

SPEARMAN MEDAL

2004

The Research Board invites nominations

Following a detailed review by the Selection Committee, the criteria for the Medal have been revised.

Criteria:

- The award is made for outstanding published work in psychology.
- The work must have been carried out by the candidate within eight years following the completion of a PhD (although research undertaken during the PhD can be taken into account) and should represent a significant body of research output.
- The Selection Committee will look for evidence of the theoretical contributions made, the originality of research (including innovation in the experimental methods or techniques used) and the impact of the research findings.
- Candidates need not be members of the Society, but they must be resident in the UK.

Nomination:

- Proposers must send a detailed nomination statement outlining the candidate's contribution to psychology, together with a copy of the candidate's current full CV.
- Proposers must also send 14 copies of what they judge to be the candidate's two most outstanding and significant publications to date.
- Nominations should be sent to Lisa Morrison (Scientific Officer) at the Leicester office by **5 January 2004**.

Award:

Recipients are invited to deliver the Spearman Medal Lecture at the Society's Annual Conference, at which they will be presented with the Medal and a commemorative certificate.

Previous Spearman Medal winners:

- 1998 Dr Francesca Happé
- 1999 Dr Simon Killcross
- 2000 Dr Kate Nation
- 2001 Dr Greg Maio
- 2002 Dr Thalia Eley

For more information contact Lisa Morrison on 0116 252 9510 or e-mail lismor@bps.org.uk.

The British Psychological Society London Lectures 2003

1 December, Kensington Town Hall

BPS Information Services Stand

in the Exhibition Area

All BPS careers information publications will be available, including:

- ◆ 'So you want to be a psychologist?'
- ◆ Set of eight posters for your classroom
- ◆ Lists of postgraduate courses
- ◆ Sample copies of *The Psychologist*

Society staff will be on hand to answer your questions

Just one tool in the box

I STUDIED psychology at University College London back in the early 1980s and eventually gained a first class honours degree. This was in no small part due to a certain obsessiveness that seemed to take over during the time I spent in the department. For example, I would be the first to arrive in the library each day and the last to leave, so I developed my own favourite seat, and would be seized by an obsessional crisis if I arrived to find someone else occupying *my* chair.

Soon I was such a regular fixture that the other students would come and ask me where materials they were looking for were. Eventually it got so the librarian would consult with me when they couldn't find something. My residence in the department seemed to develop an almost official status – the porters at the front desk once rang the halls of residence to check I was OK when one day I wasn't there as usual when they opened the doors.

Today I live just half a mile from the university, and every Saturday I still spend the whole day at this same library (that's not why I moved there – honest).

This behaviour might seem strange, but I find the subjects of psychology and psychiatry fascinating and have done so ever since I got bitten by the bug. It all started with reading Professor Hans Eysenck's

BY RAJ PERSAUD

popular paperback accounts of scientific psychology in the early 1970s. I was just a teenager then, but he inspired

me to take up the subject, and I suspect it was no accident that I ended up at his own Alma Mater, the Maudsley Hospital, where I am now a consultant psychiatrist.

The decision to go down the route of becoming a doctor and psychiatrist rather than formally pursue psychology was a difficult one. After gaining the First in my degree the psychology department at UCL brought strong pressure to bear encouraging me to consider a PhD there, and I was sorely tempted. I decided to proceed with my medical training though, because I still wasn't entirely sure that psychology was really the only coherent way of understanding people.

My clinical practice as a psychiatrist today is, however,

much more psychological than it is strictly medical. As a result of my student psychology days, I retain a healthy scepticism of the medical model as a frame for mental illness, which often produces conflict between

myself and medical colleagues at the Maudsley Hospital and Institute of Psychiatry.

I fervently believe that psychology is an extremely consequential discipline, but that its body of knowledge needs to be celebrated more effectively in our wider culture. This is part of my mission with the BBC Radio 4 series *All in the Mind* that I now present.

However, the narrowing of vision produced by the scientific quest means other bodies of knowledge like anthropology, economics and sociology, all of which have profound and empirically grounded things to say about human behaviour, are neglected by psychology and psychiatry. Back when I was studying for my psychology degree I seemed to be the only student willing to attend lectures given by other university courses. Indeed, I probably failed anatomy first time round in my initial year at medical school because I was too busy attending a sociology course rather than my anatomy lectures!

The key lesson (besides the fact you shouldn't neglect your

primary degree curriculum) is that that psychology, like psychiatry, is merely a means to an end, just one tool in our attempt to understand the human experience, and I believe we shouldn't neglect other approaches. It is those psychologists whose views are informed by these wider frameworks who appear to me to give the wisest counsel.

I suspect my early successes in psychology and psychiatry were due to drawing in studies and papers from other fields to support my arguments in essays and exams. So my advice for current students is to devote yourself to your subject, but don't forget what your subject really is – the whole human being. And that complex entity is never going to be captured by *any* one discipline.

■ *Dr Raj Persaud is a consultant psychiatrist and senior lecturer at the Maudsley Hospital and Institute of Psychiatry.*

REVOLUTION

Don't forget to send us your thoughts on last month's special issue, 'Can psychology revolutionise higher education?' You are the people most affected by higher education policy – Do you think psychological theory and research could be more widely used? What do your non-psychologist friends think of the practical value of psychology?

As usual we also welcome all kinds of other contributions from students on any topic of relevance and interest to your fellow students – see below for details.

Associate Editor: NICOLA HILLS

Articles, news, tips, quotes, cartoons and other contributions for the 'Students' page are most welcome. Send to: Nicola Hills, c/o the Society's Leicester office. E-mail: Nicola_Hills@hotmail.com.

Don't forget our Annual Student Writer Competition! We're looking for engaging and informative articles of up to 1500 words, on any topic relevant to psychology. There are two categories, undergraduate and postgraduate. Your article would be published in *The Psychologist*, and you would get an expenses-paid trip to the Annual Conference or London Lectures. Deadline for entries is Friday 30 January. See p.585 for details.