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Psychological
Society

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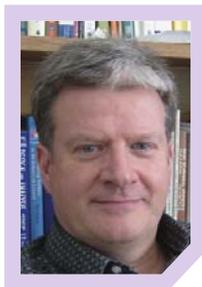
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The Society has offices in Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow and London, as well as the main office in Leicester. All enquiries should be addressed to the Leicester office [see inside front cover for address].

The British Psychological Society

was founded in 1901, and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1965. Its object is 'to promote the advancement and diffusion of a knowledge of psychology pure and applied and especially to promote the efficiency and usefulness of Members of the Society by setting up a high standard of professional education and knowledge'.
Extract from The Charter



President's column

Gerry Mulhern

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This is the first of my rather eccentrically positioned President's columns, at least in my opinion. I had expressed a preference for having the column appear at the beginning of the issue, but I gather that such a change could not happen without a review of the structure of *The Psychologist* by the Psychologist Policy Committee, not due until 2012. No matter. I shall keep in mind that, with the possible exception of a few pitiable devotees diving straight for my monthly musing, most will have already read two-thirds of the issue before encountering the column. Apologies in advance for the occasional non sequitur if I forget myself and summarise content you have already read.

So what of my column over the next year? Since becoming President Elect, an unsettling number of people have remarked how much they were looking forward to my monthly column, accompanied by a knowing glance or a roguish wink. No pressure then and, I trust, nothing to do with my (entirely undeserved) reputation for the occasional rant. I do admit that, now and then, I may feel strongly about an issue, particularly when it involves stupidity, self-interest or malign intent, but I shall do my best not to ape Victor Meldrew too closely. That said, I shall be disappointed if I do not ruffle a few feathers from time to time. It may be wise, therefore, for me to begin by issuing an important disclaimer – any views expressed in forthcoming columns are entirely mine and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society or of my employer. I guess there was a time when such caution would have been deemed unnecessary, especially as an academic for whom freedom of expression was sacrosanct, but we live in different times.

I think it is Al Gore who is credited with describing frequent flying as Nature's way of making you look like your passport photograph. Undoubtedly, over the next twelve months, I shall have ample opportunity to subject this assertion to empirical examination. As a precaution, I had fleetingly thought of substituting a photograph of George Clooney for my own, but such a violation of the causality principle is unworthy of a scientist. Mind you, having read some causal accounts based on structural equation modelling, I'm not so sure!

As you read this column I shall be about to make an early test of Gore's claim by

representing the Society at the 2010 Assembly of the International Union for Psychological Science (IUPsyS) in Melbourne. I am pleased to be accompanied our Chief Executive, Ann Colley, and our Honorary General Secretary, Pam Maras, although Pam will be wearing a second hat as a member of the IUPsyS Executive Committee. I am grateful to the Royal Society for funding a significant proportion of Ann's and my travel costs, confirmation if it were needed of the importance of this event. While in Melbourne, I have been invited to make a short presentation at an event, sponsored by Wiley-Blackwell Asia-Pacific, focusing on the development of psychology in Asia and beyond. I am particularly pleased to have an opportunity to contribute to this gathering of representatives from the leading psychological societies globally, and especially from psychological societies across Asia. I am on record elsewhere as arguing that, as a Society, we have generally underperformed in terms of our international relationships, although not,

I stress, our international standing.

I cannot end my first Presidential column without paying tribute to my predecessor, Sue Gardner. Without doubt, Sue's term of office coincided with one of the most turbulent and challenging times in the Society's history. We were in the throes of the lead-up to statutory regulation with an unprecedented need to reassure members. Our finances were in a parlous state with an unsustainable deficit on our trading account. Sue's stewardship of these challenges was assured and astute. Her instinct for inclusiveness and consensus proved invaluable. Throughout, her interest in the concerns of each individual member was palpable. Sue leaves office having overseen a successful and virtually seamless migration of our regulatory function to the HPC, and with the Society in a vastly improved financial position compared to twelve months ago. Well done Sue, and thank you. Of course, as Vice-President Sue will remain a pivotal member of the presidential team along with President Elect, Noel Sheehy. I have had a longstanding commitment to the notion of such a team which will be so much greater than the sum of its parts, offering coherence and consistency in policy and strategy as the Society moves forward.

"I shall be disappointed if I do not ruffle a few feathers"

Spearman Medal 2010

Emily Holmes

The Society's Spearman Medal, awarded by the Research Board, has gone to Dr Emily Holmes (University of Oxford) in recognition of outstanding published work in psychology.

The Spearman Medal recognises a significant body of research carried out no more than eight years following the completion of a PhD (although research undertaken during the PhD can be taken into account), considering the theoretical contributions made, the originality of research and its impact.

Dr Holmes leads a research team within the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Oxford, as a Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Fellow and Senior Research Fellow. Her research in the field of experimental psychopathology, in particular mental imagery and cognitive bias from post-traumatic stress to bipolar disorder, has attracted over £1 million of funding in the last year.

In nominating her for the award, Professor Graham Turpin (University of Sheffield) noted that Dr Holmes is unusual in pursuing both a clinical and research career together. 'Although many clinical psychologists have PhDs, Emily is fairly unique in obtaining her clinical doctorate before embarking on a PhD in cognitive neuroscience. Her ability to pursue fundamental research but alongside clinically relevant problems has been a characteristic of her career within psychology to-date.'

Dr Holmes's distinctive theoretical contribution has been to link the field of imagery and cognitive psychology, to the rich clinical and experiential material of emotional memories following trauma. This has led to paradigm-shifting changes in our understanding of the link between trauma and emotional processing of memories. Her more recent work on 'cognitive vaccines' and modifying cognitive biases constitutes both theoretical and therapeutic breakthroughs within

the area, and this work has been reported extensively within the media from the *New York Times* through to the *New Scientist*.

In addition to conducting such high-impact studies, Dr Holmes has also contributed widely to the public communication of science, working closely with the Royal Society and the media. She is the only early-career representative to a high-level Royal Society advisory group to the government: 'The Fruits of Curiosity: Science, Innovation and Future Sources of Wealth'. Professor Turpin concluded: 'I can think of no better ambassador to promote the image of science and psychology for the Society over the coming years.'

Speaking to *The Psychologist*, Dr Holmes said: 'I am honoured and

delighted to accept the Society's Spearman Medal. I would like to thank the BPS for their support of my research. I am also very grateful to my research lab (EPACT: experimental psychopathology and cognitive therapy), as well as my mentors and collaborators who make doing research such a pleasure. These colleagues include clinicians as well as pure scientists, and linking our fields has been vital for the research.'

According to Dr Holmes, experimental psychopathology is an exciting and growing area. 'We really need to understand more about the basic processes underlying psychological disorders. For example, we know much more about how we think in words than how we think in images. The strong link between mental imagery and emotion, however, points to the need to research imagery as a mechanism in emotional disorders. Mental imagery is part of our everyday thought. However, in psychopathology imagery can manifest itself from devastating flashbacks in post-traumatic stress disorder to what we call "flash-forwards" in bipolar disorder. Working at the interface between the lab and the clinic is critical to understanding distressing imagery and modifying cognitive biases. The research approach can thus inform the empirically driven development of better (and novel) treatments in mental health. It's also hugely rewarding, a fascinating journey, and just the start of so much that needs to be done.'

Dr Holmes is invited to deliver the Spearman Medal Lecture at the Society's 2011 Annual Conference in Glasgow, at which she will be presented with the Medal and a commemorative certificate.

Promoting global awareness

The Society responded recently to a joint consultation from the Department for International Development and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, on a global learning strategy for schools. How can we increase young people's global awareness through developments within the school curriculum?

Professor Helen Haste (University of Bath), who led the response for the Society, said: 'We welcome this but see a number of ambiguities and gaps in the proposal. In particular, the topics differ considerably in their educational implications, for example topics about which young people should have factual knowledge, or domains

within which they can become personally engaged, such as some aspects of sustainability and community involvement.' The response also points to some missing topics. 'Understanding world-scale health and disease issues, and their role in poverty, injustice and inequality, are potentially salient topics for reflection on global processes,' Professor

Haste said. Looking at migration on a world scale, in order to provide young people with a context for multiculturalism, is also recommended.

The proposal emphasises that identification with the 'global' community must be embedded in the individual's own personal identity, and suggests making direct

CONSULTATIONS ON PUBLIC POLICY

Responses to six consultations were prepared during May. One of these responses, concerning the draft Global Learning Strategy proposed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for International Development, is featured on p.583. Brief details of two other responses are provided below. Full details of all consultations, including downloadable copies of consultation papers and Society responses, are available at www.bps.org.uk/consult.

Humanitarian Assistance Strategic Guidance (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) This guidance is aimed at helping those responsible for the provision of humanitarian assistance (HA) in the event of a major incident. It outlines a strategic, capability-building process for ensuring that HA is integrated into other emergency response and planning activities. While welcoming the draft guidance, the Society's response emphasised the need for much closer involvement of all emergency planning with appropriate, professional, mental health services. Specific mention of the needs of children was identified as a key omission of the draft guidance, and it was recommended that schools should form an integral part of Local Resilience Forums. It was also recommended that:

- | intervention for survivors and families should follow evidence-based practice, as described by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE);
- | where supportive counselling is seen as necessary, the counsellors must be properly trained and have links with specialist trauma services.

Teenage Pregnancy Strategy: Beyond 2010 (Department of Health and Department of Children, Schools & Families) This consultation set out aims for strengthening the delivery of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in all local areas and for making further progress towards halving the under-18 conception rate and improving outcomes for teenage parents and their children. Specific aims are to:

- | give young people the knowledge and skills they need to delay early sex until they are ready;
- | ensure they are able and confident to access and use effective contraception when they do become sexually active;
- | provide effective support for teenage parents.

The Society's response highlighted both relevant research conducted by members and the challenges facing those working in the area of teenage pregnancy. It was suggested that psychological theory and evidence are not being incorporated within initiatives. A number of recommendations were for improving the strategy, including by:

- | greater awareness and recognition of the complexity of motivation and attitude change;
- | greater engagement with both young people and relevant professionals when designing and evaluating interventions;
- | a more cohesive approach towards long-term family planning and sexual health;
- | greater consideration of public health guidelines (e.g. NICE);
- | the development of a national tool for the measurement of social norms in school and college populations;
- | the provision of additional support (not limited to contraception planning) for teenagers experiencing abortion.

The preparation and submission of the Society's responses to consultations on public policy is coordinated by the Policy Support Unit (PSU). All members are eligible to contribute to responses and all interest is warmly welcomed. Please contact the PSU for further information (psu@bps.org.uk; 0116 252 9926/9577).

connections through school links, creating face-to-face relationships across national and ethnic boundaries. The Society's response suggests that, though a desirable goal, this is likely to pose logistical and resource problems, and recommends that effort be put into creating a school ethic of global awareness, combined with a programme utilising web-based resources.

The relative absence of technology in the proposal is also highlighted in the Society's response. 'Learning is being transformed by new technology, shifting to student-directed information-gathering and

collaborative working which are particularly suited to the proposal's agenda,' Professor Haste told us. 'Websites and wikis are ideally suited to the activities proposed. Worldwide, a very large proportion of young people are already engaging in connecting through Facebook, blogging, Twitter and similar. Virtual games have become a major resource for teaching in education; their potential for the proposal's agenda is huge, yet these are not mentioned at all.'

| For more from the Policy Support Unit, see 'Consultations on public policy' (this page).

SOCIETY NOTICES

Public Engagement Prize – Call for nominations See p.553
Annual Conference 2011 See p.555
BPS Conferences events See p.585
Learning Centre courses and events See pp.585–587

