending to work towards a career in educational psychology and currently work as a teaching assistant in a local secondary school. I have also undertaken relevant voluntary and paid work over the last few years. I am looking to add to my experiences so I am looking for **voluntary work experience in the education field in the Bristol/Bath/North Somerset area**. I have a current CRB clearance.  
**Michelle Rylatt**  
[mich\\_206@yahoo.com](mailto:mich_206@yahoo.com)