

Philip Marcus Levy (1954–2011)

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Few individuals had more influence in the shaping of academic psychology during the 1970s and 1980s than Phil Levy, who died on 23 January 2011. Phil was President of the BPS in 1978/79 when he was confronted by a Society facing a financial crisis and needing organisational renewal. He was the ideal person to steer the Society through examining itself and developing the new strategies that defined the organisation for many years to come. Phil also chaired the highly charged meeting of Council that debated the allegations of fraud against Sir Cyril Burt. Phil guided the Society's first strategy in response to what was, for the Society, a novel, divisive and highly public issue. There was a certain irony in this as Phil was, at the time, the Editor of the *British Journal of Mathematical and Statistical Psychology*, which Burt had edited for many years.

Phil was known for his disinterested honesty and insight, and he was in considerable demand to be a member of Chair panels by universities who were expanding their psychology departments. He also played a major role on national funding bodies. He was chair of three different committees within the Social Science (later the Economic and Social) Research Council between 1979 and 1989. Phil also jointly chaired the Psychology panel for the first university Research Assessment Exercise in 1986.

Phil was born in Redcar, North Yorkshire, in 1934, but was brought up in Leeds. He took his degree at Leeds University, graduating in 1952. Phil's PhD on the use of discriminant analysis to identify the appropriate items in a psychological test (Birmingham University, 1958) marked his lifelong interest the application of statistics to practical problems.

He was appointed as the first Chair of the newly created Psychology Department at Lancaster University in 1972. He assembled a team of keen young academics, and for many years the average age of the staff in the department remained below 30. Phil was inevitably drawn into the management of the university, chairing the very influential Research Committee, although he refused several offers to be made a Pro-Vice Chancellor.

Phil's normal attire of a suit and a bow tie made him stand out. He claimed that he wore the bow tie because he had once been taught to tie one and it seemed a skill worth adopting. He was enormously popular with those who worked with him. At times his driving hope of obtaining consensus on a disputed issue could seem to prolong debate, but his concern for the issues and for the people with whom he worked were never in doubt. Despite progressive problems with his eyes, but assisted by his difficulty in sleeping, he used most hours of the day and night for working. Departmental seminars appeared to provide an opportunity for him to take a nap, but then he would ask the first and insightful question! Phil's death is a great loss to those who knew him and valued both his friendship and his many abilities.

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