

Andrew Herbert: Award in Psychology

I have the pleasure of supervising a few Psychology Student Projects every year. In some cases, I spend a lot of time helping the student create a written document that reflects their efforts and ideas. In Samantha's case, I was able to just sit down and enjoy a nice read! Her written work has always been excellent, and I'm very pleased that she is being rewarded for it today. Samantha is one of those students who had an idea for a research project, and was able to carry it out from start to finish with minimal guidance. She has often expressed an interest in sex differences. This study allowed her to explore one area where there have long been such differences reported. Women are often portrayed as more emotionally expressive than men, and the simple hypothesis has been that this would be reflected in the relative ability of males and females to recognize emotions in others. That is, females should be more sensitive to emotional expression than men. Like all experimental research, the results didn't turn out exactly as Samantha expected. That's why we have to actually do the experiments!! It turned out men were a bit faster than women at identifying emotions, but the significant result was that males and females found pictures of females' emotional expressions easier to recognize than those of males. Perhaps those 'overly emotional' women are just better communicators! At any rate, it's a pleasure to see Samantha honoured for her work today.