

ABSTRACTS

5th Annual CEP Conference: Awareness

Current Developments in Positive Psychology

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This paper provides an overview of recent developments in Positive Psychology drawn from the Positive Psychology Summer Institute held in August 2001 in North California, USA. It summarises the latest research from Martin Seligman, Ed Diener, Chris Peterson, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Dacher Keltner and Barbara Fredrikson. The notions of psychological capital, Values in Action classification of strengths and the Broaden-And-Build theory of positive emotions are examined in relation to the main objectives of Positive Psychology - to study factors that promote flourishing and optimal functioning of individuals and communities. The paper also summarises the contributions from younger scholars in Positive Psychology on experiences and neurobiology of positive emotions, development of positive meaning and growth following trauma and relationship break-ups, experience of gratitude and forgiveness, optimism, positive health, biological mechanisms of altruism, emotional intelligence and creativity in later life. Positive Psychology is represented as a multi-disciplinary orientation of psychology which unites research evidence from evolutionary, neuropsychological, cognitive, social, humanistic and narrative perspectives. In conclusion, the future directions for research and practical implications of research in Positive Psychology are discussed.

Seeing through the Surface of Behaviour: Does ape imitation imply human-like perception?

Professor Richard W Byrne (Keynote)

University of St Andrews, Scotland

Which species are claimed to imitate depends which definition of imitation one takes, but there is good evidence that great apes can acquire novel, complex behaviour (partly) by imitation of skilled conspecifics. Compared with the manual skills of other non-human primates, the food-processing techniques of great apes (including chimpanzee tool use and

gorilla plant gathering) are elaborate, complex and highly organized; yet this knowledge is traditional and dependent on imitation, not innate. Typically only the broad-brush, "program level" structure of the task is copied, whereas details of execution are often performed idiosyncratically. It is often asserted that, in order to imitate, an individual must understand the purpose of the behaviour and how one goes about accomplishing that purpose. Instead, I argue that sufficient information about the structure of behaviour can be extracted from watching repeated, effective actions to enable imitation without intentionality. Moreover, rather than imitation requiring prior understanding of intentions, I suggest that "perceiving" the underlying structure of action beneath the surface form of behaviour may be crucial to detection of causality and the intentions of others, in humans as well as other great apes.

Transformative Action

Jane Henry

Open University

In what ways are you the same and in what ways have you changed over the last ten or twenty years? What do you think brought about that change? Are you happy with the way you are? What would you like to change about yourself, if anything? What aspects seem to be most resistant to change? What has helped you become nearer the person you would rather be? This workshop will explore factors in life that have helped us change and, if time permits, will go on to suggest some ways of tackling things that seem difficult to alter.

Merleau-Ponty's Theory of Art: A route to follow

John Haworth

Manchester Metropolitan University

Scattered throughout the writings of Merleau-Ponty is an Embodiment Theory of Art, (Haworth 1985, 1990, 1997). This views the artwork as 'enriched being' in its own right, as distinct from an analogue for an external truth or essence, as traditional aesthetic theory

claims. It proposes that this enriched being is not produced primarily by intentional acts, the traditional view, but by the reciprocal influence of consciousness, the body, techniques and materials. It 'gives visible existence to what profane vision believes to be invisible' (Merleau-Ponty 1964 p166). It involves a route, an experience, which gradually clarifies itself and proceeds by dialogue with itself and others. I have explored this theory of art in 'research conversations' with internationally famous artists (Leonardo V30, No2, 137-145). (The 'research conversations' are similar to those now being advocated in American Psychologist 2001, V 56, No 5, 445-452) I have also used a 'first person method' (Varela and Shear eds 'The View from Within' 1999) consisting of 'listening to the voices' emanating from the practice of fine art. An account of these explorations will be given, and a submission for an AHRB Innovation Award outlined.

Animal Consciousness: Language and communication in Bonobos

Ted Hazleton

Meharry Medical College

This paper examines developments in the study of animal consciousness with particular reference to bonobos (a species of ape closely related to chimpanzees). Extensive use of video material will accompany the presentation.

Deja vu and Jamais vu: altered states, subjective experience and social representations.

Kei Ito and Wendy Snowden

University of Buckingham and Bucks

Chilterns University College

Deja vu is paradoxical in that it both constitutes and is set apart from everyday experience. The research reported here examines how prevalent different kinds of deja experience (deja vu, senti, vecu, revee, jamais vu) are across gender, culture and the life course. In addition the subjective meanings of the experiences are considered within a social constructivist framework. Also examined are the reported physical and psychological states of individuals before, during and after deja experience.

Data were collected from 350 respondents in 35 countries through a web-based version of Sno's (1993) Inventory for Deja vu Experiences Assessment (IDEA). Findings indicate that deja vu incidence is high, with fewer than 2% of respondents reporting that they had never had deja experience. Interpretations of the experience are disparate, including 'proof' of reincarnation, precognition and a parallel universe, as well as the more usual social representation of unconscious memories. Systematic differences in the way deja is reported between individuals who experience the world primarily through the dimensions of extraversion, neuroticism or psychoticism are found, for instance, a significant correlation between psychoticism and the concept of a parallel universe is noted. Evidence for altered states and depersonalization is considered.

Evolving Psychology

Nigel King

University of Huddersfield

It is, sadly, not uncommon to find amongst those intimately involved in psychology – as students, academics and/or practitioners – a feeling that there is “something missing” in their discipline. Indeed, the CEP section was set up with the explicit aim of responding to such a feeling, specifically in the following areas:

- neglect – or at least undervaluing – of Consciousness and Experience in the teaching of psychology and as research topics
- lack of dialogue between different traditions in studying these topics
- failure to apply psychological understandings of experience to practical issues of change and transformation in the “real world”
- irrelevance of much of the psychological curriculum to everyday life.

This discussion session will seek to draw on participants' personal experiences of the discipline of psychology, to consider what might *practically* be done to address the kinds of shortcomings mentioned above, in the areas of teaching, research, and the application of psychology.

Experiencing Ecology, Changing Lifestyles: an in-depth study into meaningful experiences that trigger ecological awareness and behaviour change in everyday life

Paul Maiteny

South Bank University and Open University

This paper will describe research into experiences that have triggered environmental awareness and attempts to change everyday lifestyle to reduce environmental impacts. Discussants were participants in a programme designed to aid behaviour change (Action at Home). The paper builds on others the author has given articulating the need for policy-makers, educators and researchers to consider the 'inner' psychological and cultural causes of environmental problems. The research shows that key experiences contributing to irrepressible awareness include the following: anxiety (about personal and societal well-being); 'connectedness' (of self as contextualised within a bigger whole in a relationship of mutual dependence). Some are 'formative', others 'transformative'. These experiences, ecological awareness and the religious/spiritual or political beliefs that frame them give a certain meaning and satisfaction to discussants' lives. However, they are also anxious and demoralised about the huge shift in awareness and behaviour needed throughout society for it to move onto a sustainable course, the difficulty of changing within a structure that does not support it, and their personal dilemma of how to stop consuming in ways that have become habitual.

Consciousness in the World: the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty

Eric Mathews (Keynote)

Aberdeen University

This paper attempts to apply phenomenology in the style of Merleau-Ponty to the current philosophical and scientific debates about the nature of consciousness. It will be argued that, if we approach the issues in this way, we see that 'consciousness' is not the name of a thing or process, but a way of referring to a relationship in which human beings stand to the world.

The Many Maps Model

Mary Midgley

Newcastle University

We need striking new images that do justice to the complexity of the human situation. My image is that of the relation between different maps of the same territory in an atlas. Why do we need a political map of Europe as well as a physical one? The countryside does not become suddenly different at the point where France meets Germany. The truth is that no map shows everything. Each map concentrates on answering a particular set of questions. When we look at political maps, what we want to know is the present state of the answers. There is no way in which the answers given to quite different questions about the physical constitution of the world can ever be made to stand in for this knowledge, any more than giving people shelter can stand in for giving them food. The different sets can often be connected, but there is no way in which they can be piled up into a sequence where one set of answers translates or supersedes the others.

Francisco Varela : Scientist of Experience

John Pickering

Warwick University

Francisco's legacy is a body of work that included contributions to biology, the question of identity and uniqueness, the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, Buddhism, cognitive neuroscience, the experience of time and the making of computer models of living processes.

This diversity belies a unity of aim. His object was to investigate the nature of individuality. He wanted to make psychology relevant to the world of the lived human experience. He recognised that human beings are a species uniquely capable of changing themselves. His research did not treat individuality as a given or as a natural kind, but as something capable of change and development.

His work is profoundly in line with the aims of the CEP section. This session will be an open discussion on Varela's ideas which may be relevant to our own work.

**Authoritarianism and its Relation to Creativity:
A comparative study among design,
behavioral sciences and law students**

Gidi Rubinstein

Netanya Academic College, Israel

The relation between authoritarianism, political attitudes, and religiosity level, on the one hand, and career choice, on the other hand, has been investigated in several studies. Weller and Nadler (1975) have found Biology, Chemistry, and Engineering students to be significantly more authoritarian than Psychology and Philosophy students. Henry, Sims, and Spray (1971) investigated the political and religious biographies of more than 4,000 American psychotherapists, and found that they were more liberal, leftist, and secular than their parents. This finding was also found in an Israeli sample of psychotherapy practitioners and students, the vast majority of them supported the political left, were secular, and became significantly more leftist and secular than their parents (Rubinstein, 1994). In yet another study carried out in Israel it was found that social sciences students scored significantly lower on authoritarianism and supported hold leftist attitudes than their counterparts who studied hard sciences (Rubinstein, 1997). The current study attempted to enhance the body of knowledge in the field in three ways: (a) investigating the relation between authoritarianism and creativity, (b) including law and design students, and (c) examining the relation between creativity and career choice. One hundred and eleven undergraduate students studying design, behavioral sciences, and law, who filled out Altemeyer's (1988) Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale, Tel-Aviv Creativity Test (TACT) (Milgram, Milgram, & Landau, 1974), and a demographic questionnaire, participated in the study. The Design students were significantly more creative and less authoritarian than both the Behavioral Sciences and the Law students. The results are discussed in the context of the role these two personality variables play in choosing a field of study.

Engaging Consciousness

Guy Saunders

University of Bath

This is work in progress arising from teaching a Psychology of Consciousness course and is intended as a discussion paper. There are four areas of concern:

1. The absence of social and cultural explanations in theories of consciousness.
 2. The use of evolutionary explanations as a Theory of Everything.
 3. The assumption that evidence of consciousness must be physically constituted.
 4. The delegitimization of experiential aspects of consciousness, particularly those requiring first-person or metaphysical explanations.
- Students expressed dissatisfaction at the way with some arguments 'everything goes' and yet for others, 'nothing goes'. So, this paper presents a series of challenges to certain physical orthodoxies, e.g. The ego/bundle problem of psychoanalytical unity (MacKay) related to The 'Infinite Regress'; The 'Ghost in the Machine' (Ryle); seeming to exist (Dennett) and 'Actions exist, and also their consequences, but the person that acts does not (Buddha).

Life Directions: sources of guidance

Richard Stevens

Open University

One of the curious properties of human reflexivity is the ability to reflect on our actions and the degree of openness this makes possible. The idea of this workshop is for participants to share and explore their own experience of the forces and processes underlying their own life directions. In other words, how and on what basis do we decide or find ourselves engaged on particular courses of action. Which of these directions are generated by the social discourses and processes in which we are immersed, for example, and which by biological or existential needs? What role can our capacity for reflexivity play in influencing the life directions which make up the course of our lives? What other sources of guidance (e.g. philosophical, spiritual?) might there be?

Outside the Citadel: the de-interiorization of mind.

Steve Torrance

Middlesex University

Traditionally, mental states - particularly conscious ones - are seen as paradigmatically inside the head. The traditional 'interiorist' picture of mind is shot through with spatial and topographical images that work collectively to produce a composite story of how 'inner' mind and 'outer' world oppose each other.

There are various theoretical projects that challenge this picture, and which seek to 'de-interiorize' mind - for instance the idea of 'the extended mind' championed by Clark and Chalmers (1998), and 'enactive' cognitive science, as proposed by Varela, Rosch and Thompson (1991). These approaches challenge traditional computational views in cognitive science. We note that extended or enactive theories inherit some of the puzzles of such earlier views - in particular whether cognitive and phenomenological aspects of mind can be treated in a single overarching theory.

Some de-interiorizing projects directly target experiential consciousness. Recent work by Velmans and by O'Regan and Noe, offer strikingly different ways of de-interiorizing perceptual consciousness. Perhaps the apparent tension between these accounts can be resolved. But one might wonder how far such de-interiorizing projects are themselves trapped in the very spatial-topographical metaphors that they are seeking to reject in the traditional picture.

Impact of Divergent Perceptions of Supervisors' Interactional Styles upon Employees' Blood Pressure

Nadia Wager, George Fieldman, & Trevor Hussey

Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

Aim: To examine the influence of perceptions of supervisors' interactional styles upon supervisees' ambulatory blood pressures. We hypothesised that supervisees' blood pressures would be significantly elevated when working under a less favoured supervisor, compared to a more favoured supervisor.

Method: A controlled, quasi-experimental, field study of female healthcare assistants ($n = 25$), employing a within-subjects design. Allocation to the experimental and control groups was based upon participants' responses to a supervisor interactional style questionnaire. Experimental participants ($n = 13$) reported working under two divergently perceived supervisors at the same workplace, on different days. The control group ($n = 12$) worked either under one supervisor, or two similarly perceived supervisors. Ambulatory blood pressure was recorded every thirty minutes.

Results: No significant differences are observed in the control group for either systolic or diastolic blood pressures between the two supervisor conditions (mean difference: systolic = 2.78 mm Hg, diastolic = -0.53 mm Hg). In contrast, the experimental group demonstrated significantly higher systolic (mean difference = 12.51 mm Hg, $t = -3.879$, $p = 0.001$) and diastolic (mean difference = 5.51 mm Hg, $t = -3.972$, $p = 0.0009$) blood pressures when working under a less favoured supervisor compared to a favoured supervisor.