

On Saturday the 28<sup>th</sup> of November students across years 7, 9 and 10 attended a Saturday Stretch class in Psychology led by an undergraduate from Oxford University; Susanna O'Brien.

The session began mysteriously as students were taken into a separate room in preparation for a psychological experiment. Students were invited into the experiment room one at a time. They were told upon entry that they were taking part in a Skinner experiment and for the purpose of the activity they were a hungry rat, each 'rat' was placed in a make shift box. In the box were two circuits with switches that light a bulb. The students were told they had ten seconds to do whatever they wanted in the box. Some of the more savvy 'rats' realised that by switching on the light bulb they would receive a treat and continued to flip the switch.



Susanna used this experiment to conceptualise the students' understanding of positive reinforcement: a condition that encourages behaviour. Susanna explained that we can be motivated as human beings by reward and praise.



Psychology is the study of the brain but Susanna carefully explained that within this there are many avenues of study to explore such as those listed below:

- Abnormal psychology: psychopathy and abnormal behaviour
- Biopsychology: the influence of the brain and neurotransmitters
- Behavioural psychology: the study of how behaviours are learned
- Counselling psychology: providing therapeutic treatments
- Clinical psychology: assessment and treatment of mental illness
- Cognitive psychology: study of mental processes
- Educational psychology: study of how people learn
- Forensic psychology: intersection between psychology and law
- Health psychology: promotion of health and prevention of disease
- Social psychology: study of social interactions
- Sports psychology: how psychology influences physical activity

As a group, we then had a very rich discussion as we collectively tried to name everything that the brain is responsible for. We came up with a vast and diverse list to include creativity, dreams, vision, language and speech, memory and mental health. This exemplified for the students that within Psychology there are many facets and that the study of the subject at university level would result in a very interesting and mixed timetable.

The students were clearly gripped by curiosity and hands were shooting up left, right and centre to ask thoughtful questions. When asked how she found delivering the session Susanna said *“really enjoyable- the students were lovely and friendly and asked interesting and intelligent questions.”*

Susanna ended the session but talking to the students about the history and prestige of Oxford university. She helpfully explained the process of recruitment the university goes through and addressed some common misconceptions about Oxford.



When asked the question ‘do you think the session was helpful?’ some students said:

*“Definitely- it gave me an idea of what Psychology is and what A Levels I would need to do it.”*

*“Yes- we don’t really know anything about Psychology and it was a great opportunity to expand our minds and learn something new.”*

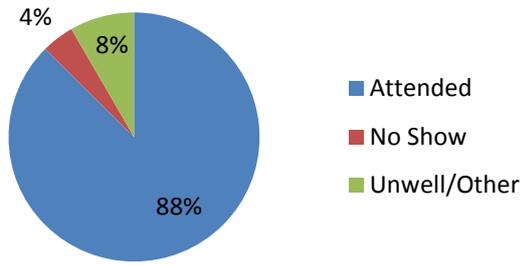
*“Yes because I learned what Psychology is and also that you can study Art and get into Oxford”*

When asked if the session had prompted them to consider studying this subject at university some students said:

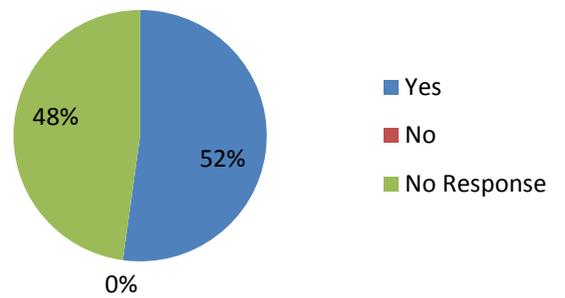
*“Yes because it seems really interesting and has a wide range of topics”*

*“Yes because it helps me understand the human mind.”*

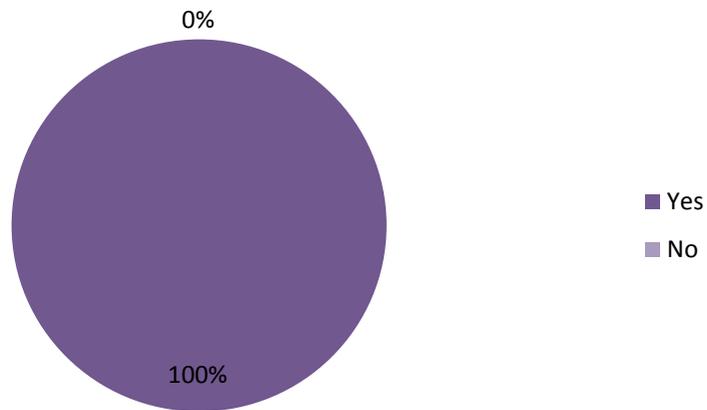
### Student Attendance Data



### Student Invitation Response Data



### Do you think the session was helpful?



### Has the session made you consider this subject at university?

