

# Newsletter

## Welcome to our March issue!

Finally, this busy term has ended and we are all enjoying a well deserved break before heading full on into the next term filled with



exams (for students) and marking (for teaching staff). But, luckily, the weather is on our side and getting going again will be much easier in the spring than it was just after Christmas. When talking to students and staff, they all say that once the sun comes out everything is so much easier (and more fun!).

This version of the newsletter is again filled with interesting stories about the Department and things related to psychology. A special thanks to all those who contributed (frontrunner, volunteer students, design team). It is also going to be the last issue before the start of the new academic year (but watch out for our special Graduation Day Issue!) and we will be collecting ideas on how to make the newsletter even more informative over the next few months. Please let us know if you have any ideas, else, relax and look forward to a revamped version in October!

Wishing you all a wonderful Easter break and a happy, successful summer with lot's of interesting stories to share when we are all back. Take care everyone!

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# Under the Spotlight: A Career in Clinical Psychology

by Desire Nilsen & Anne Ming Bokenes



As we both want to become clinical psychologists, we attended the last “Under the Spotlight” event (held in the Teaching Centre on March 18th and organised by Karen Gooch [faculty employability co-ordinator], Dee Hardcastle [careers adviser] and the Department), which gave us a great opportunity to better understand the field as well as the application process. Pieter Du Toit, clinical psychologist and deputy course director for the doctorate in clinical psychology in the School of Health and Human Sciences of the University, gave an informative presentation on how to proceed when applying for the program. He pointed out some very important tips on what would strengthen our applications. For instance, although a good degree (high 2:1

or better) is crucial, there are many other things that students can do to improve their chances of getting into the program: completing an MSc by Dissertation in the Psychology Department is one of them as it offers a great opportunity to improve research skills. At the same time, the course allows to focus on topics relevant for clinical psychology (e.g. by studying a clinical population).

Heather Castillo also talked about career possibilities in clinical psychology but focused on her experience with service users. Her interest in personality disorders guided her into research from a service user perspective, and resulted in the well-known Haven Project that has been a great success. Together with service users and researchers, Heather identifies factors that are important in the process of recovery. It was great seeing her motivation and interest for the field! During the event, students could ask as many questions as they wanted, which made the event very interactive.

## 60 seconds with...

### Dr. Steffan Kennett



#### What is your favourite song at the moment?

*Happy* by Parrell Williams. I love singing along with my daughter (6 years). She knows all of the words because they sing it in assembly at her school. I asked whether it was loud with her whole school singing along. She replied: "Yes it is quite loud, but not as loud as when we sing a real classic, like Katy Perry's *Firework*."

#### What was your most memorable birthday?

Being whisked off to Paris on Eurostar for the weekend as a surprise by Helen, my wife. We had spent the summer (1994) at the end of our first year at University living there together. It was lovely returning to some of our old haunts.

#### What did you want to be when you were little? (one of the presumed many)

As far as I can remember, I was 6 when I was first asked. Straight away, I answered "engineer", but I was thinking of a car mechanic (you see, they work with engines).

#### What is your favourite sport to watch?

I love watching almost all sports. Rugby is probably my favourite, though I also love watching running, especially relay races.

#### What was the last film you saw at the cinema?

Philomena. Heart rending.

#### When I dance, I look like...

...an extremely cool dude. Hmmm.

#### What celebrity annoys you the most and why?

Jeremy Clarkson. I hate cars (I've moved on since I was 6) and casual prejudice. It is, though, only a matter of time before I'm spotted wearing a blazer with jeans.

#### Are you a morning person?

No.

#### What is your favourite dessert?

Crème Brulee. I like cooking it too as I can have fun with a blow torch.

#### What is your ideal holiday destination?

Somewhere I've not been before, that I can reach by train, that has river-swimming and good food. The latest place to fit the bill was Aubeterre-sur-Dronne.

#### What is your proudest moment?

Strangely, I feel quite regular bursts of pride at the mundane activity of lolling about at home with Helen and our kids taking the Mickey out of each other.

#### If you could have dinner with 3 famous people, who would they be and why?

Ben Goldacre, because I like his fun yet serious approach to medicine, politics and stats; Stephen Fry, because usually he can be relied upon to have some fun stories; and George Monbiot as he is thoughtful and radical.

#### Sweet or salty popcorn?

Sweet.

# Immanent Justice

by Keishema Kerr

Senior lecturer Dr Mitch Callan and PhD student Annelie Harvey have recently contributed to a research report regarding immanent justice. Despite previously believed to be an infantile function that children use to comprehend punishments, immanent justice refers to the decision that when people suffer negative experiences it is due to previous wrongdoings; almost like the real life application of the belief of karma.



It is believed that this way of thinking is coherent with the human perception of a just world, which is a comforting and hopeful way of believing that good things happen to good people and “bad people get what they deserve”. This belief in a just world, according to Lerner, allows people to create long term goals as we believe that hard work pays off whereas if we were to believe that the world was random and unfair, it would not allow us to strive for long term goals causing us to focus more on short term goals as our investments are rewarded with almost immediate benefits. Previous studies support this notion as a positive link has been found between planning, investing and confidence in achieving future goals and beliefs in a just world. Bearing this in mind, if the just world principle includes long term (vs. short term) goals, immanent justice attributions for bad outcomes increase with participants are asked about their long term goals.

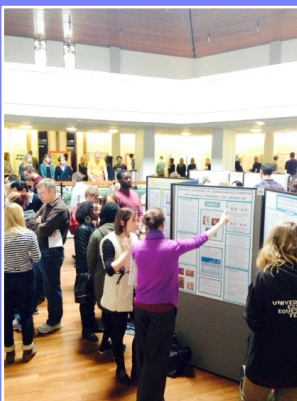
In this study, participants completed a questionnaire, which aimed to measure their long and short-term goals, reporting aspects the importance of such goals and the likelihood to achieve them. Participants were also explicitly asked how crucial is to believe they live in a fair world to achieve the goals they listed. Following this, participants were split into two groups and asked read identical articles about a man who was seriously injured as the result of a freak accident. The only differences were that one condition was labelled “good person condition” and mentioned the victim being a volunteer and beloved by the community, whereas the article in the other condition reported the victim to be awaiting sentencing for theft – “bad person condition”.

Respondents attributed the accident to his conduct (on a Likert scale) more when they believed him to be a thief rather than a valued member of the community. This is due to focus on long term goals it is these goals that motivate us to do our best to reach them. The results regarding the long-term (vs. short term) goals support the predictions, as they seem to activate the desire to perceive the world as a just place therefore increasing immanent justice reasoning. These findings illustrate the way in which the belief in a just world shapes our interpretation of life events.

To read the full report: Callan, M. J., Harvey, A. J., Dawtry, R. J. and Sutton, R. M. (2013). Through the looking glass: Focusing on long-term goals increases immanent justice reasoning. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52, 377–385.

# THIRD YEAR POSTER DAY

by Keishema Kerr



On Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March our third years had their poster day for their PS300 projects. Nerves ran high as everyone set out their posters and practiced their presentations on one another. But once the sessions got going, information was flowing and the passion for the research was evident.

The posters presented are part of PS300 projects and much thought and hard work has gone into the final displays. Projects ranged from gender and sexuality to mirror neurons and imagination. Many of the projects have resulted in very novel findings and are of publishable quality, so a special well done to those students!

Supervisors floated from stall to stall and asked questions about the research as did current second years hoping to get the scoop on who are the supervisors (as second years supervisor allocation is rapidly approaching) and which aspects of the PS300 were the most challenging. Refreshments were on hand and everything seemed to have run smoothly.

**All the best to all the third years!**



# Summer Time Stressing

by Keishema Kerr

*Too  
Blessed  
to be  
Stressed*

As exams approach and deadlines creep in, everyone's feeling the stress. The effects of stress leave us feeling drained, and let's admit it even less motivated to get anything productive done. Excuses like "I'm too tired" and "I'll start once my headache has worn off" are frequently uttered to justify our idle states. On top of that we all have that friend that tells you to relax but that doesn't help that voice in the back of your head that has your seemingly never-ending to do list on a loop.

The term stress was coined in the 1930's within the lab of Hans Selye who created stressful responses in animals to identify 3 stages of reaction (alarm, resistance and exhaustion). However, the stress students frequently face is more to do with learned helplessness with a seemingly positive correlation with bingeing on family sized bags of crisps whilst others channel their frustrations out in the gym, as physical activity is known to be one of the most effective stress relievers. This learned helplessness is when we don't confront our issues and is heighten by the creation of a bleak future be it an un-passable exam or the competitive graduate job market.

What can you do to reduce this anxiety? The truth is it is different for everyone, a lot of focus is put on the deep breaths and the long soaks in the bath, but sometimes we just want to have a good old-fashioned whinge. Dr Christian Jessen (of embarrassing bodies) claims that having a moan can be all we need to release some of that pent up anger and frustration.

If you're lucky enough to be an optimist you are better at handling stress. Recent research has shown that Cortisol levels (the stress hormone) are more stable in those with more positive personalities. This isn't always bad though as Cortisol can give us heightened memory (handy) and increase immunity. Research in Melbourne has found that chewing gum lowers cortisol levels as it stimulates us mentally, in Japanese trials chewing reduced levels by 25.8%



- ❖ Get organised! Set a realistic yet broad revision timetable. We all know that it's easier to revise the modules we like but the neglect of the less favourable ones – in the long run is a no no.
- ❖ Give yourself breaks as doctors have advised revision to be in no longer sessions than 45 minutes to maintain that much needed concentration!

Just think that everyone is in the same boat. Good luck everyone!