

# Psychology of Relationships Interest Group

## Newsletter #01/10

Dear Members,

Welcome to 2010 and another year in the world of relationships. We hope this newsletter finds you well, and we look forward to keeping you updated with news, events and some dialogue in the field of relationships throughout the year.

Dr Alexandra West  
Newsletter Editor

### **CONFERENCES**

The Psychology of Relationships Interest Group is active in the promotion of Australian research related to, of course, the psychology of relationships. I am pleased to announce that PORIG will be represented at the International Congress of Applied Psychology (ICAP) to be held in Melbourne (11-16 July) and at the International Association for Relationship Research Biennial Conference (IARR) to be held in Israel (22-26 July ) this year. Both at ICAP and at IARR PORIG members will be presenting symposiums that reflect the broad range of relationship issues that PORIG members are actively researching. The ICAP event is a great opportunity for Australian psychologists to showcase cutting edge research and practice innovations in our own country and I would encourage you to think about attending if you can. The IARR conference is a key international meeting for relationship researchers and it only happens every two years. Below are web links to access more information.

#### **ICAP: 27<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Applied Psychology, 11-16 July, Melbourne**

##### *Symposium 1*

#### **Positive and negative aspects of adolescent relationships: Attachment and aggression as influential forces. (Ross Wilkinson)**

The APS Psychology of Relationships Interest Group encompasses active researchers and practitioners who have relationships as a central concern of their work. This symposium focuses on presenting research from members of this group who are particularly interested in understanding both the positive and negative aspects of emerging adolescent relationships.

The first two papers report on individual differences and normative aspects of attachment in adolescence. In the first paper Wilkinson reports on the applicability of the dominant self-report assessment approach to individual differences in attachment for adolescents and young adults. Support is found for the two factor model of anxiety (hyperactivation) and avoidance (deactivation) although concerns are raised about how this relates to assessing attachment in particular relationships. In the second paper Goh and Wilkinson map out differences in the normative aspect of

attachment transfer in adolescents by examining the attachment networks and how different aspects (or functions) are fulfilled by different members of the network. Support is found for the transfer hypothesis in that peers, and particularly romantic partners, take on increasing importance from an attachment perspective.

In the next two papers the importance of both peer and romantic relationships for adolescence are highlighted. Pronk and Zimmer-Gembeck examine relational aggression and victimization in adolescents and their peers and how these are related to adjustment. They find that while aggression may have some 'pay-off', both relational aggression and victimization, particularly when isolating, still have negative consequences. In the final paper Murphy demonstrates how an intervention aimed at abuse in adolescent couple relationships may be beneficial. Relationships early in adolescence can set the pattern for later relationships and by intervening early with relationship assertiveness skills training it is hoped that the cycle of abuse may be broken.

The key learning objectives from this symposium are: (1) to better understand the nature of both individual differences and normative attachment representations in adolescence and the emerging importance of peer and romantic relationships, and (2) to appreciate how relational aggression and victimization effect adolescent adjustment and how interventions aimed at this age group can have benefits at both personal and social levels.

## **Papers**

*Development of a general short-form of the Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised questionnaire to assess attachment in adolescents and young adults: A multi-sample study (Ross B. Wilkinson)*

*Attachment reorganization in adolescence: Straight-forward or complicated? (Y. L. Daphne Goh & Ross B. Wilkinson)*

*The socioemotional problems, social prominence and motivations associated with relational aggression, connected victimization and isolated victimization (Rhiarne Pronk & Melanie Zimmer-Gembeck)*

*Efficacy of skills-training for increasing adolescent girls' propensity to resist abusive couple dynamics (Kylie Murphy)*

## *Symposium 2*

### **Unpacking Relationships: Contexts, Processes and Outcomes (Gery Karantzas)**

In this symposium we bring together four diverse papers that examine relationships from the perspectives of children, young and middle-aged adults, and present data using both the individual and dyad as the unit of analysis. The first paper by McGregor and Zimmer-Gembeck investigates how divorce, children's perceptions of parental conflict and the parent-child relationship predict children's optimistic and pessimistic relationship expectations. In the second paper, Webster and Fitness draw on an Emotion Focused Therapy approach in developing a measure of emotional signatures that can assist therapists in helping trauma survivors deal with relationship

issues. In the third paper, Karantzas et al. propose and test a model of relationship functioning that includes key distal and proximal relationship factors known to influence relationship satisfaction. In the final paper, Cole and Karantzas, demonstrate how attachment style is linked to arthritis sufferers' coping tendencies and psychological adjustment. Three of the papers place varying degrees of emphasis on attachment style, highlighting the powerful insights that can be gained into relationships from an attachment theory perspective. While all the papers highlight the inherent complexity of relationships, they also illustrate how life events and relationship histories influence the development of the individual and shape relationship outcomes.

## **Papers**

*Divorce and Family Relationships as Correlates of Children's Optimism and Pessimism about their Relationships* (Leanne McGregor & Melanie Zimmer-Gembeck)

*Abandonment, Annihilation, and Attachment: The Development of a Psychological Scale for Identifying Clients' Emotional Signatures.* (Michelle Webster & Julie Fitness)

*The Development of an Integrative Model of Relationship Functioning* (Gery C. Karantzas, Celia V. Goncalves, Judith A. Feeney, & Marita P. McCabe)

*Coping and Chronic Illness: An Attachment Theory Perspective* (Sian F. Cole & Gery C. Karantzas)

## **IARR: July 22-26, 2010, Herzliya, Israel:**

The local arrangements are being coordinated by Dr. Mario Mikulincer (New School of Psychology, Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel). The conference program is being coordinated by Dr. Ruth Sharabany (University of Haifa, Israel) and Dr. Ashley Duggan (Boston College, USA).

## **IARR Symposium**

### **Attachment research in Australia: Themes and contexts (Zoë Hazelwood)**

Attachment theory has been widely applied to the study of close personal relationships and has provided important insights in understanding how attachment-related behaviors and cognitions shape relationship beliefs, attributions and distress regulation. In this symposium, we present three diverse papers dealing with quite different aspects of attachment theory conducted by researchers in Australia. The first paper by Wilkinson reports on the development of a modified version of the Experiences in Close Relationships–Revised (ECR-R) scale for use with adolescents and young adults. The assessment of attachment in adolescence has remained controversial given that adolescents' attachment networks are evolving and the relative importance of parents and peers are in a state of flux. This multi-study paper assesses the structure and validity of a shortened version of the ECR-R that has been modified to refer to relationships in general rather than romantic relationships. The results support the two-factor model of anxiety and avoidance. However, correlations with measures of specific relationship attachment indicate that the level of abstraction in considering attachment relationships needs to be considered. In the second paper, Hazelwood and Ward consider attachment in fledgling intimate relationships. In response to recent research that has argued for the normative role

of attachment anxiety in very new relationships, this paper assesses the role of anxiety and avoidance in new relationships in a sample of young Australian adults. In exploring the extent to which attachment insecurities in new relationships relate to relationship attributions and self-disclosure, the authors found that attachment insecurities may not contribute to the formation of negative attributions or impact on self-disclosure in the same way as has been seen in longer-term relationships. The final paper in this symposium looks at the assessment of coping and its relationship to attachment. Karantzas demonstrates how factor analyzing coping from an attachment perspective results in a more meaningful and psychometrically superior way of looking at coping, and then shows how attachment can predict coping even when controlling for different types of stressful situations. Taken together, these three papers present traditional applications of attachment theory, issues around conceptualization and measurement, and the use of attachment theory to extend understanding in distinct but related fields.

### **Papers**

*Assessing attachment in adolescents and young adults: Development of a general short-form of the Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire–Revised.* (Ross Wilkinson)

*Exploring normative attachment insecurities in new relationships.* (Zoe J. Hazelwood & Dianah Ward)

*A re-examination of coping from an attachment theory perspective.* (Gery C. Karantzas)

### **Web links**

[www.icap2010.com](http://www.icap2010.com)

[www.iarr.org/conferences.html](http://www.iarr.org/conferences.html)

### **PORIG: SAVE THE DATE! 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. 6-7 November, 2010 at QUT Kelvin Grove, Brisbane, QLD.**

Theme is “Building Resilience through personal, family and community relationships”. For further information, see the attached flyer, the PORIG website, at [www.groups.psychology.org.au/porig/](http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/porig/), or contact the Conference Chair Dr Zoe Hazelwood at [z.hazelwood@qut.edu.au](mailto:z.hazelwood@qut.edu.au).

Further information coming soon!

## **OTHER EVENTS:**

### **• 2 Day Experiential Workshop: “Creative & Mindful Counselling with Children and Adolescents”. Presented by Julie Stirling and David McLennan.**

- A workshop for people wanting to expand or refresh their skills with children and adolescents
- Focus on mindful attention to content and process
- Use of frameworks for children and adolescents
- Didactic and experiential learning

When: Thurs 20th & Fri 21st May, 2010

Time: 9am to 4.30pm

Where: Mercy Place Convention Centre,  
371 Simpsons Road,  
Bardon. Brisbane Qld.

**See registration form at the end of the newsletter for more information.**

## **DIALOGUE**

### **• The International Task Force on International Issues within IARR: A Perspective on Better Serving International Members**

During discussions at the 2008 IARR conference in Providence, Rhode Island, USA, discussions took place regarding the participation, and availability of opportunities to participate in the Association, by international members. The incoming President Frank Fincham decided that action needed to be taken, and established a task force to explore the issue.

The Task Force have engaged in a series of discussions on several aspects of the problem, which is not without its complexities. Whilst it has been difficult to produce tangible and concrete recommendations and actions, it is at least a positive sign that the international associations are recognising the difficulties in participation that are faced by international scholars.

To read the full article, go to

[http://www.iarr.org/documents/newsletters/newsletter\\_f09.pdf](http://www.iarr.org/documents/newsletters/newsletter_f09.pdf)

### **• Interdisciplinary Research: An Australian Perspective by Peta Wellstead**

In the same vein, Peta Wellstead contributed an Australian perspective on the challenges of conducting interdisciplinary research. Her article in the previous IARR newsletter, highlighted to the wider IARR audience, the challenges she faced, but also the difficulties scholars can face outside the northern hemisphere. Good to see an Australian perspective represented!

For Peta's full article, go to:

[http://www.iarr.org/documents/newsletters/newsletter\\_f09.pdf](http://www.iarr.org/documents/newsletters/newsletter_f09.pdf)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The last few months have seen the loss of two esteemed researchers in the field of interpersonal relationships: Caryl Rusbult and Lawrence Kurdek.

### **• Caryl Rusbult**

Caryl Rusbult passed away on January 27, 2010 after a battle with cancer. Her career was dedicated to the study of interdependence processes, and she is most well known for her Investment Model of Commitment, which was heavily influenced by Thibaut and Kelley's Interdependence Theory, and more recently, the Michelangelo Effect.

### **• Lawrence Kurdek**

Larry Kurdek passed away on June 11, 2009 after a long battle with cancer. A prolific researcher in a number of areas of interpersonal relationships, Larry more recently was known for his research in the area of functioning and stability in gay, lesbian, and heterosexual relationships, as well as his work on statistical ways of dealing with dyadic data.

If you have any news of any retirements, achievements, awards, passings, please notify us so we can recognise the achievements of our members.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS**

- Do you have a new book or articles published or in press?
- Do you have any announcements to share with PORIG members? (e.g. upcoming events, funding opportunities, research opportunities, special issue of a journal etc).
- Do you have a book or article review?
- Would you like to provide commentary on any issues that relate to the field of interpersonal relationships? This can go in our Dialogue section.
- Have you received an award?
- Have you found a new job, been promoted, or retired?
- Did you get a grant?

We would love to hear from all our members about their achievements, opinions and contributions in the field of relationships. We look forward to contributions from all our members.

## **CONTACTS**

If you have anything for the newsletter, please contact Dr Alexandra West at [Alexandra.west@police.vic.gov.au](mailto:Alexandra.west@police.vic.gov.au), or Daphne Goh at [Daphne.Goh@anu.edu.au](mailto:Daphne.Goh@anu.edu.au)

<b>REGISTRATION FORM</b>	
<b>2 Day Experiential Workshop "Creative &amp; Mindful Counselling with Children and Adolescents"</b>	
<b>DATES :</b>	Thursday 20th & Friday 21st May 2010
<b>VENUE:</b>	Mercy Place Conference Centre, 371 Simpson Rd, Bardon, Brisbane QLD
<b>CATERING :</b>	Lunch, Morning & Afternoon Tea included.
<b>EARLY BIRD RATE</b> Payment must be received no later than 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2010:	\$395 per person
<b>STANDARD RATE:</b>	\$445 per person
<b>FULL TIME STUDENTS</b> (Early bird only)	\$295 per person

**REGISTER TODAY AS PLACES ARE LIMITED:**

- To book your place, return completed registration form to [securebasecounselling@safe-mail.net](mailto:securebasecounselling@safe-mail.net) or print and send to address below.
- To pay, send cheque/money order made payable to

Secure Base Counselling Service,  
365 Bunya Road,  
North Arm QLD 4562.

Alternatively direct bank deposit/internet transfer to: Secure Base Counselling, Bank of Queensland, BSB 124 -042, A/C No 20130382.

*\*Please Ensure you Enter your surname in the details as proof of payment*

- Your registration will be confirmed via email prior to the workshop. If you have not received confirmation prior to the workshop please ph. (07) 5446 3567

Register me for "Creative & Mindful Counselling with Children and Adolescents 2 day Workshop:

Name: .....

Position: .....

Organisation: .....

Address: .....

.....

Email: .....

Ph: ( ) ..... Mobile: ..... Fax: ( ) .....

**Terms & Conditions:** Registrations for this workshop must be accompanied with full payment to ensure your place. (Limited places available) Registrations conditional on acceptance of fee. Credit cards not accepted.  
**Cancellation Policy:** Refunds will not be issued. If you are unable to attend the workshop someone may attend in your absence. Please notify ASAP if there is a change in attendees.