

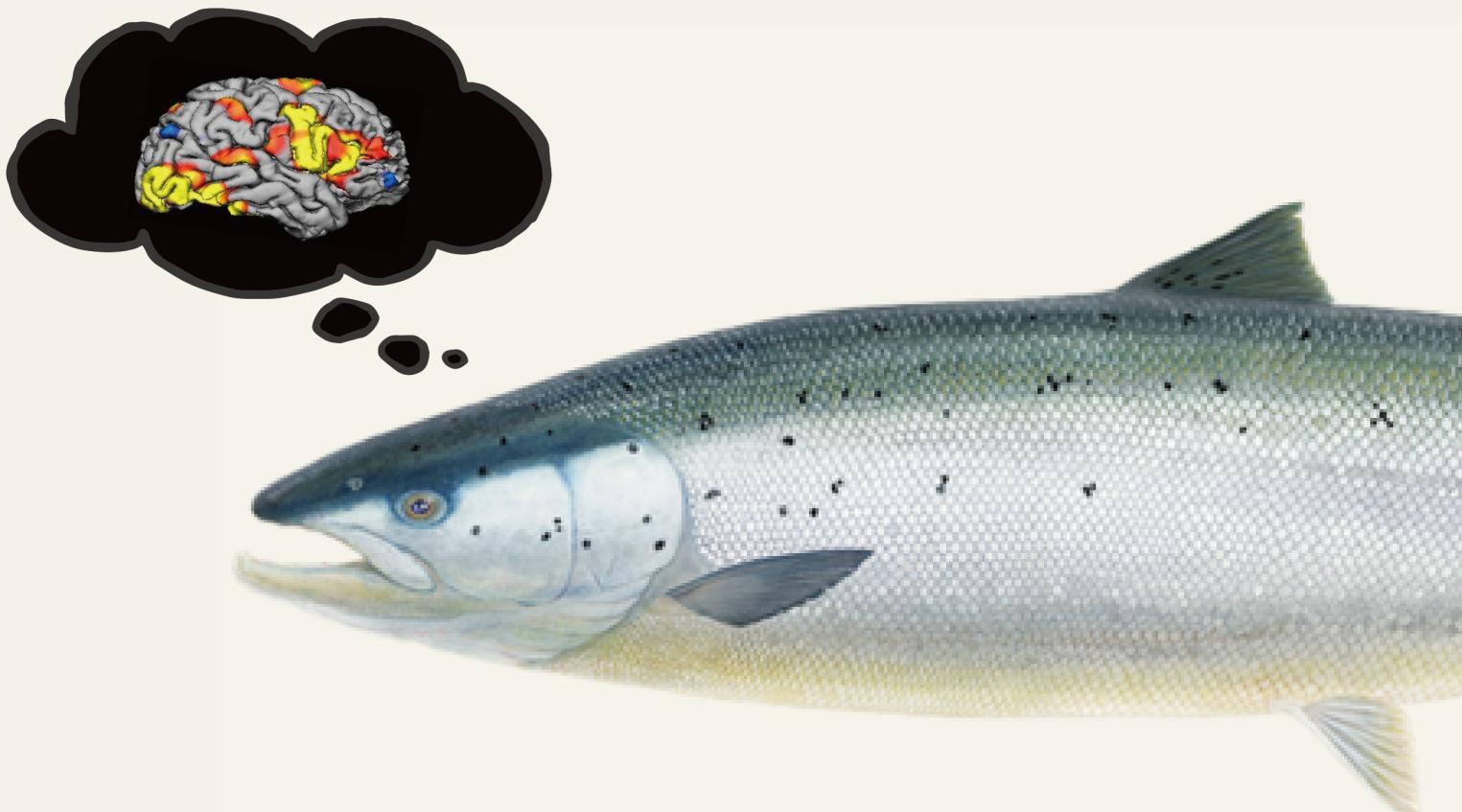
# Ψychout

UNIVERSITY *of York*

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## The Fish in the Scanner

And other unusual experiments in psychology



Issue 10 – March

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Question...

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abroad with psychology

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with Bailey House



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**[https://www.york.ac.uk/psychology/news-and-events/  
psychoutstudentmagazine/](https://www.york.ac.uk/psychology/news-and-events/psychoutstudentmagazine/)**

**All references from this issue are also available online.**



**THE COVER FOR THIS ISSUE WAS CREATED BY SO SUGITA**



# Ψychout

UNIVERSITY of York

## Editor's Letter



**Alex Reid**

Welcome to a rebooted version of Psychout, a magazine written by psychology students at the University of York. Our last issue was seven years ago in 2012! With the help of many of our current students we have managed to get this up and running again for the 2019 spring term.

This issue is themed on 'unusual but useful experiments in psychology', with article topics ranging from dead fish in fMRI scanners to musical stairs. There is also an interview with our very own Bailey House, a section on useful technology, and an article about a psychology work placement abroad (Sri Lanka!).

Our writers listed below have worked very hard on this issue, so I hope you enjoy it. For the next issue in summer term second year students Hannah Paish and Darel Halgarth will be taking over the editing duties for this magazine and I am excited to see what they will produce!

## MEET THE TEAM



**Emily Kerry**  
(MSc)



**Zoe Watson**  
(Yr 2)



**Colin Daumen**  
(Yr 1)



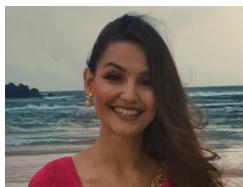
**Hannah Paish**  
(Yr 2)



**Nic Fife**  
(Yr 2)



**Ailish Carroll**  
(MSc)



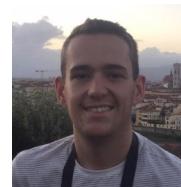
**Harriet Cackett**  
(Yr 3)



**Darel  
Halgarth**  
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(Yr 1)



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(Yr 1)

**Disclaimer: Please note this magazine is written and edited by students of the Department of Psychology, University of York. Views reflect the position of our individual writers, and are not the official position of the University or Department.**

Want to get involved in the production of PsychOut?  
Simply email us at [alex.reid@york.ac.uk](mailto:alex.reid@york.ac.uk),  
no previous writing experience is required!



## Features

*This term's feature section is dedicated to unusual but useful experiments in psychology*



### That's a bit fishy: when science mistakes go right

**Emily Kerry** tells us why putting a dead fish in an fMRI scanner can still produce useful results.

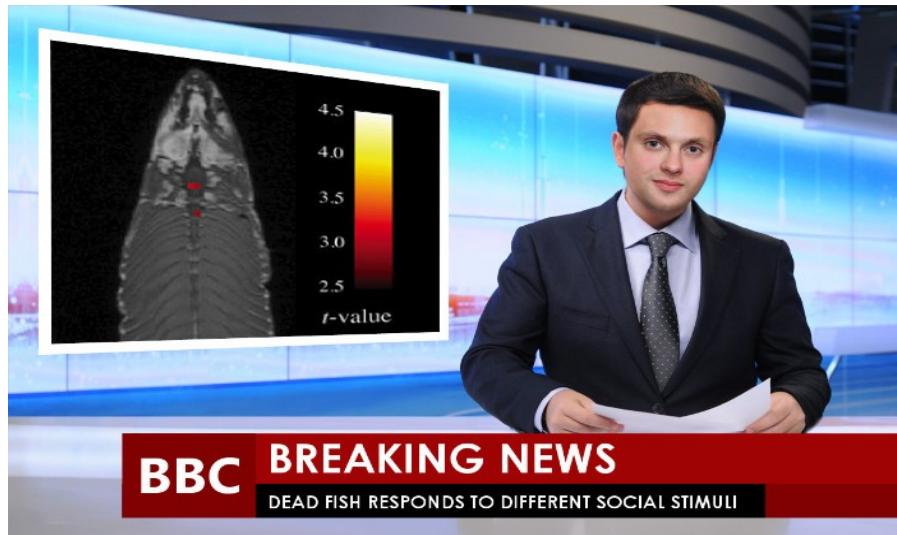
Scientific discoveries have often been stumbled upon by mistake with many inventions which are so commonplace in today's society being discovered accidentally. When Alexander Graham Bell first discovered the telephone he was attempting to replicate a German study explaining how to pass electricity through tuning forks, but instead transmitted his voice. One could argue that the German study had poor reliability due to the failed replicability however the by-product was life changing! Similarly, the X in X-ray is there to demonstrate the unknown as Wilhelm Roentgen accidentally discovered X-rays in 1895 but did not know what they were to name them more appropriately.

Psychology is a discipline founded in scientific principles with a long and respected history. Psychology has been driven by many great scientists such as Ivan Pavlov who progressed the field of behaviourism, philosophers such as Galen who introduced the concept of personality and finally Mr. Fish who demonstrated the importance of correcting your stats. Yes, you read that right, this is the story of how a lifeless fish changed the course of psychology in practice forever.

Back in 2010, Bennett and his colleagues endeavoured fMRI research to test participants brain responses to different social stimuli (Exclusive Vs Inclusive), but beforehand, as a sign of good practice, they tested the fMRI machine was working. Traditionally, fMRI machines are tested by placing an object in the scanner which provides contrast, this is often achieved via a balloon with mineral oil inside. However, on this occasion, one can only assume due to a lack of resources at the time, a dead fish fresh from the fish market was placed in the scanner.



A dead salmon: surprisingly brainy



This provided a good contrast to test the scanner due to the contrast between the bones, muscle and fat thus allowing the study to progress. However, it is not the study on social stimuli which is of interest here, it is, of course, the salmon in the scanner! When the researcher was later trying to demonstrate stats to his students, the salmon data was used as a data set for analysis. Interestingly, the fish which was evidently lifeless and bought for consumption from a fish market showed a significant increase in activation in response to the different social stimuli.

As this is not a tale of a magic resurrecting fish, you are probably wondering, how is this possible?! fMRI develops a huge amount of information which leads to thousands of comparisons of the data. However, for any of you with a head for stats may recognise that with multiple comparisons comes inflated alpha values and an increased likelihood to make a type 1 error. A type 1 error is finding a significant result when there is not truly one to be found. This might lead researchers to reject a null hypothesis and claim that something significant is happening when in fact it is not.

With respect to the salmon, multiple comparisons produced an inflated type 1 error rate to create a bizarre example of how a dead fish might 'respond' significantly differently to exclusive and inclusive social stimuli. As you can imagine, this can be very problematic in the real world and, as a result of this weird finding, corrections are now applied to fMRI data much more readily than they have been in the past. Such corrections reduce the type 1

error rate by reducing the alpha values making significant results harder to find and making the process overall more stringent. The take-home message is to always correct for multiple comparisons in your data and always be aware of type 1 errors!



**A fishy analogy: a type I error is when you think something is there but it isn't, a type II error is the opposite**



# Invisibility and where to find it

**Colin Daumen** explores our latent ability to feel 'invisible' to those around us.

Have you ever been asked the question, if you had a superpower or special ability, what would it be? Of all the almost infinite answers that could be given, I suspect you may have heard answers such as invisibility countless times. So, why choose invisibility over other powers such as immortality or mind reading, or even a complete removal of university stress?

To some extent, we all possess the power of invisibility; this comes in the form of what is known as the **invisibility cloak illusion**. Research published by Boothby, Clark, and Bargh of Yale University (2017) in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology found that, as humans, we believe that we are more observant than those around us. This creates an illusion of sorts, where we believe that we observe others more than they observe us.

Clearly it doesn't make logical sense for us to believe that we observe others more than they observe us. Yet the study found that people felt themselves to be observed less and they felt relatively invisible in various situations during their day to day life. The findings of the researchers remained consistent throughout the variety of different conditions they included in their study, ranging from interviewing students at a university canteen to results from an online survey. It was also found that individual's responses to the interview questions didn't vary depending on whether they were surrounded by close friends or complete strangers. This showed that social ties played little to no role in the outcome of the study.

So, what may be the underlying cause for this invisibility cloak illusion I hear you ask? It may be a lot less complicated to debunk this mysterious situation than first expected. We as humans each have exclusive access to one thing nobody else has does. Our mind. We

have access to our own thoughts, which other individuals don't, thus creating a sense of seclusion and invisibility from others. At the same time, we don't realize that other people have this exact same idea of self-awareness available.

**"As humans we believe that we are more observant than those around us"**

So, there you have it. If you have ever wished to have superpowers, there

may be an easier way than getting bitten by a spider or being blasted by gamma radiation. You just have to be yourself. In a sense then, we are all superheroes and amazing in the same way, but also in a completely unique and different way to each other.



**You don't need to go to Hogwarts to feel invisible (image from Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone)**



# The piano stairs experiment: why you should always take the stairs

**Zoe Watson** talks about Volkswagen's attempt to make our everyday lives a little less boring through a giant piano (pictured).



**Volkswagen's piano stairs in Odenplan subway station, Stockholm.**

In 2009, Volkswagen transformed the Odenplan subway station in Stockholm, Sweden by converting the staircase into a giant piano keyboard. By making the choice to take the stairs, members of the public were met by a joyful series of music notes, with each step delivering a different note when pressure was applied. Volkswagen was interested in whether making the stairs more exciting and essentially a more fun experience, members of the public would be more likely to take the stairs over the alternative choice of the escalator. This was considered an important motivation for the study, as technology has become so prevalent in our world, that technologies such as escalators might make us lazy and dependent. Volkswagen himself told The Star Business Journal "You know you should be taking the stairs, but it's easier to take the other route. We played off that. If we make it a fun experience, a good experience, then people will do it."

A video camera was set up within the subway station to observe whether the people of Stockholm would choose the piano stairs or stick to the escalators. In one day alone, 66% more people took the stairs than usual, suggesting that fun really is the best way to get people to change their ways. The members of the public showed pure glee as they first stepped onto the stairs, with many repeatedly running up and down the piano in an attempt to make a tune.

The basic idea behind the Piano Stairs Experiment was Volkswagen's "Fun Theory", which was an initiative developed in 2009 to promote the belief that if you want to change behavior, you need to make it fun!

Volkswagen held a competition in 2009 to encourage people to come up with fun, new ideas for products that would change people's behavior for the better. The finalists included the musical piano stairs, a jukebox rubbish bin (which plays music when people put their rubbish in) and a speed camera lottery, which eventually won the competition. Although you may think that taking the stairs over the escalators would not benefit you hugely, it has been reported that just two minutes of stair climbing each day burns enough calories to eliminate the one pound that an average adult gains each year. So, it's no surprise that this idea has escalated and been copied worldwide in a range of places including Italy and China.

The video of this experiment has since been shared and been seen by over 13 million people, with people all over the world appreciating the power of a simple bit of fun. Although this is just a basic premise, the effects are powerful and long lasting, encouraging future inventions which aim to change people's behavior through the mechanism of fun. As the world becomes consumed by technology and demands, this investigation reminds us how important it is to enjoy every little part of your day, and what a real difference a little bit of fun can make!



# Don't stand next to me while I'm peeing!

**Hannah Paish** discusses investigations into the phenomenon of bladder shyness from the ironically dubbed 'golden age' of paruresis research.



The ultimate nightmare scenario for people with bladder shyness

Being female, it is hard to imagine what it's like to have someone standing next to you while you pee, and as I can gather from conversations with my brother and my boyfriend, it's really not that pleasant for boys either. Both have told me that men will do anything they can to not stand directly next to each other at a urinal, even if there is one available. Someone even told me once that, even when you're desperate, it's really difficult and even impossible to pee if you know there are people nearby/watching you, which really says something about the power of the human mind. This sounds like a very interesting concept to investigate and it has been done (be it in 1976 when you didn't need ethical approval to measure how long it took someone to pee!).

In the late '70s, Middlemist, Knowles and Matter designed a (slightly creepy) experiment to see whether the onset of men's urination was delayed by a person standing close to them at the urinal. They conducted a pilot

study to get some idea of how men behave in bathrooms (you would think that every visit to the bathroom would act as a pilot study but I guess you have to measure the variables). This preliminary investigation found that men don't like to stand directly next to each other

at urinals, and it also takes longer for them to start urinating if

someone is standing close to them. Given that all of this was timed on a wristwatch by a guy pretending to groom himself in the mirror, it probably wasn't very reliable, so the investigators had to conduct a more detailed experiment.

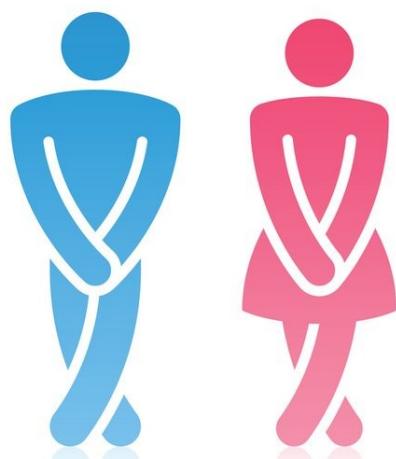
For the main investigation, naive participants were forced to use the far left of three adjacent urinals (by forced, I don't mean they were dragged in and ordered to use the one on the left, calm down. The confederate was already standing at the urinal relevant for the condition, and there was a 'do not use' sign on the other). For each test, there would either

be a confederate standing directly next to the participant, standing one urinal away, or not present at all, in order to manipulate the onset of the participants urination.

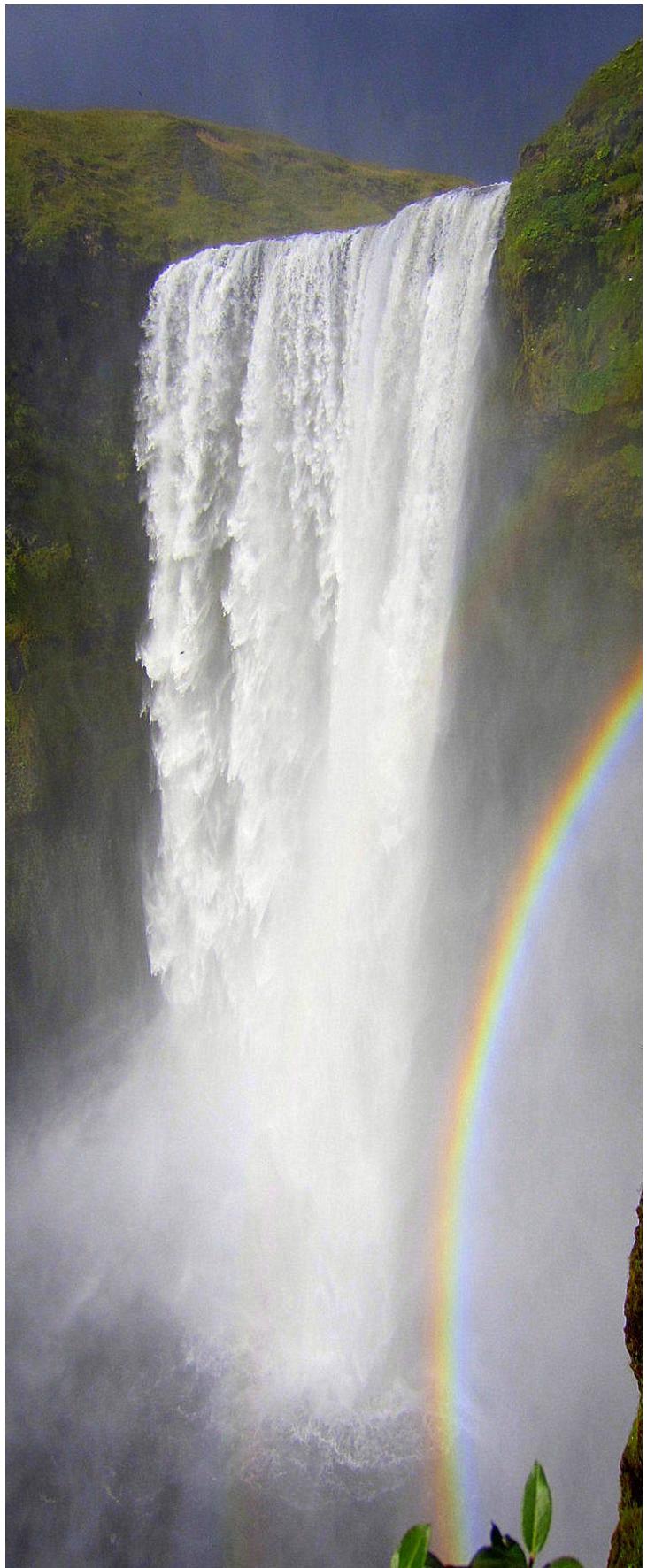
It gets weirder.... It seems that the confederate already had enough to do, so in the stall at the end of the line of urinals there was stationed a grad student with a periscope hidden by a pile of books in order to watch the streams of urine and measure the onset using two stopwatches: one to measure the onset time and the other to measure how long each participant took to urinate.

The experiment did indeed produce significant results: when there was no one else present i.e. no confederate, it took participants an average time of 4.8 seconds. When a confederate was one urinal away, onset time increased to 6.2 seconds, and increased further to 8.4 seconds when the confederate was standing next them (that's nearly double the amount of time when there was no one there at all). There were also signs that the urine streams were less persistent the closer someone stood to the participant, and participants also urinated for a shorter amount of time the closer the confederate stood to them. These results could be evidence that invasion of personal space causes arousal, making urinating more difficult. Or that guys are just really self-conscious about how good they are at peeing.

Moral of the story: guys, next time you go for a whizz, check for periscopes.



**Paruresis: the fear of going for a wee in front of other people**

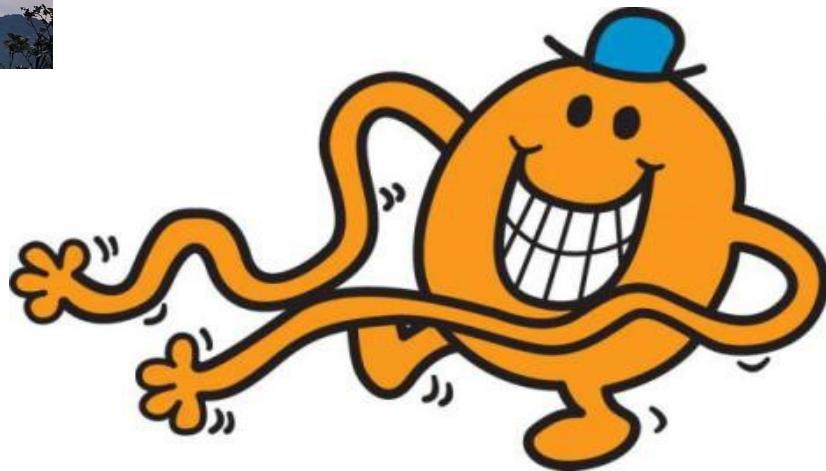


**Suggested intervention: tape this picture above urinals!**



# The humble tickle and why science should stay silly

Nic Fife discusses the human condition as probed through the adorable and scientific pursuit of baby tickling.



Mr. Tickle from the classic Mr. Men children's book series by Roger Hargreaves

Picture this: it's 1933 and you're a fresh, newborn infant. Take a second to savour what it feels like to have your every need provided for. You don't even have object permanence, let alone rent to pay and deadlines to meet. No sense of self means no self-loathing either! You're having a pleasant, if skeletally fragile, day. You're busy growing and learning and all that other stuff babies do, when your dad comes over to play with you! He pokes your little hands and you instinctively grab his finger, you're doing great! You're a nice, normal baby.

However your dad is no nice, normal dad! He briefly disappears out of the room and when he comes back, he's wearing a mask over his face. He then proceeds to tickle you as you both stare at each other, expressionless, silent. Your father is actually Clarence Leuba, the hopeful young psychologist, and you're being tickled in the name of science!

This was an unremarkable sight in the Leuba household. Leuba experimented on both of his children – first his son, then his daughter – to see if they would ever laugh when tickled if they were never conditioned to associate

tickling with cheery circumstances. Surely enough, both started laughing around the age of 7 months, leading Leuba to conclude that this must be an innate response.

Though Leuba's methods might seem a little weird, interest in tickling and laughter dates back beyond the roots of Leuba's children's mild trauma. Looking back into human history,

thinkers like Aristotle and Darwin, among others, had earlier committed their thoughts on the matter into writing, but there was little in

the way of empirical investigation. The humble tickle has always raised questions about the very nature of our humanity, many of which still stump both scientists and philosophers to this day. Why can't we tickle ourselves? Why is tickling funny? Why do we find anything funny at all?

Of course, science probably has more important things to worry about, right? We need to dedicate as much of that precious brainpower to dealing with the catalogue of unresolved impending threats we're facing moving further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



### Baby tickling: who says all psychology research has to be serious

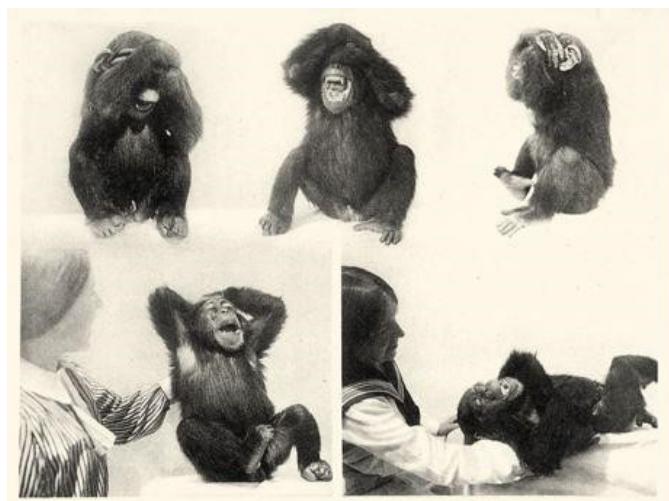
Looming climate disaster, inequality tearing apart nations, famine, mass extinction, aging populations, closure of public libraries, finding out why ice is slippery or what's up with magnets, surely these things are all of the utmost importance and should be our top priority? Nevertheless, research continues to pursue why tickling is funny. For example, a slightly more recent paper (creatively titled, 'Tickle') by Samuel Selden, reviews at length the physiological and neurological bases of tickling, and its association with laughter and discomfort. Specific, scientific language has even been constructed to distinguish between the sensation of light tickling ('knismesis') and heavy tickling ('gargalesis'). What are those pesky scientists playing at?

But Scientific enquiry into tickling is such a good example of humans trying to understand ourselves and where we've come from. There's a wider point about the nature of science lurking in the study of tickling. Science is, at heart, about curiosity, and psychology is where the rigour of the scientific method overlaps with finding out what it means to be human: the how and the why of our continued existence! It's not that unlocking the mechanisms responsible for age-related neural degeneration isn't important, but acknowledging that investigations into both the weird and the mundane have their place in science is part of what makes scientific enquiry so exciting and fun! Research like this, particularly in the field of psychology, can serve to unite and ground us in our shared

humanity. In an era filled with so many social tensions and looming disasters, it might do us well to remember that we were all helpless, tickle-prone babies once. Maybe then we'll be able to put aside our differences and work together more cohesively to solve some of the more pressing issues we face.



**Tickling in the past: Fritz Zuber-Buhler's 'Tickling the baby' (1822-1896)**



**Images of a cross-species study into tickling comparing a human child and an infant chimpanzee named Joni. Photographs are from Nadezhda Ladygina-Kohts, Infant Chimpanzee and Human Child (1935)**



# Diving into context-dependent memory: can our environment improve our recall?

**Ailish Carroll** talks about a classic study into context-dependent memory that featured qualified divers learning things on land or in water.

The run up to exam season usually means one thing: mass student panic. The seemingly impossible task of learning as much as possible as fast as possible and then remembering it all for that dreaded question paper is a problem faced by students everywhere. Whether it be writing lines, making posters or excessively highlighting notes, every student has their own method of learning (or memorising) their essential subject knowledge. But is there anything else we can do to improve our information recall in the exam room? Any other revision tips and tricks that can help us get those all-important extra marks?

One exceptionally interesting piece of psychological research found that words are better remembered when they are recalled in the same environment in which they were learned. Godden and Baddeley (1975) explored the effect that context cues have on recall in 18 divers who took part in a repeated

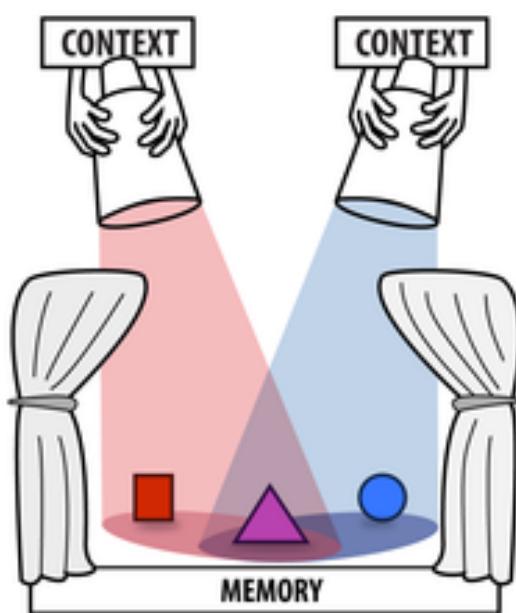
measures design involving four conditions:

1. Learning words on land and recalling on land.
2. Learning words on land and recalling underwater.
3. Learning words underwater and recalling underwater.
4. Learning words underwater and recalling on land.

The learning stage of this experiment involved the divers studying 38 unrelated words which they heard twice (in the underwater condition, this was done through a diving communication device!) Then, as a distraction task, they had to listen to and write down 15 numbers. Participants were tested in pairs and there were 24 hours between each of the conditions.



A simple breakdown of Godden and Baddeley's (1975) experiment



Learning context may play an important part in memory recall

What they found was highly surprising- word recall was around 50% better when learning and recall environments were the same, with 40% more words being forgotten when learning and recall settings differed. Maybe unsurprisingly though, word recall was higher when learning and recalling on land (13.5 words) than learning and recalling under water (8.6 words). These findings showed a significant improvement in the recall of words the divers had learned when they were in the same environment, suggesting that our location can help 'jog our memories' due to environmental cues.

So what does this mean for our own learning then? If we revise at an individual desk placed at least 1.25 metres away from another desk in a silent room mirroring the exam hall, will we do better in our exams than if we just revise in our bedrooms at home?

Well, as with every psychology experiment, findings need to be considered with the research methodology in mind. On land versus underwater are drastically different environments, and also quite far removed from our day-to-day experiences. I'm struggling to think of a time when someone may ever need to recall words underwater, let alone learn them in that scenario! In a real-life situation, while our learning and recall environments may be different, they are very unlikely to be THAT different. Nevertheless this study still nicely illustrates the concept of context-dependent memory and may be useful in police work as witnesses may be able to recall more information about a crime by returning to the scene.

In conclusion, this study provides useful information about the way our memory works and how our environment can help us with memory recall of past experiences. Maybe we can take some of the principles from these findings and apply them to our own learning by mirroring exam conditions during revision- but the effect this would have on exam results can't be deduced from this research. Maybe the best revision technique is to make sure you know the stuff in the first place...

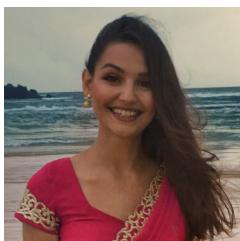


Getting deep into an article...



# Psychology Around the World

***York students talk about their work experiences and placements***



## Volunteering abroad: working in Sri Lanka

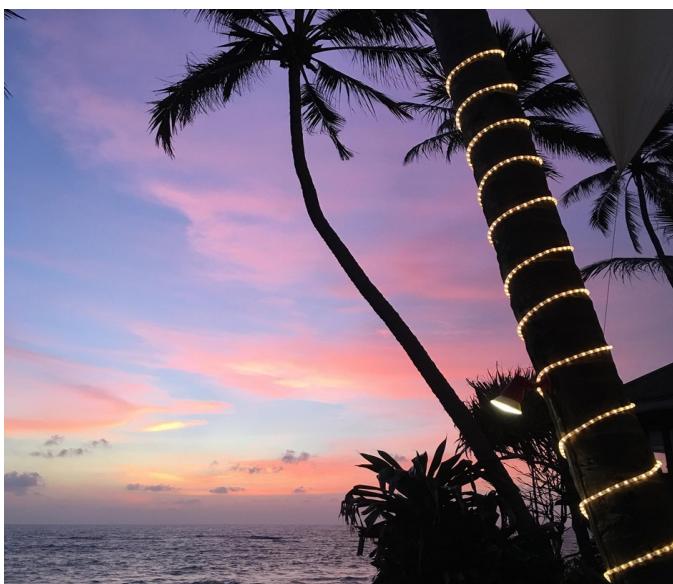
**Harriet Cackett** talks about her mental health placement in Sri Lanka as part of the SLV.Global initiative

During the summer of 2018 I embarked on a five week mental health placement with SLV.Global, a mental health organisation offering students the chance to get hands-on psychology work experience. This placement gave me the opportunity to work in Psychiatric hospitals, schools for children with special educational needs, and teach English to local communities. I developed confidence and a greater understanding of working with individuals with mental health issues and learning difficulties.

Every Monday and Friday I spent the day working within a psychiatric setting. Here, I had the opportunity to work in a variety of wards and with various client groups. I encountered many different individuals suffering from a range of disorders such as schizophrenia and psychosis. Whilst on the

wards I was able to learn and observe the different behaviours of the patients. I regularly engaged in art therapy with them as they seemed to enjoy the freedom of creativity whilst also working on their fine motor skills.

During the mid-week I would volunteer at local schools for children with special educational needs, ranging from Down Syndrome to Autism Spectrum Disorder. It was challenging working with children with such a variety of issues. However, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and learned a lot about their behaviours and needs. We regularly engaged in music and art therapies as the children really enjoyed sensory play and activities which were very interactive. These sessions were designed to improve the communication skills and motor skills of the children.



One of Harriet's photos of a Sri Lankan beach!



Sri Lanka is an island country located in the Indian Ocean



**Harriet (bottom left) with other members of the SLV team**

One day a week I also carried out projects where I would teach English to adults and children in local communities. This work forced me to become better at public speaking and certainly improved my confidence. I found this highly rewarding as I was able to help the students enhance their ability to speak another language which is essential in Sri Lanka as 80% of job interviews in the country are conducted in English. It was great to visibly see an increase in my patient's confidence and social skills.

I also had the opportunity to attend a field trip to an Addiction Unit for individuals struggling with drug addiction for half a day. Here I learned a lot about Sri Lanka history and how the civil war in the country caused an increase in depression causing some to turn to drugs. I had the opportunity to speak to patients and their family members and ask how drugs have affected their lives and how the treatment is helping. I shadowed a psychiatrist who taught me about the various treatments offered and how the treatment schedule works. SLV.Global also set up a question and answer session with a local psychiatrist who taught us a lot about Sri Lankan mental health care and how the culture impacts the therapies offered.

For the whole five weeks I lived in a homestay with a local Sri Lankan family who have housed many SLV.Global volunteers before.

This was the best way to be fully immersed in Sri Lankan culture as I ate Sri Lankan food every day, and had to do so with my hands, as this is the norm in Sri Lanka. The family I stayed with taught us a lot about the culture and showed us how to cook Sri Lankan food. During the weekends I was able to explore beautiful Sri Lanka with the group of friends I made on the placement (pictured above). This was the best way to be immersed as I was able to visit many beautiful Buddhist temples and learn about the religion. I went on lots of sunset and sunrise hikes and explored the beautiful beaches around the island. Whilst travelling at the weekends I was even able to visit a turtle hatchery where sea turtle eggs are protected from poachers!

My experience as an SLV.Global volunteer has improved many aspects of my life. I'm a more confident and cultured person thanks to the experience I've had working with individuals with mental health difficulties. This truly unique experience has undoubtedly helped me to progress towards a career in Clinical Psychology.

**If you would like to enquire more about Harriet's experiences, you can contact her via [hc1276@york.ac.uk](mailto:hc1276@york.ac.uk).**

**For more information on SLV.Global please visit <https://slv.global>**



## INTERVIEWERS



Darel Halgarth



Conor Morrison



**Darel Halgarth** and **Conor Morrison** interview **Dr Bailey House** one of our newer lecturers here in the Psychology Department at the University of York. Bailey studies decision-making and behaviour in adults and children and how these vary across societies, and how they are shaped by both cultural beliefs and evolved adaptations. Bailey has a particular interest in **prosocial behaviour**.

### What is your main research focus?

The research focus that I have right now looks at how culture and social norms shape behaviour. The goal being to understand universal patterns of human behaviour but also diversity in human behaviour. Culture and social norms tell you about both, obviously people have different cultural beliefs that make them behave in dramatically different ways, but all humans have culture. Culture is the thing that ties us together but also leads us to wander away from each other in terms of what we do. The current focus looks at how social norms shape behaviours such as generosity and sharing, using comparisons across different cultures and species. Humans are a cooperative species, we're highly generous but that doesn't mean people do the same thing everywhere.

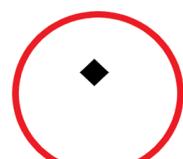
### Why does that particular area of Psychology interest you?

The reason I find it interesting is because our cooperation allows humans to do things that are impossible for any other species, like live in big societies and do things together that no person could do alone in a lifetime. Culture is so unique to humans, but you can't understand it without understanding the Psychology beneath it. The forces of social norms within culture have the power to get

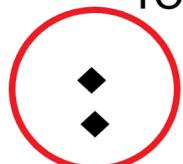
people to do all kinds of things, harmful things but also really powerful, positive things. When these forces are arranged in a way that benefits everyone they are incredibly powerful.

### What research are you currently working on here at the University?

I've been doing a lot of developmental work recently, working with children to track how they start to pay attention to and follow social norms and how they progress to behave like adults in their particular society. Knowing that process helps you understand how norms are shaping our Psychology. I look at how very simple sharing behaviour changes across childhood and adolescence and how it starts to approach what adults do. I also collaborate with other researchers to look at how social norms can help with behavioural change interventions, like programs to reduce smoking



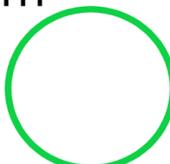
You



Types of stimuli used by Bailey



Them





**Dr Bailey House working in the field**

**You've previously done experiments with chimpanzees. What are some of the challenges and rewards you have encountered working with chimpanzees?**

The major challenge is that it's just really hard! They can just destroy whatever you put in front of them, whenever they want to. I've made equipment out of steel and big bits of wood, and it doesn't matter; if they so choose they'll break it. You have to make things as simple as possible. The data can be really noisy, collecting it is slow and there aren't that many participants. The upside is the skills you learn from research like that are useful for designing studies for young children, where the participant can understand the study just by looking at it, without too much verbal explanation.

**Does the pro-social behaviour of humans and chimpanzees significantly differ, and if so how?**

Something that is similar between the species is reciprocity, which is not just evident in humans and chimpanzees but also other primates and even a lot of fish. We're also more likely to help family, much like chimps. A lot of our behaviour is probably based on those things. But then you lay cultural beliefs and social norms on top of that underlying cognitive architecture for reciprocity and

'helping family' and you get a totally different output. The foundations of our behaviour are very similar, but when you add the dynamics of human culture the underlying systems of behaviours create vastly different outputs. A lot of animals are going to have very similar cognitive toolkits, and humans and chimps are going to share a lot of underlying cognitive bases for behaviour.

**You've also conducted experiments across many cultures. What differences in pro-social behaviour have you observed in different cultures, and why do you think those differences exist?**

I think that the differences exist because people are interpreting some particular situation differently. For example, a lot of the studies I conduct use these simple sharing tasks. You have cards like this (*see image on the opposite page*), and the task might be the more of these tokens you get the more rewards you get at the end. If you choose this pair (top pair of circles) you would get one and your partner would get one, if you choose this pair (bottom pair of circles) you would get two but your partner would get none, and the task is just which pair you want to choose. It's really simple so it's a task 3 or 4 year olds can do. You might think the answer's obvious, but people play this task differently in different places. In some places people will choose the

latter option, but then they'll go off and when someone asks them for one they'll give them one. It's a test of how people share more than whether or not they share; the end result is actually the same, the manner is what's different. So this game can help you see the differences in manner, but it's not necessarily true that people are more or less generous in different places. Then you have to try and figure out why.

### **What advice would you give to students aiming to work abroad as you have?**

Working abroad and cross-cultural work is tough for the same reason that it's useful: you're going somewhere people think and behave differently. It's important to make sure you have plenty of time, as it takes time to understand how other people think; I've had the most trouble when I've felt pressured by a deadline. Prioritise asking questions, being around people who have been there longer, and following what people do even if it doesn't necessarily make sense; taking that approach will lead you to things you haven't thought of. Go where you can see other people doing studies but you don't feel like you have to have an output, because the way you're currently thinking about it isn't the best way you could be doing it there. You're only going to see that if you decide what you're doing while you're there as opposed to coming in and imposing what you've already thought of. A lot of the data I've gathered hasn't been immediately publishable, but has allowed me to profoundly improve work I've done later.

### **What's the most surprising or bizarre finding you've come across in your research?**

My first project actually – my master's project – used a similar task to the one described earlier. Children could choose a pair where they have one and their partner has one, or a pair where they have one and their partner has none. It doesn't cost them anything to share, but what I kept finding was the children would choose the selfish option then they'd laugh! What I realised was the fact that they're laughing about it suggests that they know choosing the generous option is what's expected; I think the laughter indicated the children understood the social norm. So I went back over the recordings and used a standardised criteria to determine whether the children laughed, and I found that when you

controlled for laughter children would choose the generous option. It wasn't something I expected to happen, it changed the nature of the data.

That study was with children aged 3 to 8, but then for my next study – which was part of a big cross-cultural study – I used a wider age range because it was going to be hard to find 3 to 8 year olds in some of the communities. What we saw was that most of the interesting cross-cultural differences happened after age 8. If I had gone with what I had presumed was the right age range I would have seen nothing. It was totally found by accident! There have been a number of cases where we've just done something out of convenience and it ended up being really interesting, which makes you wonder about all the things you've missed.

### **Outside of your work in Psychology, what interests you?**

Partly because I've travelled, I like talking to people and seeing what people's lives are like. People are surprisingly willing to talk. Other than I've been enjoying exploring York.

# TECHNOLOGY CORNER

WHERE STUDENTS SHARE USEFUL TIPS ON TECH!



## Prolific: an Online Participant Pool

**Rossi Redgrave** shares with us his experiences with *Prolific*, a useful tool for running experiments online.

### PROLIFIC AS AN EXPERIMENTER

Having run experiments in the department, I know all too well how tricky recruitment can be, particularly over the barren summer months. On top of that, once you have a sample they're most likely a WEIRD sample - that's individuals from western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic societies. A recent review (Arnett, 2008) found that 96% of studies published in six of the top American Psychological Association's journals between 2003 and 2007 have *weird* samples and these appear to be one of the least representative samples when looking at cooperation, spatial reasoning, and visual perception, for example (Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan, 2010). This forces us to question just how relevant our current understanding of psychology is in today's world.

Prolific is part of the online solution to solving this issue of unrepresentative and seasonally sporadic sampling. By simply linking your experiment (from Gorilla, Survey Monkey and other experiment/questionnaire builders) you can test thousands of participants according to very specific criteria and you'll most likely have all of your data in the time it takes to complete the experiment.

A valid worry with online experiments is the possibility that the participant won't understand the task and that, if they do, they don't care enough to try. With Prolific, once you have the data, you're able to filter responses and only pay participants who appear to have responded properly and to any attention checks you

included. Not only does this save you money, it also means participants are more likely to take your study seriously.

Of course, Prolific isn't doing this for free. There's a 30% service fee on all participant payments (+ VAT where applicable). For instance, if you need 100 participants to complete an experiment for an hour at a rate of £6 you'd pay £780 total. If you ask me, it's a relatively small extra price to pay for rapid data collection from a sample of your choosing.

The prospect of testing a large number of participants in a matter of minutes makes us consider where Psychology would be now if Piaget and Ainsworth had been able to inquire into the dynamics of child-mother relationships globally or if Binet could have developed a universal, effective intelligence scale over a matter of weeks. While there might not be much use in pondering where the field would be had sites like Prolific existed earlier, with online tools like this we might be able to answer some questions more efficiently, diversify our samples and provide greater insight into the human mind, not just WEIRD minds.



## PROLIFIC AS A PARTICIPANT

You're in the library. You just re-read the same article 5 times and boredom has you taking a quiz to find out which Friends character you are (Chandler, apparently). Fortunately, Prolific offers sometimes menial, but more worthwhile distractions in the form of experiments.

Rating sandwich packets, spotting bins in Paris and opinions on insect-based foods are just a few examples of the studies I've done, all the while getting paid. As well, compared to participation sites like Amazon's Mechanical Turk, the money you're paid for participating is usually reflective of the time the task takes, if not more so.

At the risk of sounding like a pop-up, over the past few months, I've earned over £110 just from occasionally going onto the Prolific website and completing a usually brief task. It should be noted, however, that I'm not at all picky.

The only experiments you see are the ones you can do. That means there are no pre-screening questions to exclude you before you've even started - you input this information when you sign up. They ask *a lot* at the beginning: "Do you play any instruments?"; "Have you ever served on a jury?"; "Are you a fan of an English Premier League football team?". You tell them as much or as little as you want but the incessant questioning does mean you won't be given a questionnaire on your retirement plans if you don't even have a post-graduation plan, for example.

If you're looking for a way to make the most of your study breaks making money while contributing to science, find out more and register at <https://prolific.ac>.

***Editor's note: Rossi would like you to know he is not receiving unmarked brown envelopes full of cash to promote Prolific, he genuinely finds it useful.***



Bringing people together to power  
the world's research

Prolific helps researchers find the participants they need. We provide demographic screening, micropayments, and ensure high data quality so you can rapidly recruit your target respondents.

GET STARTED



**Above:** a brief overview of Prolific.

**Left:** The landing page on Prolific's website



**Welcome to the Psych Soc section, here you will find everything that is going on within the best society at York! From academic talks to the latest in a long line of nights out!!**

## **Psychout welcomes all Freshers!**

Becky Dunn

Here is your essential guide to getting the most from your first year as a Psychology Undergraduate straight from the people who have been there and got the t-shirt!

### **1. Join PsychSoc!**

PsychSoc arranges various academic events, in the past these have included tours of YNiC, external speakers and debates with departmental staff and of course the infamous socials, Pub Golf and Cavemen are two of the favourites! For just £4 membership fee for the entire academic year, it is a great chance to get to know fellow psychology students. For more information email [psychsoc@yusu.org](mailto:psychsoc@yusu.org) and to keep up to date with the latest events follow our social media via Instagram @uoypsychsoc and Facebook Page PsychSoc @psychsocyork.

Fancy joining the team? Elections for committee positions will be held towards the end of Spring term so look out for details on social media!

### **2. Become a part of Psychout!**

Whether you are passionate about a specific area of psychology or have a general interest, PsychOut offers YOU the chance to write about anything psychology related. If you are interested please contact Alex Reid: [alex.reid@york.ac.uk](mailto:alex.reid@york.ac.uk).

### **3. Buy your course books from students!**

A great chance to pick up a bargain! 2nd and 3rd years will be selling their used course books via emails. Normally these are at lower prices than book shops!!

### **Advice from current students:**

"If you're planning on going into a psychology related profession start getting some work experience as soon as you can as there are lots of people looking for the same thing." - [3rd year](#)

"Get involved in as much extracurriculars as you can! It's a great way to make friends and build up your skillset while having fun, which looks great to future employers." - [3rd Year](#)

"Don't leave all your work until the last minute!" - [2nd year](#)

"Get involved in societies and clubs – you meet loads of great people" - [3rd year](#)

"Have fun!" - [3rd year](#)

# PSYCH SQUAD **NEEDS YOU!**

**The Psychology Department is seeking enthusiastic students to join our team!**

**Get involved** in the life and future of the department.

Be part of a group of volunteers who assist with focus groups, open days, and public engagement activities.

Work with experienced staff and students.

**Enhance your employability. Develop your CV.**

**Everyone welcome!**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**[alex.benjamin@york.ac.uk](mailto:alex.benjamin@york.ac.uk)**



# SAVE THE DATES

UPCOMING DEADLINES THAT YOU MAY  
WANT TO KNOW ABOUT:

**YORK GOLD AWARD:** The application for final year under-graduates is the 17th of March. For more information please go to: [www.york.ac.uk/students/work-volunteering-careers/skills/york-award/-gold/](http://www.york.ac.uk/students/work-volunteering-careers/skills/york-award/-gold/)



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