

Department of Psychology



Psychology Staff Present their Work at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology in San Diego

Three members of staff, and one Research Officer recently represented the University of Essex at the 13th Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology in sunny San Diego, California.

Ayse Uskul, Mitch Callan, and Philip Cozzolino all presented research at the conference. Dr Uskul gave a talk about aggressive responses to situations that threaten an individual's honour. Meanwhile, Dr Callan presented a poster detailing the psychological effects of random misfortunes, and Dr Cozzolino presented a poster demonstrating the antisocial consequences of CCTV surveillance. Also attending the conference, Mr Rael Dawtry (a Research Officer in the Department), presented a poster detailing how the age of an innocent victim influences perceptions of injustice among observers.

Happy half-term!

Another month has passed and we hope that you have been enjoying this busy term so far!

In this edition of the newsletter, you can find out more about what everyone has been up to: For instance, some of our staff have presented their work at a conference in San Diego while some of our students have helped to make our Department Visit Days a full success! Thanks to everyone who has helped. As always, we also feature an alumni to show you where a psychology degree can take you.

We would also like to take this opportunity to remind you that research (in this department and elsewhere) always needs your support! Whether it is through money donations or through volunteering as a participant in one of our experiments. Your help is always appreciated!

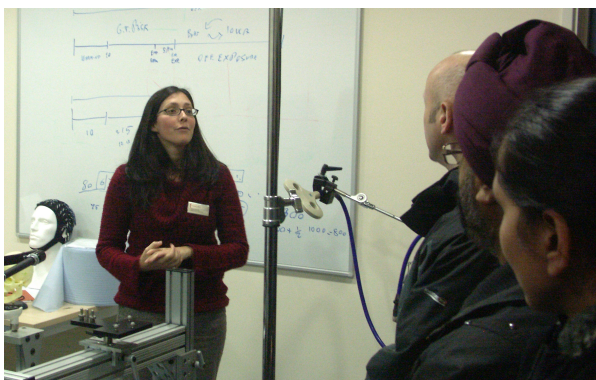
Finally, don't forget to send your news, pictures, or ideas for the newsletter to Dr Silke Paulmann.

Wishing you a fantastic second-half spring term!

Prospective Essex Students attend Visit Day

It is easy to imagine that Wednesday afternoons are a quiet time of the week in the Department. Lectures, labs and tutorials stop for a midweek break. Some students get active in clubs and societies, other do some work, paid or otherwise. The rest simply rest. However, most Wednesday afternoons this term, a team made up of lecturers, support staff and students welcome groups of prospective Essex students at Visit Days. Our guests have applied to join us as next year's first years. They come with their parents, or in some cases wives, husbands and children. This week we hosted a crowd of 70 visitors.

Many of our current students will have come to a Visit Day. Last year, some of you told us that you would have liked more time to chat with staff. Others wanted to meet with current Psychology students. So this year, Visit Days have changed. Now, our applicants and their entourage have a chance to mingle and chat with staff and student ambassadors over sandwiches and drinks. In addition, two of our current students give short talks. So far Dumebi Enebeli, Jade Fisher-Ryner (pictured above), Shade Odukoya, Charlotte Peters, Christy Sparham and Eloise Wright have taken part. These talks give our guests a flavour of why they chose to come here, what they think of the place, and maybe what their plans for the future are. Each student does this differently, but all of them do a great job. It is great to see the effect they have on the faces of next year's students. It really breaks the ice and the chatting after their talks is free and easy. We still do the things that worked well before: We demonstrate some of our current research; we present them with some reasons for choosing us; and we give them a tour of our excellent facilities. However, now that the ice is broken,



each of these other activities is easier, more fun, and hopefully more effective. If you are interested in joining in next year, please get in touch with Dr Steffan Kennett (skennett@...).

- Steffan Kennett

News in brief

- ★ Dr Tim Rakow has been appointed as Associate Editor at the journal *Thinking and Reasoning*. Congratulations, Tim!
- ★ On February 29th, Prof Elaine Fox will be speaking as part of the LSE Literary Festival on a panel discussing the portrayal of science in the media. Details can be found at: <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/publicEvents/events/2012/02/LitFest20120229t1715vSZT.aspx>
- ★ On March 13th, Visiting Professor Kevin Dutton will be speaking at the Cambridge Science Festival. More details about the event can be found at: www.cam.ac.uk/sciencefestival
- ★ In addition, on March 19th, Kevin will address questions such as “Why are some people natural leaders? How do they influence, persuade and sometimes manipulate others?” at the Essex Book Festival. His talk starts at 7:00pm and will take place in the Lakeside Theatre on campus (costs: £4/£3). To reserve tickets call: 01206-573948.
- ★ Don't forget about our research seminars which take place between 4 and 5pm in Room 4.722:
 - ★ On 28/02/2012, Dr Ana Guinote (University College London) will give the talk “Does Power Magnify the Expression of Dispositions”.
 - ★ On 13/02/2012, Dr. Simon Farrell (University of Bristol) will explore “Packages in memory: A clustering account of short-term memory and episodic memory”.

60 seconds with...

Dr. Kevin Dent
Lecturer

Can you describe your research interests in one sentence?

Characterising the fundamental limits of human cognition!

Why did you become a researcher?

I have an insatiable curiosity.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would that be and why?

Bruce Waynes Bat Cave - I love gadgets.

What is your favourite book?

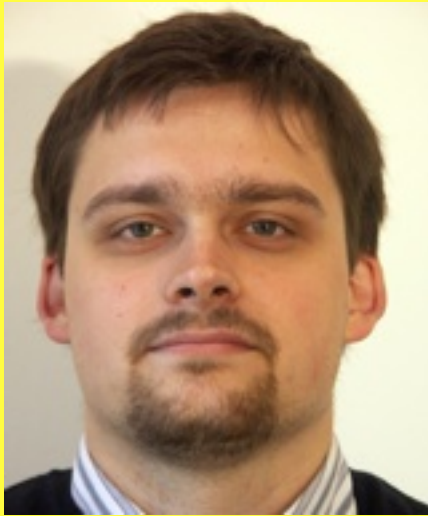
The Plague by Camus- Beautifully introspective.

If you could be a celebrity for one day, who would you want to be?

Don Van Vliet circa '68.



Research in the Department



PhD student Lukasz Walasek was kind enough to tell us a little bit about his research interests.

What are you working on?

My research is concerned with understanding how emotions and cognition (memory, attention) shape people's preferences. More specifically, I am interested in how the ownership status (whether you own something or you don't) alters the way people evaluate various consumer products. My current project focuses on the biases in value and probability judgments that stem from this distinction.

Why do you think this is exciting?

The finding that people are very averse to give up what's already theirs has huge implications for consumer research, economics, and the legal system. Very often, this behaviour will lead to interesting paradoxes. For example, does simply

thinking about an object make you want it more? Does the fact that you are a leading bidder on Ebay make you want to bid even more? The answer for both of these questions is often yes, which in itself is a fascinating observation about human nature. More importantly, such findings can tell us something about how irrational decision makers really are.

What are some of the implications for the real world?

We are constantly surrounded by many perplexing decisions in our lives. Through a better understanding of how do we make errors, we can ultimately improve decisions that we make.

Give us an impression about the department:

Personally, I enjoy working in the psychology department in Essex for two reasons. First, everyone in the department is very supportive, which creates a good atmosphere for research. Secondly, our department offers great range of resources necessary to conduct experiments in many areas of experimental psychology.

Help Support Research on Histiocytosis

One year ago, on 23rd February 2011, 5.5 months old Tilly died of the very rare disease Langerhans Cell Histiocytosis. Only one in 200 000 children are affected by this disease and research on its causes and treatment is badly needed. Tilly's mother Dr Karla Holmboe, a research fellow in the department, and her father Jo, set up a fundraising account in loving memory of Tilly. If you would like to support the work of the Histiocytosis Research Trust



(www.hrtrust.org) please go to www.everyclick.com/tilly and donate. Every little helps!

Careers in Psychology

Read about Essex psychology graduate Anushka Jatoi. She graduated in 2008.

What does your work/training involve?

I started my Masters in September 2011. Before that, my work involved conducting in-depth research on subjects such as violence in Balochistan, transgenders in Karachi, and other interesting topics we could possibly make into film documentaries. I also audited government school textbooks to help with education reforms in the Government schools in the province of Sindh in Pakistan. I was the production intern for a film on acid violence called 'saving face' which has been short-listed for an Oscar award and is due to be out spring 2012.



How did you find out about your course?

Through the SOAS website and through friends who studied here and work in the media/journalism field.

What is the most enjoyable aspect of what you currently do?

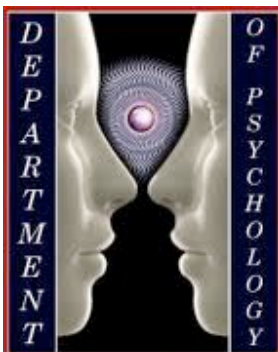
Meeting new people and learning about interesting subjects from various perspectives

Which of the skills that you got from your degree do you use most in your current work/study?

My degree at Essex was BSc Psychology. I studied this because it was extremely interesting, and I loved the mix of lab work and theory. I learnt how to write concise reports (which has been very useful!) and how to study people (through the theory gained during courses on human behaviour, decision making etc). I also did an observership at the prestigious AKU hospital in Karachi in the psychiatry ward and my degree helped me in understanding the various cases I came across there. My degree was open and helped me gain various transferable skills, thus enabling me to keep my career options open. I also write articles for the Express Tribune and Huffington Post and I usually analyse and research the subject from a psychological perspective since I feel most of the audience can always relate to this.

What advice would you give to students interested in pursuing this kind of work/study?

The theory and skills I learnt during my time at the university have assisted me in most areas of my life and during various positions in my career. It gives you various career options since most areas of life involve some aspect of psychology. The fact that the subject can stem into specific branches also helps those interested in pursuing the subject further.



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