

Psychology *for students*



The
British
Psychological
Society

Edinburgh Lectures

Thursday 9 November
The Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh

Dr Julian C.W Boon, *University of Leicester*
Psychological Profiling

Professor Vicki Bruce, *University of Edinburgh*
Cognitive Psychology

Dr Colin Cooper, *Queens University Belfast*
Individual Differences

Professor Ronan O'Carroll, *University of Stirling*
Health Psychology

Professor Stephen Reicher, *St Andrews University*
Social Psychology

London Lectures

Monday 4 December
Kensington Town Hall, London

Dr Daryl O'Connor, *University of Leeds*
Health Psychology

Professor Richard Bentall, *University of Manchester*
Clinical Psychology

Professor Tom Troscianko, *University of Bristol*
Perception

Professor Tom Ormerod, *Lancaster University*
Problem Solving

Professor Ray Bull, *University of Leicester*
Forensic Psychology



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Short articles (around 600 words), news, tips, quotes, cartoons and other contributions of particular relevance to students are most welcome. Send to: Nicola Hills, c/o the Society's Leicester office. E-mail: Nicola_Hills@hotmail.com

At the SMG conference

BY LIZ MOON

CARDIFF City Hall was the location of this year's Student Members Group conference, held in the grand surroundings of the Council Chambers, a spectacular setting. It was great to see such a large turnout, a vast improvement on last year. This may have been due to the very different programme that was on the agenda, or maybe it was just the dramatic and grand setting. Delegates looked forward to four keynote speakers presenting on various areas, with two repeated poster sessions in which students' work was on display.

Kate Latak (Chair of the SMG) welcomed everyone, and enthusiastically introduced the first speaker of the afternoon, Dr Marc Jones from Staffordshire University. Marc spoke on controlling emotions in sport. He explained emotion to be a prevalent and pervasive feature in sport, which can trigger a cascade of responses, impacting on physical functioning, motivation and cognitions. The presentation highlighted a range of psychological strategies athletes can use to enhance emotional control, notably, imagery, self-talk and cognitive restructuring. Sport psychology is a relatively new area, but one of increasing importance and interest.

The second speaker of the first session was Hannah Azzizollah, a chartered occupational psychologist, speaking on coaching, and what psychologists have to offer that other coaches may not. The presentation began with a short exercise, in which all delegates were asked to stand and cross their arms. After noticing which arm was on top, they were asked to change them around. This felt a little strange and highlighted effectively Hannah's intention of demonstrating how natural preferences in behaviour are sometimes difficult to change. The concluding comment was that psychologists bring a breadth of techniques to coaching, as well as having a greater understanding regarding limitations and boundaries.

Next on the agenda was the first poster session, in which a variety of subject matter was covered from both undergraduate students and surprisingly postgraduates. Students were from Aston,



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Dublin, Aberdeen, Exeter, Lancashire, Sussex and Wales. All posters were of high quality and were comparable to many of the posters presented in the main conference event.

After refreshments, two further speakers took the floor. First up was Dr Richard Stevens, recently retired from the Open University where he had been Head of Psychology, speaking on how to make people happy, specifically applying the psychology of well-being. Positive psychology is a prominent example of happiness in psychological terms, which aims to increase human well-being through the scientific study of positive emotions, traits and social institutions. The talk focused on an innovative project Richard embarked upon for a BBC series broadcast last November called *Making Slough Happy*.

The final speaker of the evening was Frederick Toates, Professor of Biological Psychology at the Open University. His presentation was called 'A model of the hierarchy of behaviour, cognition and consciousness'. He argued that processes comparable to those underlying human conscious and non-conscious processing can be identified in various species, reflecting possible evolutionary precursors of the human processes. Higher-order processing was argued to be an evolutionary addition to stimulus-based

processing, which could help in gaining insights into various phenomena, including brain damage and vision, and their link with consciousness.

The conference ended with a final poster session, but not before prizes had been awarded for the best posters, sponsored by Blackwell Publishing. First place was awarded to Michael Hast, an undergraduate from the University of Exeter. His research was entitled 'Don't count your clowns before they jump! An investigation of numerical understanding in infants'. Infants are proposed to possess the ability to count, with this in mind the study set out to investigate the ability of infants to individuate and enumerate actions on a computer display. Infants were required to watch a clown jumping on a computer screen, either two or three times. The hypothesis was that if infants were able to count they should look longer at the novel number jump test sequence, which is what the study found.

Laura Rees-Davies, an undergraduate from the University of Wales Institute in Cardiff was awarded second place, for her research into teachers' knowledge of mental health problems in the classroom. The aims of this study were to investigate teachers' stress related to levels of training in adolescent mental health problems, and their awareness of referral procedures of adolescents with mental health problems. Analysis indicated that an overwhelming proportion of teachers regarded their training on, and knowledge about, adolescent mental health as inadequate. Therefore, the proposition is that increasing awareness of these mental health problems may reduce teachers' stress.

This year's new conference format was a little disappointing, with a lack of students actually presenting their work alongside the keynote speakers, but the quality of student work in the poster sessions was very high and varied, and it was great to see so many students attending. Overall, the event can be described as nothing less than a success, hopefully next year's conference will match it.

■ Liz Moon is a third-year student at the University of Winchester.