

February 2013



inside
PROVIDING
EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

plus

ATP ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

TOP 10 IPAD APPS
FOR THE CLASSROOM



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FROM THE CHAIR...



By the time you read this we will be well into 2013, but I'd still like to wish all our members a very Happy New Year!

In saying this, it occurs to me that various factors affect the extent to which a psychology teacher can be 'happy'. Some of these are personal, being linked to our health and our relationships, but many are related to our choice of career. Teaching can bring enormous satisfaction, especially when you are lucky enough to teach a subject like psychology, which is potentially so interesting and relevant to the lives of young people. So why is it that so many teachers are struggling to enjoy their jobs in the way they used to? I often receive emails or phone calls from colleagues who are under enormous pressure to reach (unrealistic?) targets for recruitment, retention and achievement. Some are coping with large classes and limited resources, some with unsupportive managers and most with too little opportunity to share ideas with others because there is simply not the time.

Another factor is the extent to which we feel valued in our profession, and I think it is fair to say that many teachers do not believe that we are being given the autonomy or the respect that

we deserve. In our subject there is a particular problem because it seems that psychology is experiencing something of an 'identity crisis'. Is it a science or isn't it? It seems that this depends on the level, and whether you are teaching in England and Wales, or in Scotland. One thing is for sure, wherever they hope to teach, graduates will struggle to find a PGCE course in psychology.

Your committee members are doing all they can to communicate our concerns to the appropriate bodies, and we have made it very clear that we believe psychology should not be treated with any less respect than the traditional science subjects in terms of resources and teacher-training opportunities. We have also said that we are concerned about the potential negative effect the Key Stage 4 reforms in England and Wales might have on the uptake of psychology at GCSE level.

The British Psychological Society will soon publish their report: 'The Future of A level Psychology', which was the end product of a conference held last June, at which the ATP was represented. I had hoped it would be available before writing this, but you will be informed as soon as it is made public. We are very hopeful that this document will be influential in the development of the 'new' A-level, and I would like to thank the BPS for their continuing commitment to pre-tertiary psychology.

It has been a very busy time since the start of the academic year and I have represented you on several occasions. At the BPS (Psychology Education Board), the Royal Statistical Society, who are conducting research into the future of statistics in science subjects, at a meeting of the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) and the European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations (EFPTA). I always hope that the views I express are representative of the majority of our members, but I am aware that it is not possible to speak for everyone. For this reason we are aiming to construct a short, online, questionnaire in order to collect members' views on a variety of pressing concerns.

Finally, I'd like to urge all our members to 'do their bit' to encourage colleagues to join the ATP. Our only source of income is membership subscriptions, and, as you will see from the Treasurer's report, this has been decreasing in recent years. The annual conference alone is wonderful value for money, and if you have never attended one, you are missing out: seriously! This year we are returning to Keele and, as you will see, we have another excellent line-up of Keynote speakers.

So, have a happy new year. As Ingrid Bergman said: 'Happiness is good health and a bad memory'. I should be OK then!

DOROTHY COOMBS

FROM THE EDITOR...

This edition of ATP Today contains some letters and articles that I am hoping will stimulate discussion and even a response, some good ideas to use in your teaching and some features simply to enjoy. In her article, Morag Williamson describes many of the issues facing us as psychology teachers, at whatever level, and wherever, we teach. Helene Ansell responds to a letter written by Caroline Rigby, first published in the 'Psychologist' in October 2012 and here again in 'Letters', in which she raises several key concerns relating to the proposed A-level reform. Helene managed to persuade her local MP to come and watch a psychology lesson. Read on to find out what happened.

Andy McCarthy writes a review of a book on what I thought was a rather 'unlikely' theme, Psychoanalysis and Education, but I have to

own up to having had a sneaky read of it before I sent it to Andy, and I can guarantee you will be amazed!

More information about the annual conference is provided by Helen Kitching, the organiser, and you will find other ATP news including details of the one-day CPD event, the story of John Peters who was given honorary life membership last year and a short Treasurer's report which lets you know how we spend your money.

The next edition of ATP Today will be in June. Please consider writing something, and aim to get it to me by the middle of May. You will find guidance for writing articles on page 27, but just contact me if you need any encouragement!

DOROTHY COOMBS



ATP ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Keele University

5-7 JULY 2013

We are delighted that the ATP conference is returning to Keele University for 2013. The leafy campus university, situated near Stoke-on-Trent, offers comfortable accommodation and stunning landscaped grounds. A one-hundred acre area of the estate, adjacent to Keele Hall, has designated conservation status and includes many

architectural and landscape features dating from the 19th century.

The breakout rooms, lecture theatre and exhibition are all closely situated to each other, enabling you to spend more valuable time networking and visiting the exhibition stands, when not attending the packed programme of events. Don't worry if you've never been to our conference before, we organise meet

and greet activities and our friendly committee members and conference organiser are always on hand to help.

The station at Stoke-on-Trent is only one hour and a half away from London and has good road and rail links with the whole country. There is a bus stop situated right outside the train station and buses to the university leave every 15 minutes on week days.



OUR 2013 KEYNOTE LINE-UP

Professor David Canter

David Canter is Professor of Psychology and Director of the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology and joined Huddersfield University in 2009. He has published 30 books and 400 papers in academic and professional journals. Since 1985, David has contributed to over 150 police investigations as a psychologist and 40 court cases as an expert witness. He has also been invited as an expert advisor to the Popplewell Enquiry, the Taylor Enquiry and the King's Cross Fire enquiry.

David Canter became known internationally in 1986 for the offender profile he drew up which helped the police to catch the 'Railway Rapist' and serial killer John Duffy. This was the first time such a contribution was made to a police investigation by a Professor of Psychology (anywhere). It was also the first time that 'offender profiling' had been used by the United Kingdom police.

He has been the winner of the Golden Dagger Award and the Anthony Award for Crime Non-Fiction. He is a frequent contributor to radio and television news programmes and documentaries and writer of commentaries for The 'Times'. He also wrote and presented a six-part TV documentary that was broadcast around the world.

For further information, please visit:

www.hud.ac.uk/ourstaff/profile/index.php?saffuid=shumdc3

www.davidcanter.com/media/media-overview/



Dr David Carey (sponsored by Bangor University)

Dr David Carey is a Reader in Psychology at Bangor University. Dr Carey's research interests include: Visual neuropsychology, sensorimotor control, cerebral asymmetry, visually-guided reaching, perception and action.

"Neuroimaging techniques such as EEG, MEG and fMRI have transformed the brain and behaviour landscape, helping to create a new discipline, cognitive neuroscience. What does this new science mean for cognitive neuropsychology? In this talk I will outline the roots of cognitive neuropsychology, its methods, and how it may (or may not) deal with the challenges posed by 21st century neuroscience."

www.bangor.ac.uk/psychology/people/profiles/david_carey.php.en



Dr Martin Rowley, Keele University

Dr Rowley was appointed as a lecturer at Keele in September 2004. As a developmental psychologist he is interested in age-related changes in our ability to deal with uncertainty in different contexts. In recent research, he has been looking at children's explicit and implicit responses to advertising. As a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy he is also interested in the learning and teaching of psychology and has carried out a number of studies in this area. He is a member of the Social and Developmental Psychology Group, the Applied Psychology Group and the Research Institute for Life Course Studies.

Dr Rowley's research interests also include 'Learning and Teaching in Psychology – students' expectations and experiences of university study' as well as differences and developments in students' beliefs about knowledge and the learning process.

www.keele.ac.uk/psychology/people/rowleymartin/



Professor Andy Field

Andy Field, Professor of Child Psychopathology at Sussex University, is author of 'Discovering Statistics Using SPSS (and sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll)'.

As well as being a stats guru, Andy's research interests are focused on children's emotional development, including: how children process emotional information, children and the media and children's emotional responses to novel situations/things. He is currently researching the role of vicarious learning in preventing and treating children's fears and using expressive writing interventions to promote health in women after birth.

Professor Field's keynote speech will focus on statistics in psychology.

Follow these links to find out more about him:

www.sussex.ac.uk/profiles/9846

twitter.com/ProfAndyField

www.statisticshell.com/



For more information go to:
www.atpconference.org.uk

To book your place go to:
www.kc-jones.co.uk/atp



A New Honorary Life Member

At the AGM of the 30th Annual Conference, in July 2012, John Peters was awarded Honorary Life Membership of the ATP in recognition of the significant contribution he made to the association. For many years John was responsible for organising committee meetings, making sure that the venue was booked and that all domestic arrangements were in place. He worked tirelessly and diligently as a committee member and became the 'right-hand man' to Joe Cocker, who was the ATP conference organiser from 1994 until 2007. When asked to comment on the decision to honour John in this way he said:

"One of the many things that John did for the ATP was to help with the annual conference. He would arrive early, often bringing with him a car full of OHPs (remember them?) and other equipment. Robert Burns's famous phrase 'the best laid plans of mice and men...' certainly applied to the conference. No amount of preparation could eliminate all the hiccoughs and John was always on hand to do, cheerfully and without fuss, whatever running around was required and, particularly in the pre-mobile phone days, a lot was required! He would turn his hand to anything, putting together programmes, checking rooms, registering delegates, meeting visitors and much else. He made a highly significant contribution to the smooth running of the conferences, and other events, and it gives me great pleasure to acknowledge this and to welcome its recognition by the conferring of ATP Life Membership."

On behalf of the ATP membership, and the committee, I would like to wish John a happy and healthy retirement. You can read John's account, below, of how he came into psychology teaching and where his life experiences have taken him since.



YOU CAN TAKE THE MAN OUT OF THE PSYCHOLOGY CLASSROOM, BUT YOU CAN'T TAKE THE PSYCHOLOGY OUT OF THE MAN



JOHN PETERS

Like many teachers of my generation, I came to psychology teaching by a circuitous route. I left school at 15 and trained in agriculture. After 10 years in Kenya I returned to obtain Qualified Teacher Status in science and rural science. At the same time the OU started and I watched the first programmes – foundation courses in a number of study areas. I looked at the science course, but was more attracted to the social science foundation course.

I started my studies the following year – the second year of the OU – and so I was introduced to psychology and completed a seemingly endless number of courses to the level of BPS qualification. It was some time before I was able to put this qualification to good use, and often I heard people say, 'psychology – that's a Mickey Mouse subject', but eventually I was able to start an O-level course and, after a certain amount of opposition, an AS course. There was a definite case of the teachers of established A-level courses fearing that I might be taking students away from their subjects.

The popularity of psychology grew in my school, as in many others, particularly the sixth form and FE colleges. Heads began to

recognise that if they wanted to keep their students into the sixth form they needed to offer A-level psychology. In some of the smaller sixth forms it was psychology that kept the sixth form viable.

To cope with the increasing demand for the teachers to deliver psychology all avenues were explored. "You teach biology so you should be able to teach psychology", "you did some psychology in your PGCE", or, worse still, "you've got some spare time on your timetable". Eventually retirement came, and after a few years of part-time teaching I bowed out of the psychology classroom when I did a maternity cover in my granddaughter's school.

About five years before I retired an event which was life-changing occurred. Our son took his own life and, after a while, I became increasingly involved in the support of others through the charity Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS). My experience also encouraged me to read deeply about the subject and eventually led to my completing a Masters in Suicidology. My wife opened a Support Group locally and we organised an annual Support Day in Birmingham and I worked as a volunteer on the SOBS National Helpline. Very often the bereaved caller will

tell us of very difficult circumstances and my psychology comes in very useful in supporting the caller. This is just one way we use psychology, but I maintain we can make use of the principles of psychology every day of our lives.

As a keen football follower I am often dismayed by the way fans behave on the terraces, yet such vile behaviour is rarely seen in rugby or cricket matches. To my mind the application of psychology gives a clear explanation. By segregating fans in separate areas of the ground we only cause alienation. Fans should be mixed to avoid trouble. This is just one illustration of 'if only society could learn the lessons of psychology'.

Perhaps psychology has taught me, in later life, to think, and if I was the 'Tsar' for education I would make it a compulsory course in the sixth form. Idealism is not the preserve of the young, rather it gives the opportunity to say what you mean and damn the consequences!

**"Do not go gentle into that good night
Old age should burn and
rage at close of day".**

Dylan Thomas

TREASURER'S REPORT



DEB GAJIC • (CPsychol), Treasurer

As many of you will be aware I took over as Treasurer of the ATP at the AGM, officially taking over on 1 September 2012. Thanks go to Janet Brennan who prepared the information previous to this date.

Below are the accounts for the Year ending 31 December 2012, I think they are fairly self-explanatory, but please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Year Ending 31 December 2012

Income		Outgoings	
Subs	15040.26	Magazine	9553.47
Advertising/Sponsorship	800.00	Exp	2861.80
Interest	33.38	Travel/General	1184.44
CPD Event	653.48	Web	350.00
		Data Protection	35.00
		Bank Charges	54.35
		ATPS	275.00
		EFPTA	125.00
Totals	16527.12		14439.06
Surplus	2088.06		

You will see that a small surplus of £2088.06 was made, but expenses for the CPD Event on 2 March 2013 are yet to be paid (CPD Event received £653.48). We are very frugal and, as you can clearly see, our major income is subscription payments and the major expenditure is the ATP Magazine. The only way we can increase our income is by attracting more members, so I hope you will all be proactive in recruitment.

Annual Conference 2012

Income		Expenditure	
Interest	23.25	Travel/Exp&Gen	1841.92
BPS (Bookings)	45880.00	Aston	42338.28
Sponsorship	2550.54	Insurance	196.00
Exhibition	1720.00	Website	250.00
Cash	157.00	Promotional	1695.13
		Lecture/Ent	457.75
		BPS (Booking Fee)	1910.00
	50330.79		48689.08
Surplus	1641.71		

Those of you who attended the conference will be aware of the issues we faced. That said it is testimony to Dorothy Coombs' prudent money management that we broke even and actually made a small surplus of £1641.71 which returns to the ATP general account. Deb Gajic (CPsychol), Treasurer

PSYCHOLOGY CPD EVENT

**SATURDAY
2 MARCH 2013**

In response to feedback received at our Annual Conference the ATP is running a CPD event for all teachers of psychology. The aim of the day is to provide high quality, low cost, CPD for psychology teachers and it will consist of interactive workshops, facilitated by experienced teachers, on a variety of topics relevant to all specifications. There will be plenty of opportunity to network with like-minded professionals.

The final programme is still to be finalised, but will include workshops on issues such as effective lesson planning, using interactive resources, questioning, assessment for learning, teaching research methods, preparing for OFSTED, etc. A forum has been set up on the ATP website for you to make your own suggestions about what should be included.

The event will be held at:
The Polesworth School
Dordon Road, Dordon, Tamworth,
Staffs B78 1QT

The nearest train station is
Tamworth and the school is five minutes away from Junction 10 of the M42.

The very reasonable cost of £40 will include refreshments and a light lunch. The day will begin with registration and coffee at 9.30am and finish at 3.00pm.

****Book your place early to avoid disappointment as places will be limited****

Please pay the £40 delegate fee through PayPal, via our website www.theatp.org. In order to qualify for this bargain price you must be a member of the ATP. You can join via the website www.theatp.org

If you have any queries please contact: d.gajic@sky.com

PSYCHOLOGY ED

how can the ATP help



MORAG WILLIAMSON • ATP Secretary

If you attended the 2012 ATP conference at Aston last July, you were probably struck by the frequent concerns raised by delegates over both the current state and the uncertain future of psychology in schools and colleges. This is true of every annual conference of course, and indeed the event explicitly aims to provide members with the opportunity to air concerns and issues; but this year it seemed to me that – having attended more ATP conferences than I've had hot dinners – the concerns and frustrations were greater than ever.

Pre-tertiary psychology education (PTPE) has always been affected by longstanding issues (relating to, for example, teacher education [TE], continuing professional development [CPD], curriculum development, assessment processes, etc). But recent developments, especially in terms of changing government education policies, mean that the nature and role of PTPE are up for debate as never before. This article attempts to provide an overview of the ongoing issues, focusing on ATP involvement. As an ATP member you will soon be asked to respond to a survey of psychology teachers' views on current issues, therefore this article aims to explain the background.

It is important to bear in mind the diversity of ATP members: the ATP represents psychology teachers in all parts of the UK and beyond. Most members teach students aged 16+, studying GCSE and A-level specifications of English awarding bodies, but many deliver Scottish National Qualifications (NQs, eg Higher Psychology), International Baccalaureate (IB), or other pre-tertiary courses; some teach psychology on vocational courses (eg BTEC, Higher Care), or as elements of other academic subjects (eg Biology, Citizenship); some teach psychology to students as young as 14, and others teach undergraduates. So, although it is mainly the English GCSE and A-level courses that are currently in the spotlight, many of the issues affecting these courses are also relevant to other qualifications, and to PTPE in general.

Here are some specific concerns that were commonly raised by delegates in the ATP conference sessions, grouped into broad themes. Note that this is a simple list based on informal observation – it is not by any means a scientific analysis!

In terms of the value and purposes of pre-tertiary psychology education (PTPE), members felt that:

- Thanks to media (mis)reporting, public perception of the value of psychology has been adversely affected.
- The need for teacher training for psychology at secondary level has been given low priority across the UK: in England the number of PGCE places has been reduced; in Scotland, there are none at all.
- The value of psychology in schools/colleges is being undermined by government education policy, and by some universities (eg Russell Group).
- Some school leaders have low awareness of psychology's value, and little idea of its potential as part of the school science curriculum, or as a means of achieving curriculum integration/interdisciplinarity.

- The loss of assessed practical research skills ('coursework') at A-level has reduced its credibility amongst HE psychology staff, in contrast to the IB and Higher, which have retained practical assessment. Practical research skills are essential, but should be externally marked by exam boards, for reasons of both standardisation and avoiding excessive teacher workload.
- There was ambiguity over psychology as a science: it is classified as such in some contexts but not in others; in addition, in centres where psychology is located in the science department, psychology teachers have sometimes lost control over the subject (eg budget, choice of exam board, etc). The benefits offered by psychology in terms of reducing the gender imbalance in the sciences seem to have been sidelined.
- PTPE needs to be considered in terms of progression to degree level study, but not only that: when we ask 'Is A-level psychology (and PTPE in general) fit for purpose?' we need to be aware that there is a whole range of purposes, or progression routes, that a psychology course can and should prepare our students for.

Members' views of the role of awarding bodies:

- Specifications were seen as highly prescriptive and this is reflected in rigid, predictable mark schemes for exams. Some delegates said that to prepare students for the exam they were having to teach in a very strategic way, prompting surface rather than deep learning – as one delegate put it, they were 'not teaching psychology'.
- There was low confidence in the validity of standardisation and marking procedures by some exam boards.
- Textbooks were perceived as dictating what psychology is about. The fact that authors are often examiners was seen as an unhealthy situation; it was felt that authors should be relatively independent of exam boards (as in the past).
- The rationale for the PTPE curriculum and its relationship to the discipline as a whole had become unclear: in England the contents of different specs have very different characteristics (although this may change under new proposals), while in Scotland the new courses under 'Curriculum for Excellence' did not seem to reflect the modern discipline of psychology.

In relation to the role of HE, members felt:

- There was still a lack of awareness on the part of both HE and FE/schools, as to how each 'side' teaches students; however there were some recent positive attempts to 'bridge the gap', eg the HEA series of events 'Tackling Transition' in spring 2012.
- Puzzled and dismayed at the views of some HE academics that students with a pre-tertiary psychology qualification arrive on degree courses with 'poor skills' in areas such as essay writing and critical thinking.
- Universities should recognise the prior learning of new undergraduates with a pre-tertiary psychology qualification in terms of admission requirements and first-year curriculum design.

EDUCATION

to shape its future?

Members' views of the role of the BPS:

- The support for PTPE from the BPS was welcomed, especially the event held at Chicheley Hall in June 2012.

Members' perceptions of processes of curriculum consultations and revisions:

- There was scepticism over the scope and thoroughness of consultations and revisions of curriculum.
- Teacher involvement was seen as inadequate, and in any case it was felt that teacher input would not be taken seriously.
- There was a lack of transparency in recent reviews.
- The student voice was not sought.

There have been more recent developments: in England, proposals for changes to A-level and GCSE have been published and consultations held; in Scotland, implementation of new courses under 'Curriculum for Excellence' is underway. In England, there is government pressure on universities to take control of A-levels; it is also likely that each subject will be offered by just one exam board, and January module exams will be dropped. Some concerns may have been allayed, others heightened.

So, what is the ATP's involvement in such developments? We:

- Responded to the recent Ofqual consultations on A-level and GCSE/EBC, on the basis of views solicited from members.
- Took part in the 'Future of A-level Psychology' event at Chicheley Hall, organised by the BPS Psychology Education Board (PEB) and its sub-committee SCOPTE (Standing Committee on Pre-Tertiary Education) in June 2012. Report available soon.
- Hosted a round-table at the European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations (EFPTA) Conference, April 2012, in Copenhagen, entitled 'Whose curriculum is it anyway?' where delegates from 10 countries discussed the nature of the PTPE curriculum. (See report, www.efpta.org)
- Took part in a symposium at ATP Conference 2011 (at University of Hertfordshire) on assessed practical research skills, hosted by the BPS DTRP and HEA (see article in 'ATP Today', October 2011).
- Are represented on the OCR Consultative Forum on the psychology curriculum.
- Feature relevant articles and letters in 'ATP Today', eg items by Phil Banyard and Sam French in October 2012, and by Caroline Rigby and Helene Ansell in this edition.
- Contribute to the BPS magazine, 'The Psychologist', which also regularly features articles and letters on pre-tertiary psychology.
- Lobby for improved initial teacher education in England and Scotland: In England, some improvement in ITE provision was achieved through ATP lobbying in 2009; currently one committee member has gained her local MP's support, including a meeting with the Minister for Schools (see Helene Ansell's article in this edition).
- Were represented at a round-table on teacher-training in Scotland, in May 2011, at the BPS Annual Conference in Glasgow; this followed an

initial round-table held in February 2010 by ATP Scotland (ATPS) in Stirling; ATPS are supporting BPS lobbying for ITE in Scotland (see http://abstracts.bps.org.uk/index.cfm?&ResultsType=Abstracts&ResultSet_ID=6913&FormDisplayMode=view&frmShowSelected=true&localAction=details, and <http://atps.org.uk/docs/RoundTablePsychTeachReportMarch2010final.pdf>).

- Engage in research to provide evidence of issues in PTPE: committee members, along with EFPTA colleagues, have presented findings on 'Pre-tertiary psychology education in Europe: A survey of approaches to teacher education', at BPS Annual Conference, May 2011, Glasgow, and at the EuroPlat Conference, June 2012, in Vilnius (http://abstracts.bps.org.uk/index.cfm?&ResultsType=Abstracts&ResultSet_ID=6951&FormDisplayMode=view&frmShowSelected=true&localAction=details).
- Are building an evidence base for the value of PTPE: there is plenty of evidence of its popularity amongst students but that is not enough. We need evidence of the outcomes/benefits of PTPE: for the individual, in terms of employability, preparation for HE, and just as importantly, life skills (eg the ability to make informed life choices); for the discipline of psychology, in terms of its status as a discipline and as a science; for society, in terms of increased general psychological literacy (eg understanding of social issues, media influence, political processes, etc). Some such research has been carried out amongst psychology graduates but little has been done with those who have studied psychology at pre-tertiary level. One ATP committee member has been asked by BPS DARTP to carry out a literature review. Another has developed a bibliography of the literature on PTPE (suggestions for additional sources are welcome) – see <http://www.efpta.org/docs/RefsPTPE-MWilliamson-630224-11-10-2012.pdf>.
- Obtain and disseminate information, through EFPTA, on PTPE in other European countries. For example: The value of psychology is so highly perceived in Finland that an element of psychology is compulsory for every 15-19 year-old, and other countries are striving to follow suit; in certain countries, such as Denmark, psychology teachers and teachers' associations take a leading role in the development of curricula in collaboration with awarding bodies and government departments; this approach is no surprise given that these countries have good quality ITE for psychology, that is, the perceived value and status of psychology are as high as for other subjects.

So, what do YOU think about the issues we psychology teachers face? We already provide various channels of input for members, eg discussion opportunities at conference every year, direct contact by email with committee members, etc. However, the ATP wishes to represent the views of the membership as accurately as possible, therefore we intend to develop a clear position on issues that affect us, in terms of both current and longstanding areas of concern. That is why we need you to tell us your views – please respond to the questionnaire when it appears in your inbox! And in the meantime, get in touch with us about any of the above points, or any additional area that you feel needs to be addressed. ■

Wanted

MORE PGCE TRAINING PLACES FOR PSYCHOLOGY

HELENE ANSELL • The Chetwynd Centre (ansell@chetwynd.staffs.sch.uk)

I read, with interest, Caroline Rigby's letter in 'The Psychologist' (October 2012), in which she referred to Ofqual's A-level Reform Document. (Editor's note: you can find this letter in the 'Letters' section of this magazine.) One of the issues she raised was that the number of qualified subject specialists available to teach psychology needs to be increased as a matter of priority.

As a teacher of psychology for some 17 years I have become increasingly disappointed with the government's attitude towards the training of psychology teachers and towards psychology as a subject. There has been much debate about the quality of training, the number of training places available and a general feeling of 'malaise' in relation to psychology as an academic discipline at pre-tertiary level.

Until recently my Sixth Form Centre was in partnership with our local training providers: Keele University, who sent us at least one PGCE psychology trainee a year, and Wolverhampton University, from whom we took GTP trainees. In the early years I worked very closely with the PGCE Social Science trainees, taking an active role in the university-based training. However, the recent closure of the PGCE Social Science course at Keele, and the government's move to encourage a GTP training route, has spurred me into action.

I have never been someone to take such a vigorous stand, but on this occasion I felt I had no choice so I wrote to my local MP expressing my deep concern about these issues and made the following points:

The government has decreased the allocation of PGCE teacher-training places for psychology teachers across the country in favour of a GTP route. We have lost our local training provider, Keele University, who exchanged their limited 2012/13 psychology

allocation for history with Leicester University.

Psychology is not regarded as a valuable subject in the key stage 4/5 curriculum by the present education secretary who clearly does not seem to understand the complexity of the subject. I would argue that it is a valuable subject, and this is reflected in the fact that it is classified, and funded, as a STEM science, and has one of the highest numbers of candidates at A-level. In some schools, it is because of popular subjects like psychology that minority A-level subjects remain viable.

Psychology addresses key government priorities by equipping students with skills in science, communication and data handling. Students are trained in numeracy and statistics, scientific method, communication skills and ethics, as well as gaining a deeper understanding of the diversity of human behaviour. Not only that, but psychology is the science subject which addresses a major gender issue, as it is studied by many more girls than boys. Many of our Olympic gold medalists talked about the amazing support they received from Sports Psychologists, many of whom will have taken psychology as a route to Sports Science when the traditional sciences were less engaging.

By taking the training of psychology teachers to a GTP route only, the government will force the teaching of psychology into the hands of non-specialists, as many schools will not have the resources and few GTP providers currently train psychology teachers. Research by the British Psychological Society suggests that students taught by non-specialist psychology teachers often perform less well, particularly in research methods, statistics and cognitive psychology. However, schools will be left with little or no choice, as student demand for psychology remains high, but the supply of qualified subject-specialists declines.

To my surprise, my local MP agreed to meet me to discuss my concerns further, and during our conversation I was able to explain what I believe is the important difference between PGCE training and the GTP route. I explained that the PGCE focusses much more on the academic aspects of the subject with the hours of teaching experience being the same, and that while the GTP does offer, in some subjects, an opportunity for a career change, this is not the case in psychology. Professional psychologists are often already in highly paid jobs, and would be unlikely to switch to teaching with a starting salary of £21,000 and a maximum, on the main professional grade, of £35,000 after seven years.

I was keen to make the point that the TDA's placement of psychology in Initial Teacher Training is very confusing. The government funds psychology as a STEM science, so it is classified with the other science subjects, Biology, Chemistry and Physics, and yet the TDA places it in 'other subjects' when it comes to ITT, equating it to Sociology, Law and Government and Politics. In Higher Education psychology is a science with BScs and MScs being awarded, but in teacher training (and Ofsted inspection) it is a Social Science.

Finally I challenged the suggestion by the Minister for Schools that the Science Learning Centres offer very good CPD for psychology teachers, pointing out that these courses cost in excess of £1000 per person, and most school CPD budgets are around £300 per teacher per year, which may be why these courses have such a low take-up rate.

After a very productive discussion the MP agreed to visit my school to learn more about the nature of psychology and to observe a lesson so that he could learn about the scientific nature of the specifications that we teach, and the range



CHOLOGY GRADUATES

of skills required. In addition, he agreed to look into the current arrangements for teacher training in our subject, and to find out why the TDA has placed psychology in 'other subjects' and not in with the other sciences.

In recent weeks my MP has observed one of my Year 13 psychology lessons. He was amazed by the complexity of the subject and by the amount of biology involved. We had a very productive 40-minute discussion after the session, and discussed the nature of psychology as a science subject, the need for good quality specialist teacher training and the need for the government to appreciate the value of psychology as a subject at both key stage 4 and 5. The MP left with a greater knowledge of psychology and promised to arrange a meeting with the new Minister of State for schools early in the New Year where I, and a group of psychology teachers and with some of my students, can present our case. Watch this space!

As a newly co-opted committee member of the Association for the Teaching of Psychology (ATP) I aim to continue to lobby the government on these issues, and I hope that together we can find a way forward in brokering a better understanding of our subject at government and local level. I have been inspired by my own students,

who have a better understanding of the nature and diversity of psychology than those many years older than themselves, describing psychology as 'the science that captures their interest', and 'a disciplined scientific approach to understanding human behaviour'. We cannot let our students down by allowing psychology to be devalued by those who do not fully understand it. ■



I'm sure most of us, as teachers, pride ourselves on being effective communicators. Giving students feedback on their performance and progress is a vital part of our everyday practice...

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK



DEB GAJIC •(CPsychol)

...but there is always room for improvement and by reflecting upon the way we do it we can become much more effective, so our students can benefit from more precise and constructive feedback.

In order to become more effective at giving feedback, we need to consider the purpose. Susan Brookhart argues that feedback should describe the qualities of the student's work in relation to the learning objectives and offer advice on how to improve and foster self-efficacy by demonstrating the connections between outcome and effort. Black & Wiliam (1998) suggest that:

'Low achievement is often the result of students failing to understand what teachers require of them.'

Although we think our instructions and feedback are perfectly clear, are they really? Is the language we use appropriate



ACK

to the audience? One way to test this is to ask a student to translate what you have written on their work or said to them. If he or she can't then we have failed.

In order for feedback to be effective students need to feel that success is within their reach and that the learning is worth the effort. Students will feel demotivated if they feel what is being asked of them is too difficult or they simply don't understand what they need to do. So students need to have a real understanding of the desired goal and why it is important, their present position in relation to that goal and guidance from their teachers about how to close the gap between the two. Effective feedback should enable students to answer these three key questions:

- Where am I going?
- Where am I now?
- How do I close the gap?

In order to help students understand where they are going, teachers should provide a clear and understandable vision of the learning target. It might also be useful to provide models and examples of strong and weak work, so students can see what they need to do. To foster a clear understanding of where they are currently at, students need regular descriptive feedback and need to be taught to self assess and set realistic targets. In order to close the gap, lessons should be designed to focus on common errors or

misconceptions, students need to be coached in independent learning strategies (eg effective revision techniques) and encouraged to keep a track of their own progress.

Written feedback on a student's work should act as guidance, showing the student how to improve. This works much better if marking is 'comment-only', rather than giving a grade, which simply punishes or rewards the ego of the student. Comment-only marking is a great way to ease students into peer and self-assessment; they can be easily trained to write comments in the same way as the teacher. This focus on comment-only marking can be reinforced by insisting on seeing evidence of self-assessment on work before you take it in. This not only prompts learner autonomy, but saves a lot of time. ↘

Low achievement is often the result of students failing to understand what teachers require of them



Written feedback on a student's work should act as guidance, showing the student how to improve

Students often find it hard to be critical of each other's work, but modelling feedback sandwiches:- positive comment, constructive criticism, positive comment, makes them more confident in doing this without causing offence.

Students must be given time to act on feedback and this was a key finding by Black & Wiliam (1998). If students are not given this opportunity then our comments and the time taken writing them are wasted. Although we are all under time pressure, time spent on redrafting is crucial, as well as allowing students to improve; it reinforces the value of feedback and allows them to work in a supportive environment, where they can ask for clarification and assistance if necessary. It might be appropriate to create a learning journal for students so they can track their own progress and record their responses to feedback.

In order for us to gauge the effectiveness of our feedback to students we need to ask ourselves three key questions:

1. Did their work improve?
2. Did they become self-motivated?
3. Is the feedback viewed by the students as valuable?

It is only if we can answer all these questions affirmatively, that we can say our feedback has been effective. Feedback must also be pitched at the right level for the individual student and, whilst it is important that it is age-specific, it should not do the thinking for the student. The most effective types of feedback question the student and encourage them to think of the solutions and possible improvements to their work themselves. However, if feedback does pose questions it is vitally important that students are given the opportunity to respond to those questions.

According to Susan Brookhart:

'The effects of feedback depend on the nature of the feedback. Feedback can be the information that drives the process or the stumbling block that derails the process.'

To ensure your feedback does the

former, remember that effective feedback:

- Is best initiated by the learner
- Focuses on the learning intention of the task
- Occurs as the students are doing the learning
- Provides information on how and why the student understands and misunderstands
- Provides strategies to help the student improve
- Assists the student to understand the goals of the learning.

Many schools and colleges have now introduced assessment policies to try and improve the quality of feedback. Although they may have different names they all follow the same general principle of giving a positive comment and suggestions for improvement. Some you may have heard of include 'WWW' (What Went Well) and 'EBI' (Even Better If) or 'Ready, Steady Go' (What went well, issues or problems and ways to improve even further).■

‘MAKING AND DOING’

context is everything!

HARRIET RILEY-ENNIS

The visually striking cube illusion (above), created by Beau Lotto, is an excellent introduction to the idea of perceptual set and the concept of empirical proof. It is also a great alternative way to start teaching eye-witness testimony. The central squares on the top face and the face in shadow are identical, even though they appear as different colours to most of us. This, and several other illusions, are featured at www.lottolab.org/articles/illusionsoflight.asp. The website provides interactive masks that can be used to demonstrate the illusions.

Students often find it hard to believe that the squares are the same when viewing illusions like this on screen; they can think that there is some computer trickery going on even when the illusion is exposed. So, you can introduce the concept of empirical proof at this stage of the proceedings if you cut out the colour swatch in Figure 1, allowing students to test the illusion with their own eyes.

But why do the two physically identical tiles look so different? The information in the image strongly suggests that the dark brown tile on the top is part of a poorly reflective surface under bright light, whereas the apparently bright orange one at the side is part of a highly reflective surface in shadow. Your brain interprets the image on the retina according to its past experience, creating a percept that it regards as the most likely correct rendering of the visual data.

The value of illusions is they help us to realise that things are not what they seem and that our expectations and experiences of the world shape our representations of it: constructed perception is subject to error. Figure 1, therefore, makes an ideal starter for the eye witness testimony topic.

As Lotto puts it: 'Illusions are useful ... because they tell us how the brain works, that the brain evolved NOT to see the retinal image (which is made up of meaningless, or ambiguous, patterns of light) – ie not the world 'as it is' – but to see the world in a way that proved useful in the past. It constructs what it knows by searching for useful patterns in sensory information and then associating those patterns with a past record of their behavioural

relevance, and then using that information to guide behaviour.'

Indeed a baby would not see this illusion – it is only our experience that allows us to (incorrectly!) 'make sense' of this cube and its colours.

This illusion will shake students' sense of 'naïve realism' – the common human perspective from which we assume that the senses provide a direct representation of external reality; the state of mind in which we believe that we see what is really out there.

Beau Lotto's TED Talk on illusions

www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/beau_lotto_optical_illusions_show_how_we_see.html) will stretch and challenge your able and interested students and is good material for your Psychology club.

As a further extension of this topic, ask your students to predict and explain what is going on in the illusion in Figure 2 – yes A and B are also identical! ■

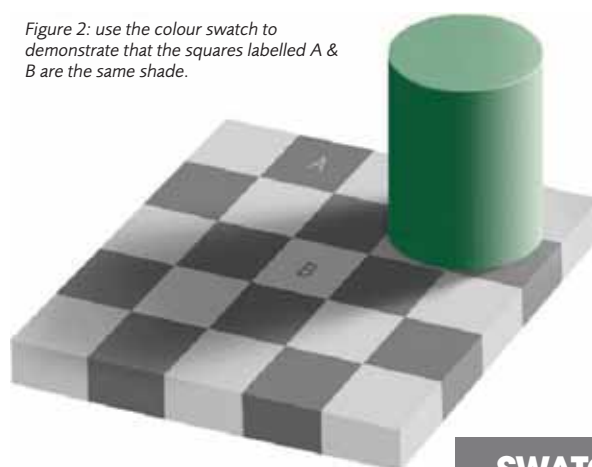


Figure 1: use the colour swatch to demonstrate that the central squares are the same colour.

SWATCH



Figure 2: use the colour swatch to demonstrate that the squares labelled A & B are the same shade.



SWATCH

I have to admit that I am a bit of a 'geek'. I like technology a lot and I try to incorporate it into all my lessons. One application of interest to me is the use of the iPad. It has great potential for improving the way we teach, and the way students learn, and I want to explore some of the opportunities available to us as psychology teachers.

I am aware that this kind of technology does not appeal to everyone. I work in an independent school in rural mid-Devon, so unsurprisingly the iPad has not 'wowed' as many as I might have at first hoped, but it has got people talking. Is it a fad? Is it a gimmick, or is there something here that could genuinely inspire a new generation of learners?

Obviously the first thing to consider is the expense, but it doesn't necessarily follow that a school has to invest in iPads for everyone, and there is plenty we can do to help enrich learning through the use of them.

I would like to recommend my top ten apps for learning and teaching. These can all be used on iPads, and some on Android devices. Most require a Wi-Fi connection, but some will operate with 3G data connections and others offer the facility to download content for offline viewing.

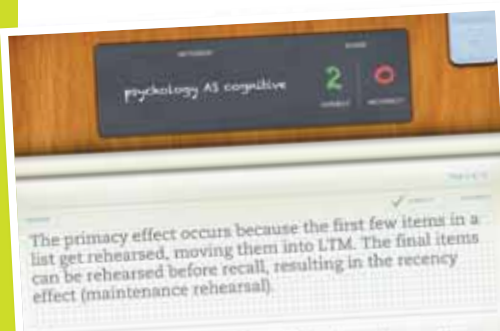


EMMA WEAVER

iPad *in the Class*

10 EVERNOTE (AND EVERNOTE PEEK)

I like this app, but I have put it at the bottom as its uses are variable depending on how badly you might need it! It is a very useful note-taking app. Admittedly there are plenty out there, and this one doesn't do much vastly different from the rest, but I do like the fact that it syncs centrally with your Evernote account, so it is handy to have reminders which you can edit from your iPad in your bedroom and then pick up at school the next day in its new form (I'm thinking end-of-term reports!). A new addition to the Evernote clan is Evernote Peek, which is designed with student use in mind and has been cleverly configured to work with Apple's SmartCover, which folds over in sections. As such students can roll back the first section to reveal a question and then roll back a bit more to find the answer. Question sets can be written by them or they can access them from an online library so it is an excellent revision tool.



9 iTUNES U

Some time ago Apple introduced iTunes U, which offers course content from a number of institutions. I find this useful for students looking to pursue psychology at University. There are courses in the subject from Yale, Oxford and the Open University, among others. Some come as audio-downloads, while others offer videos of the lectures. Once a student is enrolled on a course via their Apple device, they can download the material and begin. Nice and easy virtual enrichment and perhaps a reality check for some.

8 TED

Most of us are familiar with TED, and essentially I use it in the same way as iTunes U. A recent addition to the family is TED-Ed, which offers videos and customisable questions, which you can ask to stretch and challenge students and encourage them to think more about them. Some of my personal favourites for showing in psychology lessons are Michael Shermer: Why people believe weird things; Philip Zimbardo: The psychology of evil; Susan Savage-Rumbaugh: The gentle genius of Bonobos; and Keith Barry: Brain magic. In the app itself, these videos can be downloaded so it is possible to watch them offline.

7 3D BRAIN

Fed up with digging out that model of the brain you spent £100 on and have hardly used? This app is a fantastic free alternative, allowing the user to zoom in on particular structures and find out what processes they are involved in. It can really help students to visualise structures such as the corpus callosum which are hard to picture in two dimensions, and is particularly beneficial to kinaesthetic learners.

6 SHOW ME

This is essentially an interactive whiteboard, which you can use to record your written notes as well as a voice over. When complete it gets saved as a video that can be played back by your students. This is really handy if students are away, as the link can then get posted on your institution's VLE or emailed to them. If you are using your iPad in the classroom as an interactive whiteboard in itself, then obviously you can record the lesson that way, but equally you can use Show Me if you are absent from a session and want to set clear tasks and instructions. Other apps do a similar thing to this, such as Educreations.

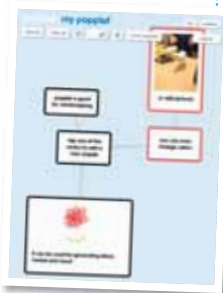


5 VOICETHREAD

This is quite a handy app for creating recap tasks to be completed before the next lesson. Voicethread allows the user to upload pictures/images/diagrams and then invite others to engage and comment on them. This could therefore be set up and sent out to students, asking them to login and get involved. Their comments can be left as text, audio or video and then the completed Voicethread can be played at the start of the next lesson as a recap. It would also be very obvious if someone had not done the work!

4 POPPLET LITE (FREE VERSION)

Popplet is a very easy to use mind-mapping app. The 'lite' version is free and has a few features removed, but you get the idea behind it. This would be useful as a starter activity where students could work in groups with iPads to create answers to questions or problems before the lesson.



3 PSYCHOLOGY TERMS

This free app does exactly what it says on the tin. It is a complete and searchable dictionary of psychology. I have encouraged my students to download it and I know that for some international students it will be particularly helpful.

2 SOCRATIVE

There are two parts to this fantastic app (also available on Android), one is Teacher and one is Student. Once a teacher has signed up for a free Socrative account, you log-in and are given a virtual room number. Students with the Socrative student app then type in the room number to connect with your activities. There are a range of activities available, ranging from simple yes-no/true-false questions, which, when students have voted, produces a graph, to open ended questions which result in all the answers being displayed and students voting for their favourite. In addition to this, teachers can design their own multiple choice quizzes and present them to students in a number of guises (for example the Space Race version displays rocket ships in different colours to represent the teams and the first to the finish wins!) and then emails you a spreadsheet of their answers at the end. Think of that dreaded observed lesson where you want to show progression and learning give them the multiple choice quiz at the beginning and end of the lesson and it's sorted.

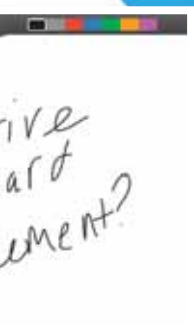


room

1

TWITTER/TWEETDECK

This is my favourite, and I took inspiration from Dr Monica Rankin, a Professor of History from the University of Texas. Her video, entitled 'The Twitter Experiment', can be found on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WPVWDkF7U8> and it really got me thinking about the power of social networking in an educational context. I have started using it for several key purposes. Firstly I have been using it for enrichment. I emphasise to my students that a little extra reading in psychology is crucial if they want success and as such, a quick link to a website isn't going to take too much time out of their busy schedules and will still get them thinking. Secondly, I would like to use it in lessons as is seen in the video. Sometimes people don't get the chance to say their piece or to ask a question, so through using 'TweetDeck' (an installable Google Chrome app) I will be able to have the 'Lesson Feed' on display for the class to use. We might not get through all the points or questions in a lesson, but we can overview them and discuss them to round off a lesson or point. Finally, I plan to use it for reminders and important dates – for example when work is due in, and will use appropriate tags for this so they know which group it applies to (eg #12hmkw or #13hmkw). Of course it has nothing to do with the fact that one of my Year 12 students told me I was 'the coolest teacher ever' when I proposed this idea to his class.



SOCIAL CHANGE & SOCIAL INFLUENCE REVISITED



TREVOR P DUNN • FRSA Chartered Psychologist

The classic studies by Sherif (1935), Ash (1951), Crutchfield (1954), Milgram (1963) and Zimbardo et al (1973)*, all clearly demonstrate the readiness with which people will alter their behaviour in any given social situation. Admittedly, they all have their design flaws and are subject to the ongoing debate of 'ethics', but nevertheless their value is unquestionable. The question that still remains unanswered is how and why certain individuals and groups continue to behave in a negative manner. We need to focus our attention outside of the psychology laboratory to look for these answers and then work back to apply some of these findings to the classic studies in the field.

In 2011 we experienced a 'summer of discontent' with regard to the riots that took place in London and other major towns and cities. Issues of delinquency, petty crime, vandalism, gang violence, excessive drinking, drug misuse and other forms of antisocial behaviour among working class teenagers are often interpreted as responses to these teenagers' confrontation with inequality in a culture which emphasizes success and places little weight on the moral evaluation of the means to achieve it. Such behaviour, according to this interpretation, is the expression of a kind

of rage against an unfair and frustrating social order. However, teenagers in the higher social strata are just as criminally inclined as those in the working class, and this was evident in the 2011 London riots.

The general consensus was that the so-called 'youth of today' were fighting back against mass levels of high unemployment, lack of opportunities, the rich getting richer and leading by example in relation to the general attitude of bankers in the city and the number of MPs engaged in fraudulent behaviour. However, it was not as simple as this, because of those people arrested and brought to trial; we saw a range of people from different races, gender, ages and social-economic backgrounds taking part, indeed there were even teachers! Relating this to research into both conformity and obedience, we can highlight the role of the hierarchical nature of society (as demonstrated by Hofling et al 1966) which can explain why conformity and obedience are at times inappropriate.

The current view relating to the riots suggests that 'parents', 'teachers' and the role of education in general are to blame. Obviously education has a part to play in raising awareness of the dangers of conformity and unquestioning obedience, and hopefully students of psychology who are exposed to topics such as social influence and moral development will gain a better understanding of why

people act in the ways they do. There have been reports that assertiveness training has helped young people who engage in high levels of alcohol and marijuana use by lessening conformity to peer pressure (Williams 1980). Mouttap et al (2003) reported that a study undertaken with high school adolescents found that conformity to authority in the form of parents, teachers and religion was a protective factor against vulnerability to behaviours such as alcohol consumption, drug use and risky sexual behaviours.

What we can see is that humans are not merely impotent reactors, with their behaviour determined by circumstances and genes, but rather they are active agents able to make things happen, able to construct events. Chein (1972) maintains that people do not, like animals, deal directly with nature; they deal with it indirectly, from known 'positions' within a culture, in terms of a knowledge of the part their action might play in maintaining or progressing the culture, no matter how vague, shallow or implicit this knowledge may be. Thus, even when 'I' alone am responsible for what 'I' do, I owe my knowledge of what I can do to my relations with others. Mead suggests:

"Unless... the individual brought himself into the same experiential field as that of the other individual selves in relation to whom he acts in any given social situation, then reason cannot

'I Predict a Riot...'

KAISER CHIEFS



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become impersonal unless it takes an objective, non-affective attitude toward self. Otherwise we have just consequences, not self-consciousness. (Mead, 1934).

In his text; *Science and Human Behaviour* (1953); Skinner states the following: The hypothesis that man is not free is essential to the application of scientific method to the study of human behaviour. The inner man who is held responsible for the behaviour of the external biological organism is only a pre-scientific substitute for the kinds of causes which are discovered in the course of a scientific analysis. All of these alternative causes lie outside the individual. These are the things which make the individual behave as he does. For them he is not responsible, and for them it is useless to praise or blame him. (Skinner, 1953; 447).

Writing in the *American Psychologist* in 1969, Miller states:

If one does take psychology's task to be that of directly promoting human welfare, then, in difficult cases where disagreement is most probable, something that advances the welfare of one group may disadvantage another group. The problem is to decide whose welfare we wish to promote. And the trouble is, of course, that due to the general indeterminacy of human affairs, it is impossible to form any clear concept of what is good for us in advance of trying things out in practice. (Miller, 1969).

Furthermore, Miller proposes that, instead of control, psychology should exist for the purpose of understanding ourselves, whatever our natures may be.

Keep Calm and Change your Behaviour

However the picture is still a complex one because other factors such as personality types, life experiences and external locus of control all come into play at any given time. People's lives, it would seem, depend upon the beliefs in which their self-conscious acts are grounded. Therefore, it follows from this that the most decisive changes in the nature of our humanity are changes in our beliefs about ourselves. We are also becoming more exposed to media influences in the form of shows like *The X Factor*, *Britain's got Talent*, *Big Brother*, *The Only Way is Essex* and *Made in Chelsea*, to name but a few, which pollute the minds of certain individuals to want the life and rewards which these programmes bring. To be known to be a celebrity to get instant fame and fortune seems to be the message that's implanted upon the minds of the nation at every given opportunity. We live in a very materialist world, currently driven by the computer industry, followed closely by fashion, cars and holidays. When we look back at the findings relating to Milgram and Zimbardo, I constantly hear my students saying that they would not

behave like that, that they would not conform. I am quick to point out that we all engage in different types of conformity all the time, sometimes without even being consciously aware of what we are saying, buying, eating, drinking, smoking... and so on. Social change will always be a slow and gradual process which starts with each and every one of us before the concept of change occurs. We all desire a better world, now perhaps more than at any other time in the immediate past, but psychology alone cannot provide us with all of the answers.

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Qualitative Methods

THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION WITHIN THE SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE OF PSYCHOLOGY



HELEN KITCHING • CPsychol, AFBPsS • ATP Conference Organiser, former A-level & GCSE teacher and current MSc Health Psychology Masters student at Sussex University.

Historical Context

In the mid-late 1800s, William James was making his mark on psychology in the USA. According to Marchel & Owens (2007), James took a qualitative stance when viewing psychology, believing human nature could be best understood holistically and that the world was not 'static reality' but in a state of 'constant flux' (p.302).

At a similar time in Germany, a physiologist named Wilhelm Wundt was using scientific methods to investigate reaction times. In 1879, he opened the world's first psychology lab at the University of Leipzig. This event is generally considered the official start of psychology as a separate and distinct scientific discipline and, unfortunately, James' introspective view of psychology did not fit well with this new model.

The scientific, quantitative, route was further cemented by the behaviourists in the 1920s who sought to move away from the psychoanalytic, introspective, nature of psychology and focus on what was observable and testable. Thus, qualitative research was marginalised to the fringes of psychology.

Current Critics

Qualitative research has garnered many critics over the years. Black (cited in Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997) argues that research findings are significantly more likely to be accepted as fact if they contain 'at least one number'. He points to examples of well-known 'facts' such as one couple in 10 is infertile, despite there being little empirical evidence to support such an assertion, simply because it contains a number.

Black (1996), in his article 'Why we need observational studies to evaluate the

effectiveness of health care', argues the case for the value of observation methods but even then he is swift to clarify that he is referring exclusively to 'quantitative, epidemiological methods and not qualitative, sociological methods in which data are collected through observation.'

Morgan (1998) is vociferous in his condemnation of the qualitative approach. He argues that scientific procedures must be reliable and the observations must be unbiased. He pointedly remarks that in his opinion qualitative research is neither. He states that qualitative researchers actually put psychology departments at risk as they challenge the status of psychology as a lab-based subject.

He goes on to say that "what matters is whether the observations made by researchers are reliable and free from their opinions", suggesting that qualitative data is neither reliable nor unbiased. His argument highlights the political implications where he states: "Heads of departments of psychology have had to beat off determined challenges to the status of psychology as a laboratory-based subject. All of this will be at risk if psychology goes down the road which qualitative researchers would like it to follow."

He is, indeed, so strongly opposed to qualitative methods that he recommends banning them from undergraduate teaching programmes, stating: "We cannot have one set of lecturers explaining to students how to study psychology scientifically, and another set of lecturers telling the same students that when studying people the methods of science are no use. It won't work." (p.483).

A Question of Funding

Apart from responding to their critics, qualitative psychologists have other hurdles to jump. Funding is a pertinent issue for most academics. According to Padgett & Henwood (2009), the vast majority of funding in the USA is given to researchers who present quantitative designs and offer statistical findings.

Pearson (1995) suggested that for qualitative and quantitative research to be placed on a 'more equal footing', there needs to be a major refocus in funding away from so-called 'hard science' and 'number crunching' to more small-scale ethnographic projects. However, this has its critics who propose that, despite being 'reflexive', ethnographic researchers cannot avoid bias (Morgan, 1998).

Other psychologists have found funding opportunities alongside quantitative projects (Pope & Mays, 2009) but the qualitative aspect is often a 'tack on' and as found by Cheek (2008), 'underfunded, not well understood and undervalued' (p.50).

Publish or Perish

The issue of 'publish or perish' is also pertinent to many academics whose professional survival depends on acceptance from peers and career advancement is linked to publishing frequently and in high profile journals (Marchel & Owens, 2007). The APA guide for new authors cites the high rejection rates of prestigious journals. If one takes into consideration the inherent bias against qualitative research shown by many editors, as evidenced by Pope and Britten (1993), (cited in Greenhalgh & Black, 1997), when they presented their collection of rejection

letters for their qualitative research from biomedical journals, then the options for qualitative researchers seem limited. According to Pope and Britten (1993), the letters showed a 'striking ignorance of qualitative methodology on the part of the reviewer.' (p.743).

Rennie, Watson & Monteiro (2002), also researched the prevalence of qualitative papers published in the 1990s via PsycInfo. They found that qualitative research was published in 486 journals both within and outside psychology, but for most journals the modal publication was one article. The seemingly large number of instances was related to the creation of journals specifically for qualitative research such as Qualitative Health Research.

This finding was echoed by Marchel & Owens (2007) in their review of APA journals from the 1950s to 2002.

However, where qualitative research may struggle to find a home within academic journals, there is a market for such material, as reflected in the emphasis given to it by the publisher Sage. The publication of qualitative research within books and chapters is potentially a good way to 'bypass journal editorial prejudices.' (Rennie et al, 2002).

Current Positioning

Kisely & Kendall (2011) point to the growing interest in the use of qualitative methods within psychiatric research. This is echoed by Chow, Quine & Li (2010) who illustrate that the use of mixed methods within healthcare research is becoming increasingly more common: from 15% in the mid 1990s to 30% in the early 2000s.

Kisely & Kendall (2011) and Marchel & Owens (2007) highlight the similarities between quantitative and qualitative approaches. They assert that the reliability and validity of the data can be assessed by 'establishing the trustworthiness of the data', using techniques such as triangulation, peer debriefing and independent coding (Kisely & Kendall, (2011), Pope & Mays, (1995), Marchel & Owens, (2007).

Kisely & Kendall (2011) also address issues of objectivity and reliability, raised by the likes of Morgan (1998). They point out that there are several commonly used statistical packages used to manage and analyse

qualitative data such as Atlas, Ethnograph and NUD*IST. These packages allow for objective analysis of the data. However, they do not produce the interpretation and, according to Pope & Mays (1995), the 'creative turn is missing'.

The Future

According to Kidd (2002) an APA article revealed that a group of editors, mainly in the field of child development, were calling for an increase in the recognition of qualitative research. Marchel & Owens (2007) also found that a significant number of APA editors (26/57) viewed qualitative work as empirical and scientific with 24 reporting that they would like to publish more

qualitative work. This heralds a way forward, and

qualitative research is slowly making its presence felt although funding remains an issue.

However, psychology, as a discipline, is still striving to be taken seriously as a science, compared to its 'hard science' counterparts such as

physics and chemistry, (Janda, England, Lovejoy & Drury, (1998).

In many A-level departments, psychology is still positioned with 'social sciences' or humanities and its 'scientific core is still not well understood by managers, parents and indeed prospective students. Simonton, (2004) found that within scientific disciplines, psychology rated below physics, chemistry and biology and only rated above sociology. Lilienfeld (2012) proposes that public scepticism in psychology may have indirectly contributed to psychology's absence from some funding agencies' lists of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The consequence of this lack of recognition is that 'Psychologists are often not eligible for targeted funding for education, professional training, and research that could contribute substantially to achieving STEM goals' (American Psychological Association [APA] 2009 Presidential Task Force Report on the Future of Psychology as a STEM Discipline, 2010, p.6, cited in Lilienfeld, 2012).

It is the opinion of this author that whilst psychology continues to struggle to be recognised as a scientific discipline, qualitative research will not easily find an equal footing with quantitative research. ■

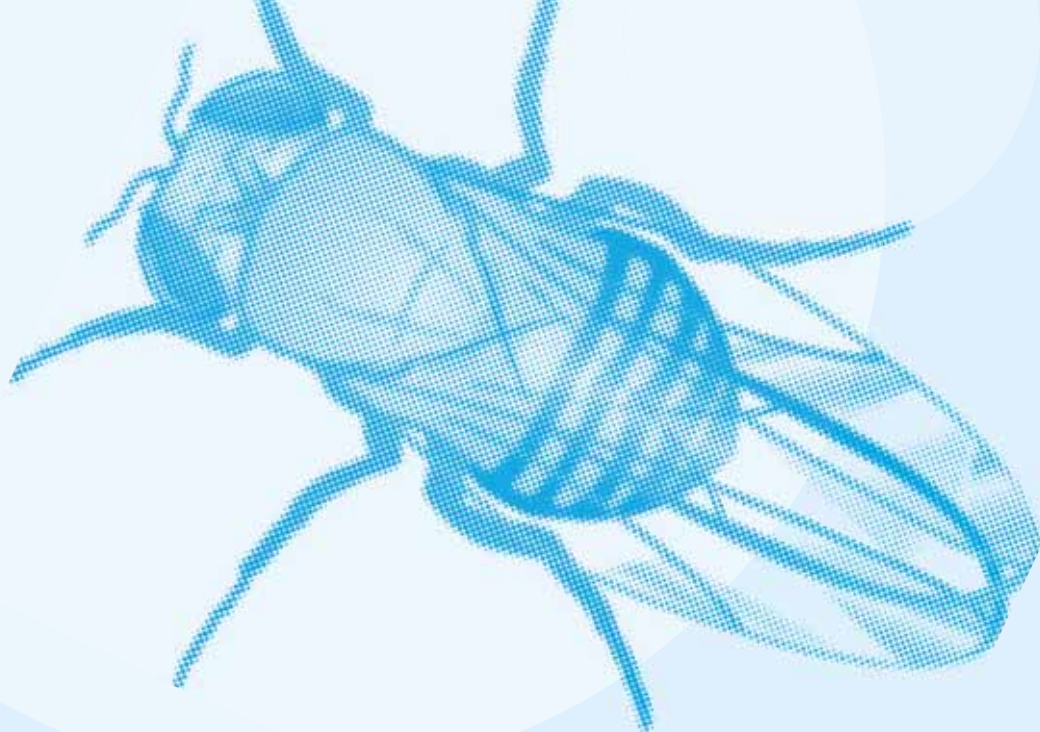
The whole is more than the sum of its parts.

ARISTOTLE (METAPHYSICA)



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THIS IS NOT AN ARTICLE ABOUT THE MORAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES INVOLVED IN PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH WITH ANIMALS AS PARTICIPANTS. THE ARGUMENTS ON EACH SIDE, IN FAVOUR AND AGAINST, ARE WELL KNOWN AND IMPORTANT, AND IT IS UP TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL TO WORK OUT HIS OR HER OWN VIEW AND BELIEF ABOUT THIS ISSUE.

WHY DO WE DO RESEARCH ON NO HUMAN ANIMALS?



EVIE BENTLEY

This looks at some of what has been learned recently from research based on animal studies. Many studies suggest a much closer link between humans and other species, including non-mammals, than was thought even in recent times. This is an important critique in favour of the evolutionary theory of human-behaviour, and it is interesting, too.

Over-expression of a growth factor receptor gene, EGFR, has been linked with lung and other cancers, and a surprising side effect of drug treatment has been memory improvement. Now collaboration between American and Chinese research teams has shown that, in fruit flies and mice, EGFR is

linked to the formation of characteristic abnormal brain plaques such as are found in Alzheimer's disorder, and that memory loss in these animals was reversed using the anti-cancer drugs. Chemically similar synthetic compounds were then tested and several were found with the memory-regaining effects. Even middle-aged (eight-months old) mice with Alzheimer-type memory loss showed memory being restored after only 18 days of treatment. The next steps suggested by the Zhong team include further testing of the synthetic compounds leading, if all goes well, to human trials on Alzheimer patients.

We all know that humans have bigger, 'better' brains for our body size compared to

other animals, even compared to our close primate relatives. The question of when this greater growth starts might have been answered by a very small study using 3D MRI scans on developing chimpanzee and human foetuses. In both species there is an initial period of very fast brain growth in the early weeks of gestation, but at 22 weeks the chimpanzee brain growth rate plateaus, while in humans the rate continues to increase for a further two months. Our gestation also lasts longer, 38 weeks compared to 33/34 in chimps. This difference in duration could be another factor for humans having proportionately larger brains, though we are built on the same basic plan as other

vertebrates - fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

What about bird studies? Things have moved on a lot since Skinner worked using pigeons. The evidence is building up and up, showing that birds have considerable cognitive abilities. For example, wild crows were captured by investigators wearing masks, and then cared for during four weeks by people behaving kindly but wearing different masks. Both sets of masks were based on human faces with neutral expressions, but referred to as 'threatening' = worn during the captures, and 'caring' = looking after the birds. After four weeks the birds were injected with labelled glucose and then spent 15 minutes with a person wearing either the threatening or the caring mask. After sedation the birds' brains were scanned, and for those who had been in the threatened

condition a region of the brain which corresponds to the mammalian amygdala was active. Those in the caring condition had no such brain activity. This suggests a level of face recognition and an ability to make cognitive links such as memory of a threat or fear, which is certainly adaptive. It is also good to know that the birds recovered well, and were successfully returned to the wild.

There is more research on birds; ravens have been filmed using their beaks to attract attention to objects, either by picking the item up or by pointing with their beaks. Before this was documented, only some mammals were known to have this behaviour. This pointing type of communication is obviously adaptive, and has always been taken to show a complex level of cognition and communication, and in humans to be the precursor to language. It could involve knowing that the other has not

noticed the object, that it could have interest for them - rather like a type of theory of mind.

New Caledonian crows, experts at problem-solving, have been tracked with a new type of electronic tag called Encounternet. This has, jokingly, been referred to as bird twitter. These crows have small family units, usually with three members, but it seems that all individual crows are connected to the larger network, in this case numbering 34. They have a lot of short 'meetings' with non-family members, and the hypothesis is that this is for sharing knowledge eg about food sources or strategies, another highly adaptive trait, and further evidence that these birds 'know' that other birds don't have the same information.

Finally, something for the oenophiles amongst us - perhaps drinking red wine is not only enjoyable but - in bees at any rate - beneficial. Resveratrol (found in red wine) increases bee life span by 33-38% and reduces the amount of food eaten, probably by acting on the brain satiety centres. Several studies show that, in general, reducing food intake lengthens life, but on the other hand, in humans, alcohol is known to stimulate the brain's hunger centres, so possibly downing an extra glass or three of the red stuff won't increase our lifespan after all. ■



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“Crows have a lot of short ‘meetings’ with non-family members - the hypothesis is that this is for sharing knowledge about food sources or strategies”



A response to Sam French's question (ATP Today October 2012): Is A-level psychology good preparation for Higher Education?

So is A-Level chemistry a good preparation for chemistry in Higher Education?

I teach, and have taught, psychology at many different levels (GCSE, GCE, Access to HE and Undergraduate) and in many different sectors (school, FE College and University). I have some firm opinions on the role of A-Level psychology and if I was marking Sam's letter I would comment: well done, you raise many valid points, it is very well referenced (and I apologise for using the rhetorical in my title).

Probably the most ideal trio of subjects for a psychology undergraduate would be: biology, statistics and psychology, accompanied by good passes in GCSE English and Mathematics. So, from these subjects which transferable skills would most benefit a psychology undergraduate? My response would be: some basic knowledge of the history and development of psychology as a science, some basic statistics (standard deviation, measures of central tendency, etc), some 'hands-on' experience of carrying out, and writing-up, simple research, how to write a grammatically correct sentence/paragraph and, perhaps most importantly, how to structure and reference an essay. Most of this could be learned without formally studying psychology. Biology, for example, includes some behavioural science, and an understanding of the process of scientific research is a basic requirement of all the sciences.

So should A-Level psychology be a prerequisite to studying psychology in higher education or be withdrawn as an A-Level option? If it were to be a prerequisite, then the BPS, via the Standing Committee for Pre-Tertiary Psychology (a committee within the PEB (Psychology Education Board), should exert influence on developing the specifications to include statistics, referencing, research, etc. Instead, it would appear that the examination boards, whilst responding to the re-classification of psychology as a science, have allowed it to be 'watered down', and the requirement to conduct a significant research project has been reduced, and finally withdrawn.

If we were to remove A-Level psychology as a scientific option, we could then waste the first year of university by teaching the equivalent of A-level to get all students up to a common standard, and we would still be offering introductory courses in the third year (oops, that is what already is happening). I once heard a University lecturer telling his first year undergraduates to forget everything they had learned in A-Level psychology (if this is a common opinion it is an insult to our many excellent teachers of psychology).

So do I hear the expression 'exclusion'? Are students who have not studied chemistry at A-level excluded from chemistry in higher education? Being fully aware of a subject (eg, statistics and psychology as a science) through preparation, I would argue in terms of 'inclusivity' as it allows students to prosper from an even start with rudimentary knowledge and informed expectation. Pre-tertiary psychology should highlight the importance of statistics, rather than hiding what is at present a 'ticking time bomb'. That is the 'statistical shock' lying in wait for 'virgin' psychology undergraduates, many of whom probably arrive at university thinking that Derren Brown, body language and 'mind reading' are the underpinning dynamics of psychology, and leave disillusioned by the Christmas vacation.

Sam, you did raise an interesting point about Freud. Most universities (and IB) have now dropped Freud from mainstream teaching, advising that it should only be referred to in an historical context. It does appear that the A-Level examination boards have a fixation with this rather ancient, empirically vacuous area; that is despite the drive to carry psychology forward as a science. Sam, I also concur with your comments about Cognitive Neuroscience and further support it as a 'must-have' within A-Level psychology, because it is arguably the contemporary manifestation of psychology as a true scientific discipline.

So the solution is to make psychology and its progression 'joined-up' at all levels. That is, GCSE preparing for GCE and GCE preparing for Degree, with BPS accreditation and input at all stages. This is lovingly called 'vertical integration' and the government and examination boards should listen to the 'voices'.

Finally Sam, you mention two other interesting points (yes I did read it to the end!). The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), as you say, should not be only for the most able of students. The International Baccalaureate (IB) already addresses this with the extended essay (EE), and psychology could address this with the re-introduction of a separate research project (similar in format to the EPQ). Secondly, I am interested in what you say about the FSMQ (Free Standing Maths Qualification [Use of Statistics]), a course about which I know little. But then education is about learning, and you are never too old to learn something new.

So a thank you goes to Phil Banyard, Chair of the Standing Committee for Pre-Tertiary Psychology (BPS). Make sure all members of the ATP know how much you are supporting our cause (the development and vertical integration of GCSE, A-Level and HE psychology).... You deserve a great big 'thank you'.

And one 'raspberry' goes to The Russell Group (the self-appointed private club of 'protectionists' for their own academic establishments)... take a look in the National History Museum... meet the relatives!

So Sam, thanks for raising these issues and good luck with your studies. Perhaps Ofqual (regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England) should take advice from you; a person with great insight.

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Letters

Editor's note: This letter was originally published in the 'Psychologist' (October 2012) and Caroline has agreed to let me print it here so that ATP members who are not in the BPS have an opportunity to respond to it, as Helene Ansell has on page 10.

I am writing as a teacher of A-Level Psychology who has read the 'Ofqual A-Level Reform Consultation' document. I have mixed feelings about the proposals which I wanted to share with other society members before decisions start to be voiced and inevitably become harder to influence. The document states that by 2018 all A Levels will have been changed or discontinued. Reading this was the first time I felt any worry while reading the proposals. Whilst I feel that A-Level psychology is a valid and valuable subject choice, I am not confident that the Government and the public would agree. I am also not confident that Universities wouldn't prefer a blank slate when students arrive to study psychology at degree level. This nervousness, however, sits alongside a sense of excitement that we have an opportunity as a society to make improvements.

Ofqual has touched upon the fact that practical issues will need to be considered regarding the delivery and provision for the new A Levels. I feel that quantity of quality subject specialists to teach this subject needs to be considered as a matter of priority. The recent cut in the number of PGCE places that are available for training psychology teachers is an issue, as it seems to signal the lack of regard the Government has for this subject.

The potential reform of A-Level psychology should be of concern to the BPS and all members because psychology is one of the most popular A-Level courses and as such much of the publicity for this discipline comes from this level of study. The recruitment of tomorrow's psychologists partly depends

on presenting this subject in the right way and the discussion needs to start early on about what the 'right way' might be.

To ensure that the A Level is as valid and valuable as possible, some creative thought needs to be given to a number of issues including:

- Whether it is possible to avoid the duplication of Year 1 degree study and A-Level psychology to ensure that the choice to study A-Level is enriching.
- How the inclusion of independent or practical work can be achieved without simply bringing back the old coursework (which was removed because it lacked validity).
- Educating those who teach and publicise the subject (including GCSE Science teachers) that it is the scientific approach to research in psychology as a discipline that makes it science, not the inclusion of biological psychology and neuroscience content/topics.
- Ensuring that it is possible to determine which candidates are more learned about psychology and the issues involved in research, rather than those who are simply better at English.
- Supporting those teachers who find themselves teaching a subject in which they do not have a degree.
- Investigating how the skills of a researching psychologist can be assessed as well as knowledge of psychological theory and research.

I would really like to hear what other society members in all fields think about the possible reform of A-Level psychology as many of us, I am sure, are society members now because of our first experiences with the subject at A-level.

Reference <http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-reform>

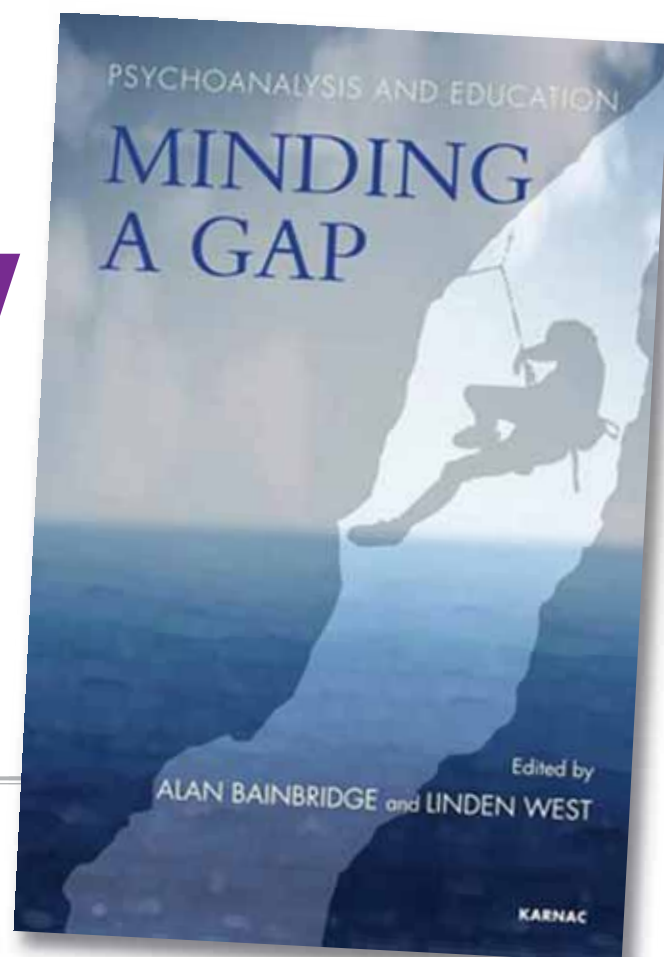
Psychoanalysis and Education

Minding a Gap

Edited by Alan Bainbridge and Linden West

Publisher: Karnac Books; 1 edition (26 Jun 2012)

ISBN-10: 1780490453 • ISBN-13: 978-1780490458 • 288 pages



ANDY MCCARTHY

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My Christmas reading concerned two books: *Psychoanalysis and Education (Minding a Gap)* and *Fifty Shades of Grey* (from a purely psychological point of view!). My gut instinct was that I would not like either, but to my surprise found both to be little gems (for quite different reasons) and if you are still reading this I know why!

Rightly or wrongly, Freud and his followers have been marginalised, and to some extent written off from mainstream teaching, so many universities (and the International Baccalaureate) no longer teach Freudian theory. So does this book (*Minding a Gap*) actually offer anything new, reduce the 'gap' and seduce a sceptic like me? Quite simply the answer is 'yes', and yes it made me think.

If we knew how a child actually learns it would be a good starting point for improving the educational system. This of course can be carried forward, because how teenagers and adults learn is not necessarily that different. It is interesting to note that universities are slowly moving away from just 'lecturing' in favour of a more student focused approach. This then raises the simple question: When does a human learn the most? Answer: during the first six months of life (critical learning period) and then up to three years old (sensitive period). This is all before compulsory mainstream education gets

hold of the child, and Freud had quite a lot to say about infants and parent-driven, experiential learning.

Freudian theory is about how a human constructs its subjective self within its unconscious, and how, from there, all expressed behaviour emanates. This includes knowledge of self and others, and knowledge itself (an epistemological approach). Beyond Freudian theory is the life-long approach: we continue to be constructed as a product of our continued experiences. The major point this book raises is that as infants our source of knowledge is usually from our first significant other (ie parent or guardian) and that in this dyadic relationship, although exposed to shifting focuses as time progresses (school teachers and later university lecturers), underlying the knowledge creation/transfer is a personal, dyadic relationship between two subjective, sentient humans. So, does the rate of learning slow partly because the recipient of surrogate parenthood (eg teacher/lecturer) does not know how to fill that role correctly? (A point of interest is that in many countries the infant-maternal relationship is not disrupted by compulsory schooling until the age of seven.) So is counter-transference of infantile behaviours one that needs to stop with infants and do we stop it too soon? The empathetic, reciprocal, conflictual, maternal

relationship is based on passive learning and active response; can this be applied to the relationship between a student and their school teacher and onto to a student and their university lecturer? Reading this book actually makes you think and re-evaluate your role as an educator.

'*Minding a Gap*' is about how the educator should fill this role and adapt to the needs of the learner. It is not always an easy read, but stick with it and enjoy the chapters which talk about you as an educator and the educator you think you are. You might be surprised to find that who you strive to be is not necessarily the person your students need you to be. Maybe it is not the educational system which needs changing, but the educators!

Finally, both '*Fifty Shades of Grey*' and '*Minding a Gap*' are mind-changing 'little gems'. They both lack pictures both contain surprises, and from one of them you will learn a lot more about yourself and how to improve as an educator.

Andy McCarthy has a wealth of experience in teaching and publishing, and currently teaches psychology at Kent College (independent school), Canterbury Christ Church University and University of Kent. ■

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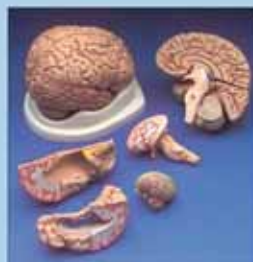
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