

## SOME GOOD REASONS FOR WRITING FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST...

*None of my other papers have received such interest. As soon as the article was on the BPS website the invitations to give presentations started to come in. Additionally, the entire submission process was handled promptly and professionally.*

**Dr Carl Senior**, National Institute of Mental Health, USA, 'Cutting edge: Depersonalisation', March 2001

*Quite apart from the benefits of spreading a certain message, the process of writing for an informed but non-specialist audience makes you consider and develop your ideas afresh – I now feel much clearer about the issues I was dealing with.*

**Ray Owen**, Gloucestershire Royal NHS Trust, 'News analysis: The grieving relatives', April 2001

*The graphics and layout were great, and enhanced the presentation beyond measure. How soon can I have a chance to write again for The Psychologist?*

**Professor Elizabeth Loftus**, University of Washington, 'Imagining the past', November 2001

*I enjoyed the challenge of writing a 'State of the art' piece for The Psychologist. I had to explain some very difficult arguments and illustrate them with suitable experiments for a very wide audience. I was delighted when I got lots of feedback from people who found the article helpful.*

**Dr Susan Blackmore**, University of the West of England, 'State of the art: Consciousness', October 2001

*We hoped that publication of a special issue of The Psychologist on decision making would raise interest in this topic in terms of discussion, academic pursuit and practical application in psychology. So far it has done all three.*

**Dr Clare Harries**, University of Leeds, 'Decisions decisions', February 2002

*Reaches a wide readership quite quickly and is actually read and reacted to.*

**Dr Derek Milne**, University of Newcastle, 'Personal space: Differing values', December 2001

*I was very grateful for the rare opportunity to publish a highly newsworthy article according to such a short timescale. The level of interest, positive feedback and kudos generated by the publication of my article, even among complete strangers, has been tremendously gratifying. I would greatly welcome the opportunity to write something similar, should the possibility ever arise.*

**David Waddington**, Sheffield Hallam University, 'News analysis: Trouble at mill towns', September 2001

See p.271 for contributors' information

# Thorny issues

**A**LTHOUGH this is my second 'President's column', it is the first that I've written as actual President – within days of taking over from Professor Vicki Bruce. So at this point I think it is appropriate to thank Vicki for the untiring efforts she put into being the Centenary President, and in so doing, making the Society's centenary year a resounding success. Notwithstanding her other important commitments throughout 2001/2, her presidency has been marked by her attention to detail and the enthusiasm with which she carried out her official duties.

With all the special centenary events promoted by the Society over the last year, it was extremely encouraging to see so many delegates at the Society's Annual Conference in Blackpool in March. I have been a regular attender at these conferences for very many years and see them as one of the important public faces of the Society. The Annual Conference also provides an interesting mixed forum for researchers, practitioners and students who are learning the art of research dissemination.

I, like many others, value these conferences. For me, as a researcher and academic, they are an opportunity to exchange ideas both with researchers from other branches of the discipline, and with those members of the Society who use psychological knowledge in a more direct, practical fashion. These are the kinds of experience you will rarely get from conferences focused on individual topics or branches of the discipline. I was also extremely impressed by the quality of the papers that I attended – whether presented by professor or first-year research student. Not only was academic quality good, but the presentations themselves were, almost without exception, clear and well constructed.

On a rather different note, I would like to use this column whenever possible to keep members informed of current developments within the Society, especially important issues that are being discussed in forums such as the Board of Directors meetings and Council.

Ongoing developments include the search for a chair of the new Psychology Education Board (see the advertisement on p.226), which will be focusing exclusively

on developing the undergraduate and secondary curriculum – an exciting challenge for all its members. In addition, it is an opportunity for a focused board to grapple with many thorny issues surrounding graduate basis for registration (GBR). Those of you who were privileged enough to attend the Award for Distinguished Contributions to the Teaching of Psychology at the Annual Conference will have heard Professor Tony Gale give one of his usual uncompromising presentations, this time on GBR. An article based on this talk will appear in *The Psychologist* soon, and should be required reading for all new members of the Psychology Education Board!

## 'CPD...is going to be essential as the Society moves towards statutory registration'

I should also report on the progress made on continuing professional development (CPD). Following the decision of members to make CPD mandatory, the Standing Committee for CPD chaired by Joanna Adler has been consulting with all subsystems on the Society's CPD requirements and procedures, and is looking towards developing a robust system. Having a proper set of CPD procedures in place is going to be essential as the Society moves towards statutory registration – and there are encouraging signs that this may be sooner rather than later.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Professor Zander Wedderburn on his election to President for the year 2003/4. The Society very much needs such people who are willing to devote their valuable time and effort to developing the services provided to members, and I very much look forward to working with him over the next two years.

*Graham Davey*

Contact address: School of Cognitive and Computing Sciences, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9QH. E-mail: [grahamda@cogs.susx.ac.uk](mailto:grahamda@cogs.susx.ac.uk).

### DRIVING AFTER A STROKE

THE Mobility and Inclusion Unit of the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions has commissioned a major research project to evaluate procedures for assessing whether it is safe for someone who has had a stroke to return to driving.

The Stroke Driver Screening Assessment (SDSA) is claimed to be successful in predicting who is safe and unsafe to resume driving. The validity and reliability of the SDSA will be studied by TRL Ltd in Berkshire.

□ Sam Keating at TRL is keen to hear from people who use the SDSA tool (tel: 01344 770665; e-mail: skeating@trl.co.uk).

### US COMMISSION DIVIDED ON ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

THE White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy has called for the health department to establish a new office to co-ordinate research and information on 'alternative' treatments such as homoeopathy and acupuncture. However, a minority of its members has written a statement of dissent, calling on the government to do more to highlight scientific scepticism about these therapies.

□ See the article by Adrian Furnham on complementary and alternative medicine on p.228.

### EU RECOGNISES JOB STRESS PROBLEMS

THE European Commission is set to include psychological health risks in its health and safety at work policies. In a statement issued at the end of March the Commission said that greater stress on the job has led to an increase in bullying and other forms of psychological violence towards employees. EU Employment Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou said: 'These new conditions must be addressed now, and as far as possible anticipated and prevented in the workplace.'

### DEADLINE

We welcome news items from members for possible publication; deadline for the July issue is **31 May**

## Is it safe to come out at work?

**ONLY one in three people with experience of mental health problems feel confident in disclosing this on job application forms, according to a new report from the Mental Health Foundation launched in April to mark Mental Health Action Week. However, many who do find work and 'come out' about their mental health problem are pleasantly surprised with the support of employers and colleagues.**

The report, *Out at Work*, is based on a survey of over 400 people with personal experience of mental health problems. 'The results clearly show that things are starting to change for the better,' said Ruth Lesirge, MHF chief executive. 'However, it is still only a minority of people with mental health problems who are in employment. In order that employers don't overlook a valuable resource it is essential that they focus on people's experience rather than their diagnosis.'

Less than half of those with psychosis, schizophrenia or manic depression who took part in the survey were in full-time or part-time employment. People with anxiety or depression were more likely to be employed – but still less

than 60 per cent were employed full-time or part-time. Overall, one in five of those who responded were doing voluntary work, with people with schizophrenia or manic depression most likely to be working as volunteers.

Despite the fact that only one in three people felt confident in disclosing mental health problems on an application form, nine out of

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**1 in 4 people will experience some kind of mental health problem in the course of the year**

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ten of those who were currently working had told somebody at work about their experience of mental health problems. Within the workplace those who had been open about their experiences generally felt supported and accepted. Over half reported that they always or often had support when they needed it, with a further one in five sometimes getting support. About two out of three said that people at work were always or often accepting towards them.

But the report also paints a picture of pressures at work

causing or exacerbating mental health problems. Nearly two thirds believed that unrealistic workload, too high expectations and long hours were a major contributors to their mental health problems while one in three believed that bullying at work had caused or added to their mental health problems.

The report recommends that the Disability Rights Commission should give priority to addressing discrimination in relation to people with mental health problems and that the government should recognise the importance of employment for this group.

The MHF urges the government and agencies working in mental health to consider a campaign to encourage people to 'come out' about their mental health problems. Other recommendations are for employers to identify elements of practice or culture that may be detrimental to mental health, and for mental health awareness training in schools.

□ *Out at Work is available free of charge from the MHF website [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk), or as a bound document, price £12.50 plus p&p, from the Mental Health Foundation (tel: 020 7802 0302).*

## Academics bound and gagged?

**L**ECTURERS' union NATFHE has warned that the integrity of research is under threat from a 'crisis' in research funding, combined with increasing dependence on commercial sponsors.

In a survey published in March, 24 per cent of respondents rated their academic freedom – to test received wisdom and to put forward controversial ideas – as limited, poor or nonexistent; 1.6 per cent had been pressured

into altering results and 1.6 per cent into suppressing findings; 3.2 per cent had been pressured into delaying publication, and 1.6 per cent had faced pressure not to publish at all. Of those who reported pressure, 30 per cent said it was applied by the funding source.

The survey came as NATFHE's executive committee put forward a motion for the union's summer conference criticising the erosion of academic freedom. It says: 'The

freedom to question received wisdom and critically test ideas is theoretically enshrined in the 1988 Education Act, yet research that cannot attract external funding is constantly being squeezed while external funders retain ownership of research and can restrict publication. Few academics have the time or facilities to carry out independent research.'

□ See p.244 for more on the silencing of dissent in academia.

## CHILDREN'S DAY

The NSPCC 'Children's Day' is on 8 May, the latest event in an ongoing campaign to increase consideration of child welfare issues amongst public and professional circles.

The national child awareness day follows the publication in March of the second report from the most comprehensive research into child abuse and neglect undertaken in the UK. *Child Maltreatment in the Family* presents the findings of a survey of the childhood experiences of 2869 18- to 24-year-olds, as part of the 'Full Stop' campaign. The main recommendations for professionals from the report are:

- Professionals working with families where domestic violence is found should always treat any children present as at risk of maltreatment even if there is no evidence of violence having been directed at them.
- Children and young people of all ages need greater legal protection from physical assault within the family.
- Professionals need clear guidelines on procedures for referral to child protection services.
- Advice, counselling and mentoring services for young people should recognise that they will often be used as confidants by their friends.

- Multi-agency training for all professionals in contact with children is essential to ensure that the signs and importance of physical neglect are recognised.

These services need to provide adequate information and support to assist them. The charity has also launched a website offering information and counselling for young people. The national manager of [www.there4me.com](http://www.there4me.com), Pat Marsland, said: 'Increased confidence and awareness in the benefits of seeking help may encourage young people to overcome some of their anxieties in reporting child abuse. We hope that it is a resource that psychologists can suggest to young people who want to seek advice in confidence.'

Mary Marsh, Director and Chief Executive of the NSPCC, said: 'Psychologists are already doing a great deal towards the goal of our Full Stop campaign to end cruelty to children – partnerships with psychologists are crucial. Psychologists give advice to our therapeutic teams and other work with young people at the front line of child protection. Support in campaigning, research, policy development and public awareness can really make a difference in encouraging cultural change and reform. We hope that NSPCC resources like training materials, publications and reports will also be of use to psychologists and their clients – see [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk) for more.'

## WEBSITES

### [www.rae.ac.uk/overview](http://www.rae.ac.uk/overview)

A report by each of the RAE 2001 panels giving a brief account of the strengths and intensity of activity of the research areas falling within the unit of assessment.

### [www.heightmatters.org.uk](http://www.heightmatters.org.uk)

A site set up by the Child Growth Foundation with the support of the Turner Syndrome Support Society to address emotional, social and educational issues affecting females with the genetic condition Turner's syndrome (TS).

Practical help and ideas are very much needed from educational and clinical psychologists or other professionals with experience of psychological issues that may affect TS girls and women. Contributions are invited from professionals by e-mailing articles or comments to [cgflondon@aol.com](mailto:cgflondon@aol.com).

### [www.allianceforchildhood.net](http://www.allianceforchildhood.net)

Recommended particularly for 'Fools' gold: A critical look at computers in childhood', a highly relevant report for those working with services for children and their families and who are concerned about the connections between research and what actually happens in early years and educational practice for children.

## A testing time for Saturday night entertainment

THE BBC is set to devote a Saturday night this month to an attempt to test the IQ of viewers.

*Test the Nation: The National IQ Test* will involve the administration of a 70-item IQ test. BPS member Dr Colin Cooper (Queen's University Belfast) became

involved with the programme following a call to the Society's press office. He explains: 'A look-up table on the answer sheet will allow participants to convert their raw score to an IQ (for five age-groups – standardised on the basis of the pre-test sample). There will be guidance on what

the IQ represents; the idea of confidence intervals about the obtained IQ, and reassurance that a low score on the test can arise for all sorts of reasons, such as distractions, anxiety, glasses of wine. There will also be a studio audience with celebrities and various criterion groups – there will be some 'fun' comparisons made and I've also managed to slip in a few variables of some scientific interest, such as tongue-curling, and eye colour.'

Full details of the test are given in a report, which should be available after the show, from Talent TV. 'The programme provides an opportunity to check out some of these relationships on a very large, though probably not very random, sample,' Dr Cooper explains. 'The continental versions of the show indicate that it can be both fun and informative. Given the widespread use of ability tests in personnel selection, I think it makes good sense to introduce the public to how these tests are administered, scored and interpreted – and to some non-controversial correlates of IQ.'

