

Winter 2014

Ψ  
NO.1

@PsychOutMag

# It's Christmas!



What makes  
a Happy  
Christmas?

Santa; saint  
or sinner?

The Psychology  
of Christmas Spending

INSIDE! Quentin Summerfield interview



Ho! Ho! Ho! We're back!

# Psych Out

MAGAZINE

## Don't Mind Us!

Editor's Letter

*Hello and a warm welcome to the first issue of PsychOut for the academic year!*

We have a new team here at PsychOut HQ, and we are all very excited to bring you this special Christmas edition.

PsychOut has been off the radar for a little while, so if you haven't heard of us before, we're a student-run publication aiming to bring you news on all things weird and wonderful in the world of psychology (including some that you won't hear about in the lecture theatre!)

Thank you to the team for working on this issue on such a tight deadline

– it wouldn't have been possible without your hard work! We are always looking for new contributors, so if you fancy getting involved in the next issue, be sure to drop us a line at [psychout@yusu.org](mailto:psychout@yusu.org).

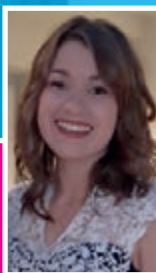
Check out our fantastic Christmas features, including articles on whether the myth of Santa is damaging to children, and how to have yourself a merry little Christmas. I would like to give a special thanks to our Head

of Department, Quentin Summerfield, who met up with Megan Goddard to give an exclusive interview and insight into his role at the University of York.

I very much hope you enjoy this issue of PsychOut, and look forward to bringing you more exciting psychology news in the future.

Until then, have a fantastic Christmas, and we'll see you next term!

*Bethany*



All the references and materials used in this issue can be found at [psychoutmag.wordpress.com](http://psychoutmag.wordpress.com)

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Staff?  
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# The Psychology of Christmas Spending

**Psychology is a dynamic field, and spans into advertising and retail. Rianna Fernandez decided to take a look into how retailers use psychological theories to their best advantage.**

With Christmas less than a month away, most people will have already done their present shopping (or, if you're in the minority like me, you haven't even started it yet).

**“4 out of 10 people started Christmas shopping in October”**

According to research by the Ideal Home Show, 4 out of 10 people started Christmas shopping in October, with shops such as Selfridges setting up their Christmas displays in the same month. But what psychological concepts do shops take advantage of in order to encourage us to spend during the festive period?

Marketing and psychology go hand in hand. Shops employ multisensory techniques, drawing on what is known from psychological research in order to encourage certain behaviours.

## **Colour**

Colours such as red and green are strongly associated with Christmas, for example the green of holly leaves and the red of Saint Nick's outfit. It's not surprising then, that as you walk into shops their themes and displays appear to be centred around these two colours to make it look 'Christmassy'. However colours also appear to play an important part in our shopping behaviour. A study by Gueguen and Jacobs (2012) showed that people were likely to tip more if their waitress

was wearing red, while Bagchi and Cheema (2012) demonstrated higher bidding activity on Ebay when products were positioned against a red background compared to blue.

## **Music**

Christmas music often evokes the feeling of nostalgia, and as it gets closer to the big day we slowly start to hear more and more classic Christmas tunes being played throughout shopping centres and stores. Nostalgia has been shown to make us feel good and elevate our mood (Sedikides et al., 2008); and while in a good mood, it's been suggested that we not only view products more favourably, but spend longer shopping in general (Dubé and Morin, 2001).

## **Smell**

Smell has strong ties to memory. By piping in smells that remind shoppers of Christmas it's likely to put them in a good mood (assuming they like Christmas), and spend more. A study by Spangenberg, Grohmann and Sprott (2005) also showed that shops that had both a Christmas scent and Christ-

mas music playing increased customer's evaluations of products.

## **Touch**

Although online shopping is becoming increasingly common and convenient, it is estimated that 98% of us still go into stores and physically buy our presents. Studies show we are more likely to buy what we touch (Wolf, Arkes, & Muhanna, 2008) and that we're even more likely to buy what's in the centre of displays (Underhill, 2007). This means shops can arrange their displays to sell highly priced products.

**“98% of us still go into stores and physically buy our presents”**

It seems that shops are targeting our senses in order to make us buy at Christmas; and it works! The combination of colour, smell and sound amongst other things sends us into a festive shopping frenzy; although I'm sure we wouldn't want Christmas shopping any other way!

From:  
Rianna Fernandez

# Meet the staff: Quentin Summerfield

with Megan Goddard

**MG: Hello Quentin, as it's the first term of a new year we were wondering if you'd give us a moment of your time to share some of your wisdom on the psychology department.**

**QS: Of course, I'm flattered.**

**You've been the Head of Department here at the University of York since 2011. Could you explain your role in the department?**

*I've been Head of Department for nearly four years now. Being Head of Department is not a post for life; it's a privilege that rotates amongst the professors. The job of the Head of Department is to define the ethos and the standards that the Department seeks to attain in teaching and research. I also try to encourage enthusiasm for the discipline of Psychology and for our Department, so that students feel they have come to a special place. To that end, I have recruited many members of faculty who are stellar researchers as well as brilliant teachers. Ultimately the Head of Department is responsible for decisions about how we support students, who we hire, what we teach, and what areas of research we emphasise. I consult widely, but ultimately I have to make the decision and that's where the responsibility of the role lies. I also teach a first-year course and I supervise third-year literature surveys and projects, as fundamentally we are here to teach and supervise students. If a Head of Department didn't do that, I think they'd become very detached. Plus, I really enjoy working with students.*

**You must have experienced quite a few things whilst at the University of York, what are your highlights?**

*Meeting some enormously able and interesting students has been a real highlight, particularly when working with them in third year. Also being able to recruit new outstanding members of faculty. Recruiting really fantastic people is a tremendously rewarding thing to do as Head of Department as you actually change things and make a difference for the long term. It has also been very rewarding to expand the Department. Ten years ago when I first came here we recruited only about 100 undergraduates each year; now we are able to recruit more than 200. I hope that we still look after everybody as well as we did when we were smaller. Another highlight has been the opportunity to work with some of the most senior people in the University and witness their commitment to supporting students and making York a really great place to work, study and learn. There are some phenomenal people whose motivation to do the right thing for students in York is impressive. Finally, conducting research that informed decisions by policy-makers in the health services about what treatments to provide adults and children with profound deafness through the NHS, which is of course enormously rewarding.*

**How did you become interested in psychology? Did your interest arise before or after your degree?**

*I started out as natural scientist interested in maths, physics and chemistry. I went to Cambridge and briefly flirted with engineering before realising I was more interested in how people worked, rather than how things worked. So I moved back into natural sciences and read psychology and biochemistry in my second year and then specialised in psychology in my third year. I had made up my mind that I wanted to be an experimental psychologist whilst*

*I was studying as an undergraduate. I have always really enjoyed running experiments, gathering data and trying to work out how hearing and speech perception work.*

**It's a privilege to have someone as successful as yourself as head of department. How is it you came to be here at York?**

*Well, that's very flattering; thank you. I was an undergraduate in Cambridge. I then did my PhD in Belfast in the early 1970s. After that, I won a post-doctoral fellowship from NATO to study speech perception in the Haskins Laboratories at Yale. I was there for two years and then came back to the UK and worked for the Medical Research Council for the next 27 years at the Institute of Hearing Research in Nottingham where I did research with and for people whose hearing was impaired. At that point, I decided that I wanted a change in career and one in academia rather than solely in a research lab. I knew some of the faculty in this Department, Peter Bailey who was a Reader here, and Peter Thompson who is still here; also Andy Young and Andy Ellis. I knew that the Department was outstandingly good. So I applied for a chair in psychology here in York, which I was fortunate enough to get.*

**Your speciality is hearing, how did this come about and why did you choose this field?**

*I met my lifelong mentor and personal friend, Mark Haggard, when I was an undergraduate. He taught me as an undergraduate, supervised my PhD, and then directed the Institute of Hearing Research where I worked. He introduced me to the art of speech synthesis, which caught my imagination, and helped me realise the importance of research on hearing to improve to quality of life of people*



*with impaired hearing. So really, meeting Mark, plus a prior interest in music, and the realisation that one way of making a difference is to conduct research that addresses real needs and is relevant to policy makers.*

**Do you have any top tips for freshers on how to survive the course?**

*One of the key things is to ask questions when you don't understand. Don't be afraid to speak to faculty. We enjoy talking to students about the things we teach and about the research we do. On the one hand, we really do want to convey the interest and excitement in experimental psychology that motivates us, but we are also interested in students as people. Sometimes I worry students think we'll only be interested in them if they want to be an academic, but that isn't the case! We want to help you to enjoy your time at York and go on to whatever career interests you, whether or not you work as a psychologist.*

**Finally, as it's the Christmas edition, what is your favourite thing about Christmas?**

*Being with my family; playing games after lunch on Christmas Day – and realising that my daughters' reaction times are hugely faster than my own; walking in the Lake District on Boxing day and riding mountain bikes in Dalby Forest.*

**PsychOut would like to thank Quentin for taking the time to speak with us.**

# It's not about the money: What makes a Happy Christmas?

PsychOut contributor Ella White decided to take a look into who has the happiest Christmas, and how we can all make the most of the festive season.

Christmas is said to be the happiest time of the year, with 96% of US Christians celebrating Christmas, and also 81% of non-Christians. What is it that makes Christmas be so successful and therefore celebrated worldwide? Is this happiness from the religious experiences and family gatherings which set the foundations for this festive holiday? Or is it the more modern approach of materialism: buying the perfect gifts and having the best decorations?

Hirschman and LaBarbera (1989) suggested there are seven types of activities that take place during the Christmas period 1) Family time 2) Religious activities 3) Christmas traditions, such as decorating the tree 4) Present-buying 5) Receiving gifts 6) Helping others, such as donating to charities 7) Enjoying sensual aspects of Christmas, such as food.

Who has a happier Christmas? It was predicted that people would report greater well-being if they had close family experiences and significantly helped others (Kasser & Sheldon, 2002).

Another strong indicator for a happier Christmas was

Christmas was a stressful experience. Participants income, marital status and education had no effect on their happiness at Christmas, however gender did. Women were considerably more stressed than men, possibly because women typically take more responsibility, such as shopping, cooking and present-wrapping.

It is suggested that family and religion make people satisfied due to the relatedness to others, so Christmas draws people together and makes them feel special. Religion also gives people a greater sense of meaning. Alternatively, people who put a strong focus on Christmas and religion could simply just feel happy because they are fulfilling social expectations of the season.

Material aspects of Christmas were associated with less happiness and the more the person spent during the holiday period, the higher stress levels the person had. Even though a large part of the holidays is dominated by shopping and wrapping presents, it actually contributes very little to happiness. Materialism also takes up valuable time, which could be spent with family (which may increase happiness), and standing in busy shops in long queues further elevates stress levels. People who put great importance on receiving gifts also reported less satisfaction and happiness, whereas those who gave more money to church and charity had a higher well being.

Therefore, stop focusing on what presents to get people and how many you will receive, and instead put more focus on being reunited with your family; you're bound to have a happier and more fulfilling Christmas!

“Women were considerably more stressed than men, possibly because women typically take more responsibility”

how much religion was incorporated into the holidays.

Results showed 74.8% of participants were satisfied with their holiday experiences, with a further 57.4% disagreeing that

When evaluating the occurrence of the seven types of Christmas experiences, family experiences were associated with the strongest feelings of well-being and happiness. Religious activity was also strongly associated with happiness and satisfaction during the holidays.





## Psychology in the Real World: Artistic Autistic

Artistic Autistic is a student-lead initiative in our very own Psychology Department at the University of York. Lead Editor of PsychOut, Bethany Dimmock met up with Managing Director Nicole Hatton-Urey to find out a little more about the company.

**In one sentence tell us what is Artistic Autistic?**

We are a student-run, community-interest business that helps and supports a local artist Peter Myers who has Autism, whose artwork is characterized by [his] incredible attention to detail.

**What is the aim of Artistic Autistic?**

To sell products with Peter's artwork on and allow Peter's artwork to get the publicity it deserves. We started with stalls and aimed to make as much profit as possible, but now we're trying to give the business an online presence with a website as well.

**Tell us a bit about the artist, Peter, and how Artistic Autistic has helped him.**

This has given Peter the chance to do something he really wants to do with his life. He'd really love to be a professional artist... He is still really humble about it even though his artwork is amazing. The aim is for one day that Peter will be totally independent within Artistic Autistic, which gives him the chance to live his dream.



**"It's awesome to know you're helping someone's dream come to life"**

**Personally, what is the most rewarding task as Managing Director?**

On one side it's my own personal development and awesome for me to realize what I want to do with my life. On the other hand it's awesome to know you're helping someone's dream come to life, especially for someone who just needs an extra hand and just a bit more help.

**Besides selling products featuring Peter's art, what else does Artistic Autistic do?**

We did something for the Tour De France, as it was coming through York. We visited a local primary school to run sessions to inform primary school children about Autism in a fun and interactive way. We showed them Peter's art and asked them to create pieces inspired by that. Peter decided a winner from each session and we held an exhibition at Accomb Explore Library. We hope to do more like this for more Primary Schools as we were informing children about Autism in a way which focused on positives of Autism, such as seeing the world from a different light.

**How does working with Artistic Autistic relate to the world of Psychology?**

It's awesome to be able to get a first person view of what Autism is, as I think doing it at degree level is one thing, but meeting someone with Autism is a totally different. It shows you the incredible individual differences between cases. When we were with the children in the workshops it was cool to see how different ages interpreted tasks which showed developmental psychology as well.

**What can we expect to see from Artistic Autistic in the future?**

We have a Christmas stall in James on the 26th November. We're praying the website will be up and running, but if not it definitely will be after Christmas.

You can get your very own Artistic Autistic products from the Christmas Market in James on 26th November, or visit their upcoming website (watch this space)! If you want to get involved, don't hesitate to email [artisticautistic.york@gmail.com](mailto:artisticautistic.york@gmail.com) for more information. We wish Artistic Autistic every success.

**- Bethany Dimmock**



# PsychPoll:

We asked 200 people:

Based on their 2014 Christmas TV advert, which retailer would you most likely shop at?

- A. Marks & Spencers 4%
- B. Debenhams 4%
- C. John Lewis 87%
- D. Other 5%

John Lewis  
won our poll!



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# Santa; saint or sinner?

Is lying to children  
about Santa  
damaging rather  
than just a  
'little white lie'?

by Emma Jessim

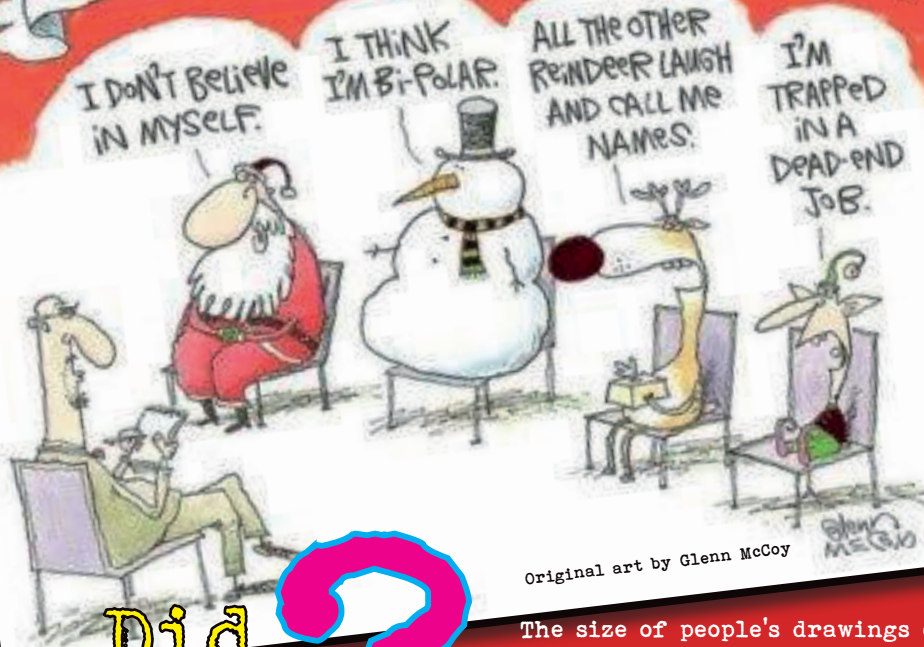
If there's one aspect of Christmas that nearly all children in the U.K. are familiar with, it's Santa. They are bombarded with stories of a magical man in a red suit delivering gifts straight down their chimney, and are encouraged to behave well in order to ensure his visit. This seemingly trivial 'white lie' has not often been investigated in the field of psychology, but the research that has been done shows surprising results.

It was found by Prentice et al. (1979) that children who were the most exposed to the myth of Santa Claus were less disappointed to discover that Santa was not real than those who had little exposure to the myth. The reason for this is unclear as the researchers expected that the less exposure, the less disappointment. However, this was not the case. When asked how they felt when they made the discovery, the most common response was that they were 'not at all' sad. Moreover, Condry (1987) found that none

of the hundreds of children that he interviewed reported feeling angry at the discovery of the lie. Interestingly, when asked how they thought other children would feel when they found out was quite different - 56% sad that others would feel emotionally distressed!

These results suggest that the myth of Santa does not have a damaging effect on children. Some might argue that because parents engage in a form of deceit, this might negatively affect the child and cause psychological issues. This is very hard to test, as the majority of U.K. children have exposure to Santa, so if it did cause psychological issues, then it would be difficult to distinguish, as most people may have them. Although some philosophical debates suggest the myth of Santa is harmful, no empirical evidence can be given for this argument. Thus, it is suggested that the myth of Santa Claus is nothing more than a light-hearted 'white lie'.

## CHRISTMAS GROUP THERAPY



Original art by Glenn McCoy

Did  
You  
Know

The size of people's drawings of Santa can tell you how close it is to Christmas, according to Craddick (1961). In theory, people's drawings of Santa will be bigger in mid-December than in early December, so the larger they are, the closer you are to Christmas day!

Our team of experts\* give up the goods!

## top tips for FRESHERS

**1. Get Stuck In:** Don't be afraid of throwing yourself into life as a Psychology student - **what you give is what you get!**

Take the opportunities the department offers you, both social and academic, whether it's nights out with PsychSoc or volunteering as a research assistant. Time really does fly and you don't want to look back and think 'I wish I'd had the chance to do that'.

**2. Keep on top of your work:** Many of us are guilty of getting behind with notes (me included!) but keeping up to date with lectures and reading really does make the holidays more enjoyable (and less stressful!).

**3. Speak out:** It's normal to feel homesick or scared for the first few months of University, but keeping it to yourself won't make things any better! There are many types of support systems available at the University of York, whether you turn to friends, your college welfare team or your supervisor, they are all there to listen!

**4. Be brave!** Do things you wouldn't normally do. Join societies you like the sound of and introduce yourself to new people! It's the best way to meet new friends and get the most out of university life. Everyone is in the same boat.. **so go for it!**

**5. Make a plan:** When writing essays, it is easy to get engrossed in one particular point and then go off on a tangent. By making an essay plan, you ensure that each point you make is focused on the title and answers the question at hand. Keep checking back to make sure each point is relevant.

**6. Speak up:** During the course, you will have tutorials with deathly awkward silences. Be that person who breaks the silence. You have nothing to lose, if you are wrong then you learn something new, and if you are right your tutorial group and tutor will thank you.

14 \*by experts, we mean our editors!



PsychOut: MEDIA WATCH



"All in the Mind"

BBC Radio 4 and Claudia Hammond explore the ins and outs of the human mind. [Find episodes online.](#)



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"Mother of all Autism Challenges"

Read this insightful blog from the mother of a high functioning autistic child.

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THE UNIVERSITY *of* York

# Psych Out

MAGAZINE

From all the team here at PsychOut, we hope you enjoyed this issue of the re-launched magazine.

As the song goes, "HAVE YOURSELVES A MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS"!

Good luck with exams in January.

We'll see you again next term!

# HO!

# HO!

# HO!

Look out for the next issue  
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