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From the British Association Festival

CHRISTIAN JARRETT reports from Dublin.

IN BRIEF

Psychologists at the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin, showcased their approach to developmental research. Sheila Greene said their qualitative research *with* children, not *on* children, aimed to discover 'what it is like to be them', recognised 'the individuality and diversity of children's childhoods', and involved children in research design and data collection. For more information see www.tcd.ie/childrensresearchcentre.

Ian Robertson (Trinity College Dublin) said that when it comes to keeping your marbles, the old adage 'use or it lose it' was a fact, not a myth. He outlined seven secrets for staying sharp into old age: exercise, stimulate your mind, keep learning, avoid stress, socialise, eat healthily and have a young attitude.

Kylie Barnett (Trinity College Dublin) has tested 62 synaesthetes – people who experience a mixing of their senses – from 53 families. She found different forms of synaesthesia – experiencing tastes from words, or smells from sounds, for example – often ran in the same family, suggesting a single genetic mechanism may underlie all types of synaesthesia. For more information see www.tcd.ie/Psychology/synres.

Andy Ellis (York University) said that people with Alzheimer's disease could be reliably distinguished from age-matched controls by calculating the average 'age of acquisition' of the words they were able to think of belonging to a given category, such as fruits or animals. People with Alzheimer's tended to think of fewer words that are learnt later in childhood.

The problem of prejudice

MULTICULTURAL Britain remains blighted by racial prejudice. Race attacks are increasing, and 40 per cent of white people polled by *The Guardian* last year said they'd rather not have a black neighbour. It's against this bleak backdrop that the BA Psychology Section convened for its symposium 'The problem of prejudice'.

One antidote for prejudice is to encourage greater contact between society's disparate groups. Rhiannon Turner (Oxford University) said young white adults in Britain with more Asian friends were more aware of Asian people's individuality and were more trusting of them as a group. Having friends who had friends who were Asian – so-called extended contact – also predicted reduced prejudice. Ed Cairns (Ulster University) said research showed intergroup contact helped reduce prejudice in Northern Ireland too, especially when people were made conscious that they were interacting with the other community. 'Children from the different communities should be brought together with knowledge of each other's differences,' Cairns said, 'not by papering over the cracks.'

The media can also help fight prejudice, according to Elizabeth Levy Paluck (Yale University), who reported encouraging findings from Rwanda where the Dutch NGO La Benevolencija has been playing two programmes

on Radio Rwanda intended to teach people about the causes of ethnic hatred. Among the study participants (70 per cent of whom had lost relatives in the 1994 genocide), those who'd been listening to the radio programmes were less

THE EXTREME OF THE MALE BRAIN?

SIMON Baron-Cohen, of the Autism Research Centre in Cambridge, believes autistics are good at understanding systems but poor at empathising because they have brains that are extremely male in nature. If his conceptualisation is right, non-autistic boys ought, in general, to be poorer at skills related to empathy than girls. To find out, David Skuse's (Institute of Child Health) team tested the social intelligence of 600 children aged between six and 17 years. Skuse found six-year-old girls tended to be better than six-year-old boys at recognising emotions, but that this difference had largely disappeared by late adolescence. There was no difference at any age in boys' and girls' ability to remember faces or to detect eye contact. 'The theory that autism is the extreme of the male brain is not strongly supported by these data,' Skuse said.

An unexpected finding was that around the age of puberty, teenagers actually showed a temporary deterioration in their ability to recognise emotions. 'This may go some way to explaining the 'Kevin' phenomenon, described so perceptively by Harry Enfield,' Skuse said. 'One wonders sometimes if teenagers understand anything you are saying. It would appear that this is a function of their brain at that time.'

The findings will appear in the *Journal of Applied Statistics*.

likely to agree with statements such as 'It's naive to trust people' or 'There's mistrust in my village'.

Despite all the attention paid to interracial prejudice, especially the case in Britain since the recent London terror attacks, Dominic Abrams (University of Kent) reported the results of a survey showing ageism is the most common form of prejudice in Britain. Among 1843 people polled, 65 per cent reported suffering from prejudice in the last year, with ageism, against both young and old, experienced more than any other form. Participants tended to see older people as friendlier and younger people as more capable. 'We should guard against this sympathetic but patronising form of prejudice,' Abrams said. Again, contact between groups helped reduce

prejudice: participants with a friend aged over 70 were less likely to believe in these stereotypes.

At the other end of the research spectrum, Pamela Walker (Oxford University) showed how intergroup contact affects the brain's response to faces of another race. For example, 300ms after we look at a face, there's a spike in the brain's electrical activity (the P300) that is normally larger when we view faces from another race. But Walker found this effect of race on the P300 was reduced among white people who spent more time with black people.

Meanwhile, Richard Crisp (Birmingham University) reported that the frontal lobe may be implicated in our ability to overturn stereotypes. He found people with frontal lobe

damage were particularly impaired at remembering information that contradicted stereotypes: that a fictitious librarian was outgoing and amusing, for example.

Miles Hewstone (Oxford University), who chaired the symposium, criticised the media's interpretation of research on the neural correlates of prejudice as meaning it is hardwired and intractable. Hewstone said the opposite was true, that neuroscience was showing how experience shapes the brain's social responses.

Weblinks

Information on the Radio Rwanda project: www.labenevolencija.org
Test your own implicit prejudices: www.implicit.harvard.edu

Remembering faces

AFTER witnessing a crime, people are notoriously poor at creating a recognisable image of what the perpetrator looked like, despite replacement of the old photofit method with a more high-tech electronic system. For example, when participants are asked to create an image of a face they've just looked at, only 20 per cent of other people who know the face are subsequently able to recognise it. The difficulty arises because we usually view faces holistically, whereas police identikit systems require witnesses to work with the different facial features separately.

Vicki Bruce (Edinburgh University) described ways in which she, Peter Hancock and Charlie Frowd (Stirling

University) are trying to improve the situation. One way is to average the photofit images created independently by several witnesses. Using this approach, 44 per cent of participants could tell which of six alternative faces the 'witnesses' were trying to recreate, compared with 25 per cent of participants using the standard system. Future work is planned to test the advantages, if any, of also using three-quarter perspectives of faces, and to introduce context into the images. If a suspected criminal is seen on a bus, for example, a witness may find it easier to recreate an accurate image of the criminal against that backdrop.

Hancock and Frowd have also developed an entirely new identikit system called

EvoFIT that presents witnesses with successive arrays of faces from which they select the one with the greatest likeness to a suspected criminal. Based on their selections, EvoFIT uses genetic algorithms to present them with each new, morphed array. As the selection process is repeated over and over again, the witnesses get ever closer to a face with a true likeness to the suspect. The system has the advantage over traditional methods in that it allows witnesses to select faces holistically, rather than according to individual features.

Weblinks

EvoFIT: www.evoFIT.co.uk
Stirling Face Perception Lab: www.psychology.stir.ac.uk/faceslab

GORILLA TACTICS

What we say only tells half the story. Our intended meanings often arise from a combination of words, gestures, facial expressions and touch. Consider a person waving with a smile on their face, compared with a frown on their brow. According to Gillian Sebestyen Forrester (Sussex University), it's the same story with gorillas.

Whereas most primate researchers have tended to focus on either body language or vocalisations, Forrester has used new dual-camera technology to observe how gorillas at the Port Lympne Wild Animal Park in Kent communicate across multiple modalities at the same time. She's currently analysing her findings, but early observations have revealed that, unlike humans, gorillas also communicate using their body orientation. So, for example, when crossing paths, gorillas of a lower social status will keep a greater distance from gorillas of higher status, and will maintain their head and shoulders oriented towards the other gorilla.

DON'T WASTE YOUR BRAIN

Brain research is being hampered by a lack of healthy brain tissue to work on. According to Kirsten Goldring (UK Parkinson's Disease Society Tissue Bank at Imperial College), for every 25 brain donations they receive from deceased people who had Parkinson's disease, they only receive one donation from someone who died with a healthy brain. Yet researchers need healthy brain tissue to compare with diseased tissue so that they can identify what has gone wrong. 'Like your kidneys and your heart, don't throw away your brain when you have finished with it, since it could help save people's lives too!' Goldring said.

Driven to distraction

IN 2003 a law was introduced in the UK banning the use of hand-held mobile phones while driving, but allowing for the use of hands-free sets. That's despite the fact that research suggests it's not just the handling of the phone that impairs driving performance – attentional factors play a role too. Now an Australian study published in the *BMJ* reports that drivers are four times more likely to have a crash when using a mobile phone, even if it's a hands-free set, than when not using a phone (see tinyurl.com/a3535).

The statistic was reached by interviewing drivers who had been taken to accident and emergency after a crash. Suzanne McEvoy (University of Sydney) and her colleagues used phone company records to compare the drivers' phone use before the crash with phone use at earlier, control intervals, when participants confirmed they had also been driving.

UNDISCOVERED AUTHOR?

A NATIONAL writing competition aimed at seeking out new literary talent has been set up by publishing company BookForce. Entries can be on any subject, in the categories of General Fiction, Non-Fiction and Academic. There are prizes of £1000 per category for each of 16 regions. Regional winners are then entered into a national final with prizes of up to £10,000.

More information online at www.undiscoveredauthors.co.uk

DEPRESSION IN CHILDREN

A ONE-day conference to introduce the new NICE clinical guidelines on depression in children will be held on 2 November 2005 at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in London. The keynote speaker is Professor Al Aynsley Green, Children's Commissioner for England.

Call 020 7977 6654 for details.

The researchers said: 'More and more new vehicles are being equipped with Bluetooth technology, facilitating voice activation and therefore totally hands-free phone use. Though this may lead to fewer hand-held phones being used while driving...our research indicates this may not remove the risk... if this new technology actually increases mobile phone use in cars, it could contribute to even more crashes.'

In a separate development, psychologists at the University of Illinois have shown that people's performance on a driving simulator is impaired when they're concurrently focused on either a listening or a speaking task. Compared with when they drove without distraction, participants were less able to maintain a steady speed, or a steady distance, from the vehicle in front, when, at the same time as driving, they were either telling the researchers the relative location of different university buildings (speech production) or judging the accuracy of spoken statements about the location of those buildings (speech comprehension). Tate Kubose and colleagues said their findings support the notion 'that it's the cognitive demands associated with communication via wireless phones, rather than use of the phone itself, that interferes with driving'.

But why is hands-free more distracting than talking to a passenger? Tate Kubose told us it's probably because unlike a caller on the phone, a passenger can see when the driver is in a difficult situation and will therefore stop talking, especially if they are an experienced driver themselves. 'By examining driving performance of both older and younger drivers (who differ in amount of driving experience)

while carrying on conversations with partners either in the car or via cellphone, we hope to verify these initial notions,' Kubose said.

If you really can't avoid talking on your phone while driving, Kubose said that one way to reduce the risk is to tell

Anthony Reinhardt-Rutland at the University of Ulster said: 'What is paradoxical is the contrast between attitudes to safety regarding private and public transport. As an example, in public transport millions has been spent by the railways in replacing 'slam-door' carriages – all to save a very few lives. In contrast, whenever private motorists' "freedom" is even trivially threatened, a chorus of protest arises, even if the threatened activity has self-evident safety implications.'

The Department for Transport told us: 'While we agree that using any mobile phone while driving is distracting, we believe that making the use of hands-free phones a specific offence would be largely unenforceable. Nevertheless, the police are able to prosecute drivers for failing to have proper control of their vehicle or for careless or dangerous driving as a result of any in-car activity that distracts the driver.'

Elsewhere, cognitive psychologists are looking at ways of using multisensory cues to improve driver awareness. Drivers currently get visual or auditory warnings, but Charles Spence (Oxford University) and his colleagues have recently shown that vibrating cues can be used to improve the speed and accuracy of their response to hazards. For example, vibration on a person's back can prompt them to look forward into the rear view mirror, in order to detect the hazard behind. Their report, due to appear in the journal *Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour*, suggests using tactile warning systems linked to an onboard collision detector. CJ

Hands-free not risk-free

your caller that you're driving. 'The partners may then relax their usual standards for the time-course of the conversation. That is, the partners might not expect immediate responses, and be more agreeable to restate portions of the conversation that the driver might miss,' he told us.

Paradoxically, Kubose and colleagues' recent study also showed that lane maintenance was better when participants were distracted by the secondary speech production task, compared with just driving or driving and listening. 'One interpretation of this result is that better lane maintenance while speaking was due to active prioritisation of lane maintenance in response to the perceived greater difficulty of speaking,' the researchers said. Their findings are due to appear in the Wiley journal *Applied Cognitive Psychology*.

Commenting on the government's failure to ban the use of hands-free phones while driving, despite evidence of the risks, chartered psychologist Dr

US psychologists concerned about violent video games

THE American Psychological Association has called on violence to be reduced in all video games designed for children and young people. Its Committee on Violence in Video Games and Interactive Media made the policy announcement after reviewing research literature showing that violence in video games leads to increased aggressive thoughts, aggressive behaviour and angry feelings in young players.

Because these effects can be mitigated by teaching children to distinguish better between fantasy and reality, the committee also called for parents and teachers to help young people be more critical of the games they play.

Reacting to the announcement, Professor Barrie Gunter, Director of the Centre for Mass Communications Research at the University of Leicester, told us: 'Differences in the underlying epistemologies of media research that have dominated in the US and Europe have meant that the results of media effects research have been more readily accepted in the US. Despite these differences in viewpoint, it is nevertheless the case that a significant body of research exists on media violence based upon psychological experimentation and large-scale, one-off or repeat-panel surveys that collectively has indicated links between exposure and enhanced

aggressive disposition or propensities to enact aggressively in certain circumstances, especially ones in which an individual is provoked by another person.'

Professor Gunter said less research had been conducted on the psychological effects of violent video games than had been conducted on TV and film

violence, but that technological advances had undoubtedly made the games more sophisticated and psychologically powerful. He said people already predisposed to aggression who play games intensively are more likely to be affected by the violence in games.

'To the extent that this prognosis is accurate, and initial research evidence with video game players suggests that it could be, then it does support the call for close monitoring of video game themes, experiences and effects in the future, especially as the games themselves become more sophisticated technically and in terms of production quality,' Gunter said. *CJ*

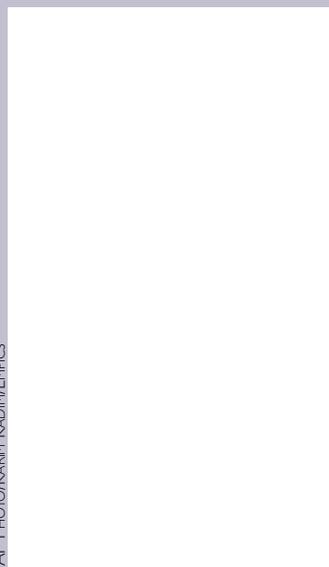
BRINGING PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT TO IRAQ

TWO and a half years after Baghdad fell to US forces, psychological support and research in Iraq remains virtually non-existent. Psychologists from overseas are deterred by the continuing violence, while resident psychologists tend to be trained to graduate level only, and so lack clinical expertise. According to a recent report on the health situation in Iraq by UK-based charity Medact, just 1 per cent of consultant grade doctors in Iraq are psychiatrists, compared with 13 per cent in the UK. 'Community based mental health services are almost non-existent and people do not consult until their condition becomes chronic,' the report says.

However, efforts have been made to improve mental health support for Iraqi citizens. Psychologist Dr Amer Hosin of

London Metropolitan University told us that in July 2004 in Jordan, and the following month in Istanbul, several Iraqi psychiatrists and doctors were given training in

AP PHOTO/KARIM KADIM/EMPHICS



Grief in Sadr City following the stampede on 1 September

PTSD in children, trauma rehabilitation and child psychiatry. The first workshop, held in association with the Psychosocial Trauma Centre, University of Missouri Medical School, was sponsored by the Arab Medical Union in Europe and GlaxoSmithKline (regional office, Amman). The WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office sponsored the Istanbul meeting. Lack of funding meant Iraqi delegates were unable to attend a third workshop held earlier this year in the United Arab Emirates.

Consultant psychiatrist Dr Riadh Abed at Rotherham District General Hospital is chair of the newly formed Iraqi Mental Health Forum (IMHF), 'an association for all mental health professionals who may wish to offer their help to Iraq'. He told us one probable reason why more British psychiatrists than psychologists

are involved in Iraq is the relatively larger number of British psychiatrists of Iraqi origin. The IMHF were due to hold a meeting in London in September to discuss ways of improving the mental health situation in Iraq.

Meanwhile, consultant psychiatrist Dr Majid al-Yassiri of the South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust chairs the London-based Centre for Psychosocial Services in Iraq. About 18 months ago his organisation established the Centre for the Treatment of Survivors of Torture in Baghdad, which has treated over 300 patients to date. Dr al-Yassiri told the BBC: 'There are efforts to organise research looking at mental health services, what would be feasible economically and culturally. There are a lot of things happening. But it will take years.'

Psychology and the music of Michael Tippett

EUGENE SADLER-SMITH introduces his web-only article, inspired by the centenary celebrations.

FEW composers have acknowledged the role of psychology in their creative endeavour as consciously and overtly as the English composer Sir Michael Tippett (1905–1998) the centenary of whose birth is celebrated this year.

Tippett embraced the modern age wholeheartedly, but psychology was central to his oeuvre. For example, one of the main characters in Tippett's third opera *The Knot Garden* is Mangus, a psychoanalyst, and Jung had great personal and

professional significance for Tippett. A reading of *Psychological Types* (1921) was instrumental in Tippett's personal and creative transformation in the 1930s. Many of his works, most notably his first opera *The Midsummer Marriage*, make extensive use of Jungian concepts of myth, archetype and individuation.

The synthesis of psychology and musical composition that we find in Tippett's work offers unique insights that are not available through music or psychology alone. Indeed the vision that his works continue to express transcends the limitations of Jungian psychology and communicates his experience of the human

Sir Michael Tippett

condition through the universal language of music.

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A full article by Eugene Sadler-Smith on psychology and the music of Michael Tippett can be found at www.thepsychologist.org.uk, under this month's issue.

This is part of a continued attempt to integrate our print and web coverage and to offer something extra to members. Web-only material is not peer-reviewed, allowing us to deal more effectively with time-sensitive issues. The website can also host longer articles than we have room for in print, particularly at a time when submission rates and advertising levels remain high. If you are interested in writing a web-only article, e-mail the editor on jonsut@bps.org.uk.

As part of the Tippett centenary celebrations, the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden will stage Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage* from 31 October to 18 November. For more information see www.tippett100.com.

How babies lose the rhythm

BABIES have been shown to be better than adults at differentiating between foreign speech sounds, and at distinguishing both between non-human primate faces, and between the faces of people from a different racial group. Similarly, research has shown that Western six-month-old babies are also better than Western adults at perceiving differences in foreign, non-Western music. Now Erin Hannon at Cornell University and Sandra Trehub at the University of Toronto, have shown this ability is already degraded by 12 months.

Like adults, but unlike six-month-olds, 52 12-month-old infants were unable to tell the difference between a Balkan folk-dance melody with an intact pattern of beats and a modified version with a disrupted beat pattern –

something they and Western adults were, however, able to do with conventional Western music that has a simpler rhythmic structure (music samples available at tinyurl.com/b5pnq). 'By the time babies are 12-months-old, they much more closely resemble adults who are more sensitive to rhythms in their own culture's music than to rhythms in a foreign musical culture,' Hannon said.

However, in a further experiment, Hannon and Trehub showed that after the 12-month-olds were exposed to the Balkan music twice a day for two weeks, their ability to distinguish between beat-disrupted and non-disrupted versions of the folk music recovered to match the ability shown by Western six-month-olds. In contrast, Western adults didn't benefit from

exposure to the foreign music. 'Infants' representations of musical meter [the underlying pattern of strong and weak beats] may be considerably less robust [than adults'] and consequently, more susceptible to modification,' the authors said. 'Adults become less sensitive to foreign rhythms because they become more efficient at processing familiar rhythmic structures of their own culture – this is natural and adaptive,' Hannon added.

'Early learning about faces and voices is often viewed as evidence of their social and biological significance. [Now] music must be added to the list of socially and biologically significant stimuli,' the authors concluded in their report on the work, 'or it must be acknowledged that the phenomenon of rapid perceptual attunement coupled

with early flexibility is more widespread than is currently believed.'

To judge whether infants could distinguish between two melodies, the researchers exploited the fact that babies are known to look longer at novel stimuli. Melodies were paired with computer monitors showing a David Attenborough nature programme. The babies were acclimatised to the unmodified melodies, then they were introduced to the beat-disrupted version. If they could detect the melody had been altered, it was assumed they would look longer at the monitor playing the new version than the monitor playing the unmodified version.

The study is published in the 30 August issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, USA (tinyurl.com/a64kz). CJ

DYSLEXIA MYTH?

DYSLEXIA will continue to hit the headlines this month, with a conference under the banner 'The Death of Dyslexia?' (see tinyurl.com/cly5j). Debate raged about the scientific status of dyslexia following an article by Society member Professor Julian Elliott (Durham University) in the *Times Educational Supplement*, followed by a Channel 4 documentary *The Dyslexia Myth*. In the article Professor Elliott said 'there is no consensus about how it should be defined or what diagnostic criteria should be used', and 'a diagnosis of dyslexia tells us virtually nothing about how best the individual can be helped to become a better reader'. He argues that it is hardly surprising that 'the widespread, yet wholly erroneous, belief that dyslexics are intellectually bright but poor readers would create a strong, sometimes impassioned demand to be accorded the dyslexic label'.

Although there was much comment following the article, hardly any of it came from other psychologists. Send your views to 'Letters' at psychologist@bps.org.uk, or contribute to our forum via www.thepsychologist.org.uk.

JS

Graphics pack for the visually impaired

PSYCHOLOGISTS at the National Centre for Tactile Diagrams (NCTD) have developed and evaluated a 'Core Graphics Pack' for psychology, to make the visual aspects of British psychology courses more accessible for blind and partially sighted students.

Last year the NCTD appealed to *Psychologist* readers for help with their project ('Get in touch about graphics', *The Psychologist*, March 2004; see tinyurl.com/ey353). Consultation with blind and partially sighted students, psychology lecturers and other curriculum specialists, led to a pack of 54 key images in a tactile format, covering the BPS core domains.

Dr Gemma Gray (NCTD) said: 'Several higher education institutions have already purchased their pack, in line with the Disability Discrimination Act guidance for advance preparation of accessible materials for disabled students.'

JS

□ You can order a pack from www.nctd.org.uk/cgp. For the research, design and evaluation of the pack, see Gray & Morley Wilkins (2005) in the *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, 23, 31–37.

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subscribers. To join them, send a message to subscribe-rd@lists.bps.org.uk.

Here's a sample, by the Digest editor **CHRISTIAN JARRETT**.

WHERE DID ALL THE MEMORIES GO?

What's your earliest memory? If you're an adult, it's unlikely to be from before you were three and a half to four years old. So what happens to your memories from before that age? It's not that you never had any: two- and three-year-olds gladly talk about events from over a year ago, suggesting these earlier events were once encoded in verbally accessible long-term memory.

Carole Peterson and colleagues at the Memorial University of Queensland in Canada wondered at what age these earlier memories become inaccessible. Perhaps younger children have access to earlier memories than teenagers and adults do. So they asked 128 children and teenagers aged from six to nineteen about their earliest memory.

They found children aged six to nine years had earlier first memories (from when they were about three) than the older children and teenagers, but that beyond age 10 there was no difference: a typical 10-year-old's first memory was no earlier than a typical 19-year-old's, usually being from when they were around three and a half to

four years old. So what happens to these earlier memories when children reach the age of 10?

Peterson and colleagues don't have the answer: '...this report adds to the paradox,' they said, '...children are able to verbally retrieve memories from a period of their lives to which they later have little or no verbal access.'

Another finding that surprised the researchers was that the content of the children's earliest memories was similar regardless of their current age – usually a snapshot of an individual experience, rather than a more detailed story. Children from more collectivist cultures would probably recount more group-based early memories, they said.

They also found, contrary to earlier research, that most of the children's earliest memories were emotionally neutral. However, girls were more likely than boys to recall an emotional memory, the latter tending to recall events surrounding play.

Peterson, C., Grant, V.V. & Boland, L.D. (2005). Childhood amnesia in children and adolescents: Their earliest memories. *Memory*, 13, 622–637. [See tinyurl.com/ae2f9]

THE MISSING PARTICIPANTS

An inevitable weakness with psychology research is that so much of it is conducted with people (usually students) who have volunteered. If certain kinds of people routinely opt out of research, it could mean our estimates of what is psychologically average or 'normal' are completely off the mark.

Bernd Marcus and Astrid Schutz at Chemnitz University of Technology tried to find out if people who don't participate in research have different personalities from people who do (see abstract at tinyurl.com/89gcv). They e-mailed 685 people, mostly men, who maintained personal websites, asking them to participate in an 'online study on psychological aspects of personal webpages'. Two hundred and eighty of them agreed to participate.

Over a hundred students, mostly women, then viewed the websites of people who had and hadn't agreed to participate. Without knowing who had volunteered, the students used a website's content to score its owner's personality on things like

sociability, anxiousness, creativity, intelligence, meticulousness and self-adoration – adjectives chosen to tap into the Big Five personality factors of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientiousness.

People who volunteered to participate were rated as more agreeable and more open to experience than those who did not volunteer, even though the student raters were unaware of who had and hadn't volunteered. 'To the degree that these ratings are valid, these differences will translate directly into incorrect normative data in personality assessment', the authors said. Therefore 'a finding that the sample mean in a given study does not deviate from published norms only applies to volunteers and does not generalise to the full population', they warned.

Marcus, B. & Schutz, A. (2005). Who are the people reluctant to participate in research? Personality correlates of four different types of nonresponse as inferred from self- and observer ratings. *Journal of Personality*, 73, 959–984.

RESEARCH FUNDING NEWS

The **Mental Health Foundation** has launched a new grants programme to fund innovative research into the care and treatment of mental illness, and mental health promotion. The two-year, £300,000 programme will fund grants available to individuals, non-profit making organisations and others working in and around the mental health research field. Grant proposals will be required to feature one of the following themes: Innovation; Parenting/child-adolescent mental health; Transitions through the lifespan. The programme will fund three large grants up to £50,000. The remainder will be split between medium-size grants (£10,000–20,000) and smaller grants (up to £3000 each).

□ Visit www.mentalhealth.org.uk or call 020 7803 1100 for more information.

The **ESRC Survey Link Scheme** gives academic social scientists the chance to acquaint themselves with professional social survey research carried out by the Office for National Statistics, the National Centre for Social Research and various market research companies. This is a free opportunity to observe the data collection phase of one of a range of major British surveys. Participation involves attending a one-day workshop, held in various places in the UK, and a chance to shadow an interviewer to observe first-hand how a survey questionnaire is carried out in a respondent's home and how interviewers handle the varied circumstances they encounter. Surveys involved this year include the British Social Attitudes Survey, Labour Force Survey and National Travel Survey. Surveys in the 2006 programme will be announced in the next few months.

□ For more information go to <http://qb.soc.surrey.ac.uk/sls.htm> or call the Scheme Administrator, Amanda Eastell-Bleakley, on 01483 689457.

The **Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)** is inviting organisations to tender for a review of the organisational models and principles that support good practice in advocacy services for African-Caribbean men with mental health problems. The project will run from December 2005 to July 2006. Up to £70,000 is available for the work. Deadline for tender proposals: Friday 14 October 2005.

□ For more information visit www.scie.org.uk or telephone 020 7089 6840. See also the advertisement on p.643.

For a list of current funding opportunities go to tinyurl.com/4fmx4. Funding bodies should e-mail news to elibee@bps.org.uk for possible inclusion.

SPLIT MEMORIES

SANDIE CLELAND reports from the *BPS Cognitive Psychology Section Annual Conference, University of Leeds, 31 August – 2 September 2005.*

AMONG the speakers at this year's conference was David Shanks (University College London), accepting the Cognitive Section Award for his paper with Annette Kinder, which appeared in *Psychological Science* in 2003. Presenting an overview of this work, Shanks questioned the widely held assumption in cognitive psychology that memory has multiple systems. In particular, he questioned the division of long-term memory into declarative and procedural memory. Declarative memory can be thought of as memory for facts or events; memory that can be brought to mind. Procedural memory is associated with implicit, or 'how to', knowledge. To give a crude example, remembering how to ride a bike would involve procedural memory, whereas remembering that Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France would involve declarative memory.

There is a huge body of literature to support this distinction, not least the fact that procedural memory can be spared in people with amnesia, even when declarative memory has been devastated. However, Shanks argued that these cases are misleading. He presented a connectionist computer model of memory that does not make a distinction between declarative and procedural memory in its architecture – essentially a simple group

of networks that operates the same way regardless of what kind of memory task it is performing. Amazingly, when Shanks and colleagues simulated amnesia in the model by reducing its learning rate, it performed memory tasks as if it had lost its declarative memory but retained procedural memory. In other words, it showed a pattern of dissociation between the types of memory despite being a single-system model.

On the basis of these findings, Shanks compellingly argued the case for a reconstruction of memory theory that abandons the distinction between declarative and procedural memory in favour of a more unitary view. He certainly gets points for ambition: a quick look at undergraduate psychology textbooks shows this is no small request!

Legend has it that John Morton (also of University College London) was opposed to the formation of a BPS Cognitive Psychology Section when it was first suggested; his reason being that he believed cognitive psychology important enough to play a role in all fields of psychology. He confirmed this story to the delegates at the Leeds conference, but luckily it did not prevent him from providing an engaging keynote address. Morton spoke about dissociative identity disorder (DID; previously known as

multiple personality disorder), in particular the intriguing case where there is amnesia between different personality states. For example, within one patient, Personality A may not be able to remember anything that Personality B has been up to. Morton argued that there could be a couple of reasons for this 'not remembering' based on his 'headed records' model of memory. One possibility is a problem of retrieval; A cannot retrieve B's memories at all. Another possibility is that A can retrieve B's memories, but that they are then repressed from A's consciousness. Morton presented a series of experiments that aimed to disentangle these possibilities. His general approach was to teach one personality state something and then test another personality state on the same information. To take an example, Morton could teach A with a list of paired associates ('bus/tree', 'house/fence, etc.) and then teach B with a different list of paired associates ('bus/horse', 'house/sword, etc.). B would then be tested

on the associates she had been taught (e.g. to provide the associate 'horse' for 'bus'). If B does not have any access to A's memories, then the list that A learnt should not interfere with B's performance on the task. However, if B does have some access to A's memories (although B remains unaware of this) then there may be interference of A's knowledge on B's test performance (e.g. erroneously producing 'tree' instead of 'horse').

In fact, Morton found that different DID patients showed different patterns of results; some showed interference between personality states while others showed none at all. Interestingly, this suggests that different DID patients have different mechanisms underlying the amnesia between their personality states. It has to be said that findings such as these rather prove Morton's point about the importance of cognitive psychology!

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