



# Psychology News @MASSEY

School of Psychology, Massey University

May & June 2006

Issue 3, 2006

The School of Psychology at Massey University is situated on three campuses, Albany in Auckland, Turitea in Palmerston North, and Wellington. This newsletter is issued bi-monthly and is intended to capture what's been happening and what's coming up in the School of Psychology at Massey University.

## Significant Events

Graduations took place in April and May. Congratulations to all our graduates and thanks to staff who helped make ceremonies and functions so successful. We also had the largest cohort of Māori graduates in psychology ever.

At the graduation ceremonies, the School of Psychology celebrated the graduation of 74 BA, BSc and BHthSci students; 11 GDip Sci and GDip Arts; 4 PGDip Sci and PGDip Arts; 3 BA(Hons) and BSci(Hons); 10 MA and MSc; and 6 PhD graduates. See below for PhD abstracts.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> May, Albany campus entertained over 200 high school students with mini lectures from Dr Antonia Lyons, Dr Richard Fletcher and Professor Kerry Chamberlain. The day was a complete success and hopefully attracted some future psychology students.

## Campus News on Staff Activities, Achievements, Awards, Appointments and Departures

@Albany

### News on Staff Activities, Achievements and Awards

#### Professor Kerry Chamberlain & Dr Antonia Lyons

Professor Kerry Chamberlain has been the Campus Coordinator at Albany. Kerry will be standing down from this position at the end of July this year. Dr Antonia Lyons has agreed to take up the position from August.

@Turitea

### Arrivals

Natalie Allen has been appointed as the Academic Administrator for the Turitea campus.

### News on Staff Activities, Achievements and Awards

#### Dr Shane Harvey, Professor Ian Evans, Amber Barry & Simon Bennett

Dr Shane Harvey, Professor Ian Evans, Amber Barry, John Fitzgerald, and Simon Bennett have been awarded an 8-month research contract with the High and Complex Needs Intersectoral Unit. The research will involve evaluating assessment and outcomes measures

for a range of domains relating to the three government sectors (CYFS, Health, Specialist Education Services) who provide services for youth with high and complex needs

#### **Dr Mary Breheny**

Dr Mary Breheny recently defended her doctoral thesis successfully. Mary's work was on the social construction of adolescent motherhood. Congratulations to Mary and thanks to Dr Chris Stephens, her supervisor.

#### **Arrivals**

Dr Lisa Wu has been appointed to a three year post as a Clinical Psychologist, at the Clinic in Wellington, while Simon Bennett is seconded to a Health Research Council Clinical Research Fellowship.

## Staff Publications

Ehlers, A., Taylor, J. E., Ehring, T., Hofmann, S. G., Deane, F. P., Roth, W. T., & Podd, J. V. (in press). The Driving Cognitions Questionnaire: Development and preliminary psychometric properties. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*.

Taylor, J. E., Deane, F. P., & Podd, J. V. (in press). Diagnostic features, symptom severity, and help-seeking in a media-recruited sample of women with driving fear. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*.

#### **The South Pacific Journal of Psychology**

For the past five years, the School of Psychology has hosted the *South Pacific Journal of Psychology* (SPJP), an international peer-reviewed publication devoted to exploring the diversity of psychology within our region and its relevance for the wider global community. SPJP has a focus on social, organizational and community development, and publishes papers with a range of methodologies and in a variety of formats. The emphasis is on social relevance, innovation, and multi-disciplinarity. The journal is co-edited by Stuart Carr, Massey University and Leo Marai, University of Papua New Guinea.

Key developments in the recent past include the addition of a journal website (<http://spjp.massey.ac.nz/>) to provide information about the journal and content pages of the hard copy journal. The latest e-innovations introduced by Harvey Jones, the webmaster of the site, has been the provision of full-text online versions of past issues, and the inclusion of an edited online book featuring development-related publications in the journal over the past decade. In these ways, SPJP is expanding its outreach, impact, and dissemination of original findings, and fulfilling its goal to be relevant to students, practitioners, academics and policy-makers within the region and beyond.

(Ass Prof Stuart C Carr)

# PhD Abstracts

**Bronwyn Campbell**

**PhD Thesis**

## **Negotiating Biculturalism: Deconstructing Pākehā Subjectivity**

### **Abstract**

This thesis engages social constructionist epistemology, deconstruction and discourse analysis to constitute a reading of bicultural relations between māori and pākehā in Aotearoa / New Zealand. In the opening chapters, the theoretical and political framework of the project is developed and a critique of race / ethnicity / culture unfolds psychology as replete with eurocentrism. Practices of biculturalism become increasingly challenging for mental health professionals (psychologists) in this context. For the most part, bicultural dialogue struggles to have an audience with pākehā. In Royal's (1998) terms, this implies that the meeting house for biculturalism is empty. pākehā mental health practitioners who were considered to be engaging in bicultural practices were interviewed about cultural identity, the meanings and practices of biculturalism, and their personal experiences of engaging in bicultural practices. The texts of these conversations were read through deconstructive discourse analysis to articulate the implications of their accounts for the future of bicultural practice in psychology. These readings consider how the kaikōrero negotiate being pākehā both within available pākehā (colonial) positions and beyond into new (postcolonial) subject positions. Taking up a postcolonial subject position puts kaikōrero in the uncomfortable and unfamiliar place of acknowledging their power. Negotiating pākehā subjectivity with a colonial past, a contemporary (pākehā) mainstream, and exploring new relationships with māori is a difficult and complicated process. In recognising the privileges of being pākehā the marginalisation of māori is mutually constructed. Some of the kaikōrero used the repertoire / metaphor of a journey when they talked of their bicultural development. Others talked of a distinct / discrete transformation of subjective experience / understanding. Discontent with the present state of biculturalism was mediated by positive aspirations for future relationships that were consultative, collaborative and collegial.

**Kirsty Ross**

**PhD Thesis**

## **“Fathers without Children” – A Discursive Study of the Accounts and Identities Presented by Sperm Donors**

### **Abstract**

Discursive psychology challenges traditional psychology by contending that knowledge, reality and the “truth” are socially constructed and actively negotiated through language. Through discourse, people are placed in, or adopt, subject positions and roles that confer certain rights and responsibilities. Current discourses for talking about sperm donors can be seen to negatively position them at a low status, with little power or rights, but multiple obligations. This research interviewed 24 New Zealand sperm donors, with the aim of investigating how donors constructed and made sense of their experiences and their position as a sperm donor. These discourses revealed that being a sperm donor can lead to an enhanced construction of masculinity, and an accompanying powerful subject position with regards to other men in society. This had ramifications for the donors' relationship with both the ‘social father’ and the biological mother of the offspring. Donors' discourses of fatherhood revealed a delicate balancing act of trying to claim a position of (biological) father, and establish a role and place within the lives of the offspring without encroaching on the position of the recipients as parents, particularly the male ‘daddy’. Through their language and utilisation of discourses concerning masculinity and fatherhood, the men in this study challenged the dominant construction of sperm donors, and provided an alternative understanding of the psychology of being a sperm donor.

**Susan Watson**

**PhD thesis**

**The Congruency Hypothesis: A Closer Look At Its Components:  
Interpersonal And Achievement-Oriented Personality And Life Events**

**Abstract**

This research involved an examination of Beck's congruency hypothesis (1983). There were three studies, each examining an assumption that underpins the congruency hypothesis. There were two groups of participants: 61 remitted depressives and 61 university student controls, who were followed for a 1-year period.

The first study stemmed from Blatt's theory that interpersonal and achievement-oriented personality styles are independent and enduring, arising from different early childhood experiences. It investigated individuals' perceptions of the parenting style they had experienced in the first 16 years of their life and how these related to their current personality style. Overall, an achievement-oriented personality style (self-criticism) was predicted by maternal protectiveness in the university student sample and by a lack of maternal warmth in the clinical sample. No relationship between perceptions of early parenting and an interpersonal personality (dependency) was found.

The second study comprised two parts. The first examined the stability of personality over the 1-year examination period. This was seen as an important test. For personality to be a vulnerability factor or diathesis in terms of the congruency hypothesis, it must be stable over time. The second part of this study investigated whether any significant changes in personality over time were predicted by recent negative life events that had been experienced. The results showed that all of the personality constructs investigated (sociotropy, autonomy (solitude, independence), dependency, self-criticism) were stable over the 6-month period. However, during the 12-month period, there was a significant decrease in mean scores on sociotropy for the university students group and a significant decrease in mean scores on sociotropy and dependency for the remitted depressives group. For the remitted depressives group, change in dependency was predicted by stress resulting from negative life events as rated by an independent research team (objective stress) but not by participants' own ratings of the stressfulness of these events (subjective stress).

In research testing the congruency hypothesis, life events are routinely classified as being either sociotropic or autonomous. The third study investigated the validity of this practice. The results of this study demonstrated only partial support for the a priori procedure for classifying events in this way. Across samples (university students and remitted depressives) and measures (self-reported and interview measures of life events), participants did not consistently rate events as sociotropic or autonomous in line with their own personality styles.

Throughout the research, many of the methodological shortfalls that were identified as being present in prior research on the congruency hypothesis were addressed. Notably, comparisons were made between the different samples (student versus clinical) and measures (self-report versus interview) used. The results of the current research differed depending on the choice of sample and the type of measures used. For example, in some instances, significant results were found only when the stressfulness of an event was rated by the research team (objective stress) rather than by the participants themselves (subjective stress). However, it is subjective stress that is most commonly used in previous research on the congruency hypothesis. This choice could well contribute to the many non-significant results found in this area of study. These and other methodological issues are taken into account, examined, discussed, and recommendations for future research are made.

**Rachel Morrison**

**PhD thesis**

**Informal Relationships in the Workplace: Associations with Job Satisfaction, Organisational  
Commitment and Turnover Intentions**

**Abstract**

The aim of this thesis was to develop and test a theoretical model of friendships in the workplace. Friendships within organisations may have a profound effect on an employee's experience of work, potentially either hindering or facilitating organisational functioning, yet friendships have seldom been studied in an organisational context. The association between friendships at work and organisational outcomes such

as job satisfaction, organisational commitment and turnover intentions were investigated in three studies, assessing support for a theoretical model.

In the first study, employees of a large Auckland hospital<sup>1</sup> ( $n = 124$ ) were surveyed using a written questionnaire. Results indicated that cohesiveness and opportunities for friendship were related to increased job satisfaction, leading to increased organisational commitment and decreased turnover intentions. The actual prevalence of friendships was primarily related to decreased turnover intentions. Overall there was good support for the proposed model. The need for further research to ascertain the generalisability of the findings was highlighted.

A second study was conducted using an Internet based questionnaire, accessed both from within New Zealand and worldwide. A diverse sample of employees responded ( $n = 412$ ). The analysis (structural equation modelling) indicated further support for most aspects of the model, suggesting that the findings are generalisable and the model is robust.

The model of workplace relationships was cross-validated in a third study, confirming linkages between friendships at work and organisational outcomes. The model was then tested for inter-group invariance. The model was invariant across groups reporting differing needs for affiliation, autonomy and achievement, but non-invariant across groups occupying relatively less or more interdependent jobs. Results suggest that the interdependence of individuals' jobs affects the salience of work friendships more than respondents' subjective needs.

Overall, the research suggests that the presence of workplace friendships has a significant effect on several workplace variables, with the effect of friendships being more salient for individuals in interdependent work roles. The implications of the research findings are potentially far reaching. Not only do workplace friendships improve employees' experiences of work, but they also have the potential to affect the financial "bottom line" through factors such as enhanced organisational commitment, job satisfaction and reduced intentions to leave.

**Jane Cherrington**

**PhD thesis**

### **Blood Brothers and Southern Men: Engaging with alcohol advertising in Aotearoa**

#### **Abstract**

The aim of this project is to develop a robust methodological translation of the insights of 'culturalist' theoretical positions as an alternative through which to approach contemporary media research. The focus is on engagements with alcohol advertising. In Aotearoa New Zealand, as internationally, there is a significant body of publicly-funded research examining how alcohol advertising affects audiences. However, this thesis contends that important questions need to be asked about the adequacy of these (dominantly positivist) investigations. A review of local research identifies that in theoretical and methodological terms the majority of these studies are riddled with tensions and contradictions. In addition, when located within the context of wider developments in contemporary communication studies, an important epistemological gap is highlighted as requiring attention and debate. Comparison of this local review with international studies highlights similar concerns, particularly around 'effects' driven research, the adequacy of dominant positivist models, and the need to examine epistemological alternatives that can encompass meta, meso, and micro forms of enquiry. A discursive-theoretical approach is then argued as an epistemological alternative that is highly congruent with contemporary communication studies, which, if more robustly translated through methodology and method, could provide a very solid 'culturalist' alternative framework for media research. Taking a contrastive, multi-voiced, context-based approach, the present research focuses on connections, divergences, or disjunctions between different participants' interpretations of, and responses to, themes, ideas and positions they perceive as existing in the ad-texts, and themes and ideas on offer about alcohol in the wider social context.

Using a methodology I describe as 'Discursive Sonar', this research highlights the socially located, interpretative complexity of advertising engagements. By unpacking that complexity, this project identifies how, and why, media engagements vary for different participants (including that of the reflexively engaged participant researcher). By locating the interactions between participants and ad-texts within the context of wider struggles over meanings around alcohol in Aotearoa/New Zealand the research shows ways in which both ad-texts and participants reflect, employ, and debate those wider struggles.

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<sup>1</sup> Waitemata District Health Board, Auckland (NZ)

I contrasted and compared individual participant interactions with the content and themes they identify in response to the ad-texts, with what producers intended those texts to communicate, and also with the views of the other participants. Through these analyses key textual 'mechanisms' become apparent as determining why and how engagements can be closely shared or variable between people and groups. Focusing on diversity and variance in engagements highlights cultural shifts around how alcohol is understood in Aotearoa/New Zealand, as well as significant alterations in views between the generations involved in the project. Focusing on commonalities across engagements identifies how 'interpretative communities' can be produced through textual responses, which are in turn engendered in response to commonly held constructs such as gender and age.

This project succeeds in two ways. As well succeeding in significantly developing existing 'operationalisation' of discursive theory, it also constructs a viable discursive framework through which to approach media research. It is suggested that further development of this alternative might move us beyond the barriers of abstraction and effects in media research to examine the ways in which media and other dominant discursive forms interact, and are interacted with, to shape choices in our social worlds.

**Yvonne Carleton**

**PhD Thesis**

**Evaluation of a Formal Mentoring Programme in the New Zealand Police**

**Abstract**

This thesis was an initiative within the New Zealand Police to introduce mentoring as part of a supported induction process. The aim was to evaluate the use of mentoring as a psychosocial support for new Police Constables entering the organisation. The investigation utilised a four group experimental design to examine the effect of mentoring on psychological wellbeing and the participants' experience of how mentoring supported their initial six months in the Police. While mentoring did not appear to have a strong influence on a number of psychometric measures of wellbeing and distress for protégés or mentors, positive outcomes were about participation in the mentor relationship by both protégés and mentors. These results were achieved in less than three sessions. It may be concluded from these findings that there is a place for a formal mentoring programme in the induction process of the New Zealand Police organisation.

## Completed Theses / Honours Projects

**The following theses/honours projects have been completed since the last bi-monthly newsletter:**

**Student** Nina Reid  
**Thesis** MA  
**Title** Retirement Climate in Organisations: Its Relationships to Intended Retirement Age.  
**Supervisor** Dr Fiona Alpass

**Student** Natalie Flavell  
**Thesis** MA  
**Title** The Impact of Nursing Culture on Stress, Coping and Health Outcomes of Student Nurses.  
**Supervisor** Dr Chris Stephens

**Student** Alison Thomson  
**Thesis** Honours Project  
**Title** The Effects of Age, Sex, and Stimulus Type on Facial Recognition.  
**Supervisor** Associate Professor John Podd

**Student** Diana Paki  
**Thesis** Honours Project  
**Title** "Wanna Drive?": Driving Anxiety and Fear in a Community Sample.  
**Supervisor** Dr Jo Taylor

**Student** Iain Saunders  
**Thesis** MA

<b>Title</b>	Locus of Control, Type A Behaviours and Coping Style as Predictor of Police Performance.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Fiona Alpass
<b>Student Thesis Title</b>	Christine Beckett MA In Pursuit of the Subject of Happiness: A Genealogy
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Mandy Morgan
<b>Student Thesis Title</b>	Amber Barry Honours Project "That's Not Fair!": Children's Emotional and Behavioural Reaction to Unfair Maternal Discipline.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Professor Ian Evans
<b>Student Thesis Title</b>	Julia Davis MSc (Mis)Communication in Couples: Positioning as a Site of Conflict.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Mandy Morgan
<b>Student Thesis Title</b>	Anita Darrah Honours Project An Analysis of ACC Funded Sensitive Claim Files: Characteristics of Sexual Abuse within the New Zealand Context.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Cheryl Woolley
<b>Student Thesis Title</b>	Annette Henrickson Honours Project The Role of Negative Mood in the Stressor-Strain Relationship in a Sample of New Zealand Police Recruits.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Chris Stephens
<b>Student Thesis Title</b>	Lauren Worsley Honours Project The Influence of Self-Efficacy on the Relationship between Life Events and Psychological Distress.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Dave Clarke
<b>Student Thesis Title</b>	Lucy Cennamo MA Generational Differences in Work Values, Work-Related Outcomes and Person-Organisation Values Fit.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Dianne Gardner
<b>Student Thesis Title</b>	Holly Coombes MA Exploring Maori Experiences at University: Impact on Retention and Well-Being.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Ross Flett
<b>Student Thesis Title</b>	Carolyn Freeman MA Aircrew Personality and the Impact of Crew Resource Management Training on Hazardous Attitudes.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Richard Fletcher
<b>Student Thesis Title</b>	Janet Miller MA Survivors of Cancer: A Phenomenological Study.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Chris Stephens
<b>Student Thesis</b>	Michelle King MA

<b>Title</b>	Is Emotional Intelligence a Mediator or Moderator of the Stress Process.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Dianne Gardner
<b>Student</b>	Andrea Hannah
<b>Thesis</b>	MA
<b>Title</b>	Mothers' Representation of their Child in a Maternal Mental Health Setting in New Zealand.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Professor Ian Evans
<b>Student</b>	Nicola Gardiner
<b>Thesis</b>	MA
<b>Title</b>	A Study on how a Sojourner's Identity is affected when not Surrounded by Family or Customary Cultural Traditions.
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Chris Stephens

## Visitors

Professor Robert Knight was on the Albany Campus on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, to present a seminar on *Memory and Traumatic Brain Injury*.

Professor Jacqui Smith visited the Turitea Campus and on 28<sup>th</sup> June presented a seminar on *Psychological Ageing 70 to 100+: Longitudinal Findings from the Berlin Aging Study (BASE)*.

## Other News

Jennifer Little, a journalist with Massey Communications (Albany) is looking for interesting stories for Massey News. She'd be interested in hearing about any special events, interesting research (including student research) or visitors. If you'd like to promote anything that's happening at Albany please get in contact with Jennifer directly.

The next issue of this newsletter will be sent out in early September. If you have any news you would like to contribute to the July-August newsletter, please send the information to Rachel Geard; R.A.Geard@massey.ac.nz before 20 August.

Editor: Dr Ruth Tarrant  
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