

## **Peace News July 2007**

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### **From Dr Susie Burke, National Convenor**

Dear Psychologists for Peace,

Like me, many of you have probably been thinking a lot lately about the implications for world peace and regional stability in the context of climate change. As we know, there is a strong relationship between scarcity of resources, food and energy security and conflict. Whilst on the one hand, the threat of global warming offers the potential for individual nations to transcend their national differences and work together on a super-ordinate goal of protecting the environment, it also brings the risk that more and more countries descend into chaos and violent conflict as resources become increasingly scarce. Indeed, the Australian Defence Force has identified climate change as a national security threat for the first time, and predicted that the military would become more involved in stabilising failing states than fighting conventional wars. Chief of Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, said the military faced security challenges it had not envisaged before, specifically "climate change and the impacts of global demography" (Sydney Morning Herald May 17, 2007).

How conflicts over resources are handled has enormous implications for regions around the world. The interest-based conflict resolution models that underpin so much of Psychologists for Peace's work are as relevant as always!

The Victorian PFP group has been discussing holding a forum to look at some of implications of environmental threats on regional peace and stability, and to explore useful models for communities and regions to resolve conflicts in peaceful and equitable ways. If you are interested in helping to organise such a forum, please contact me at [s.burke@psychology.org.au](mailto:s.burke@psychology.org.au). Otherwise, stay tuned for further announcements.

Yours in peace,

Susie

### **Changed Website and New Address**

Those of us who use the APS website will know that it has had a major revamp over the last couple of months. As part of that exercise, all the Member Groups (which includes Interest Groups, such as PFP) now have a separate entry point on which to click, called APS Member Groups, and you find it above the other main menu items, beside the search panel. The most important change for our group is to note that we have a new URL address, so please make note of it, because the old one is not linked to it, so will draw an error page for you if you try it. Our web address is now:-

<http://www.psychology.org.au/pfp>

### **Biennial WA Peace Art Award**

The WA group have been working hard on this project, and it is great to hear of their success in winning a grant from the City of Perth Council to support the presentation of *Peace Between Diverse Cultures* art exhibition, which is a crucial part of the Award project, at the State Library of WA. Congratulations!

If you know any Year 11 students or teachers of them, in WA, who may be interested in entering the competition, please encourage them to do so. You can direct them to information at

<http://www.psychology.org.au/about/awards/art/>

This is an updated address for this info, as a result of the recent web work happening at APS HQ, so if you've previously had some trouble finding the links, please accept our apologies for any inconvenience.

### **Oxfam Skillshare project with Vic group on PFP Resources.**

The Victorian State Group has recently been accepted into the Oxfam Skillshare program. This is a voluntary program of professional support, run by Oxfam, to offer expert advice to community/nfp groups to assist them with their work. We have been matched up with Amy Chemay, a Marketing Professional working mostly within the education sector. We are working with her to guide us as to how best present and distribute our poster and book resources, which is really about how we can best get our work on

conflict resolution out to the people who need it most. Susie Burke, Margot Trinder and Catherine Ryan (Admin) have met with Amy (and will do moreso) and we look forward to considering and implementing her really helpful advice and insights to support the work and ideals of the group.

**Now up on the PFP website, new info at**

<http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/news/refugees/>

A collection of articles, invitations, and news bulletins on refugee and asylum seeker issues.

**A Day with Psychologists for Peace at the APS National Conference, Brisbane, 10:30am – 3pm, Sept 25, 2007 - Two Symposia and AGM.**

We are pleased to let members know that there is a whole day of Psychologists for Peace activities at the APS conference this year!

**Symposium One**

Peace-promoting Research with Children and Adolescents

Presenters: Jodie Lodge, Christine Wood, Margot Trinder.

Chair: Eleanor Wertheim.

The prevention of destructive conflict and promotion of means for handling differences and difficult interpersonal experiences needs to take place throughout all sectors of society. Of key importance, however, is helping young people to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills to deal with differences, disputes and aggressive behaviours from others. This symposium focuses on peace-promoting research in children and adolescents, which is being conducted in a variety of contexts. The first paper reports on the *Enhancing Relationships in School Communities* project, which won the APS Robin Winkler community psychology award in 2006, for work in supporting schools (1) to develop positive conflict resolution processes and curricula and (2) to increase cultural diversity awareness and school programs. The second paper describes an initiative by the Tasmanian government to train *Parent Effectiveness Training* instructors with the aim of promoting constructive communication processes between parents and children. The final paper reports on a newly emerging area of conflict and aggression taking place through on-line computer communications. *Cyberbullying* will be described and a study presented that examined which children are vulnerable to this new form of bullying and pointed to possible avenues for dealing with these problems.

**Symposium Two**

Towards Developing Constructive Peace-Building and Post-Conflict Processes.

Presenters: Sowmya Devaraj, Melissa O'Connor, Peggy Koutsos, Adela

Ristovski

Chair: Tony Thompson.

Peace and conflict theory and practice cover a range of processes including those which address the fundamental (or root) causes of conflict; peacebuilding efforts which find ways to address these causes; early intervention after conflict or hurtful actions by parties in order to allow the relationship to continue; and methods for helping non-reconciling parties to separate in constructive ways. This symposium consists of a variety of studies depicting peace processes at these different levels. The first paper explores the basis for negative biases towards members of another group, which can lay the foundation for unjust actions and set the conditions for conflict. The paper focuses specifically on credibility judgements made about Aboriginal individuals. The next two papers explore processes after hurtful actions and transgressions and examine which intra-individual and contextual factors facilitate forgiveness towards an offending party. Those papers explore forgiveness in both the individual and the criminal context. A final paper addresses post-conflict methods for assisting conflicting parties that have chosen to separate. It specifically addresses methods for facilitating positive interactions among professionals who are working with separating couples

### **Climate change and Psychology**

At the Victorian group's last tele-meeting, discussion was had about the psychology around climate change and its larger impacts on our world, like increased conflict over resources and land, especially in the face of projected climate refugee movements. The group felt that this was territory into which PFP should have input. Susie Burke and Heather Gridley facilitated a half-day workshop on this in Melbourne in May, and the topic, with a list of Tip Sheets and Resources, features on the Home Page of the APS website. Go direct to:

<http://www.psychology.org.au/community/topics/climate>

If you would like to follow up these ideas in any way, or wish to have access to the PD materials she and Heather used in their Melbourne presentation, please contact Susie at [s.burke@psychology.org.au](mailto:s.burke@psychology.org.au).

### **A Good News Story of Action and Change**

APS Member David Berle contacted PFP about some recent articles in *The Lancet* where there was discussion about the involvement of the company that owns the publishers of *The Lancet* in promoting arms trade exhibitions where cluster bombs have at times been promoted and traded. Clearly, there were issues of hypocrisy in Reed-Elsevier (the parent company) being involved in medical and scientific publishing (which presumably promotes

human health and prosperity) whilst at the same time, promoting arms sales. Many psychologists subscribe to or write for Elsevier journals (such as *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, *Personality and Individual Differences*, *Behavior Therapy*, and *Cognition* among others).

I was preparing to send any interested members a petition on this topic, ([http://www.idiolect.org.uk/elsevier/index\\_old.htm](http://www.idiolect.org.uk/elsevier/index_old.htm)), when David got back to me with some excellent news. The petition, which had begun after the first concerns were raised in late March this year, has been successful, with *The Lancet* publishing the following in their June 9 edition.

From *The Lancet* Vol 369, Issue 9566, p 1902 June 9, 2007

Reed Elsevier and defence exhibitions: an announcement On Friday, June 1,

Reed Elsevier, the current owner of *The Lancet*, announced its decision to exit the defence exhibitions sector. In recent years, Reed Exhibitions has organised the Defence Systems and Equipment International exhibition in London, the International Defence Exhibition and Conference in Abu Dhabi, and Latin America Aero and Defence in Rio de Janeiro. The Lancet warmly welcomes this statement. Crispin Davis, the Chief Executive Officer of Reed Elsevier, said: "...it has become increasingly clear that growing numbers of important customers and authors have very real concerns about our involvement in the defence exhibitions business...We have listened closely to these concerns and this has led us to conclude that the defence shows are no longer compatible with Reed Elsevier's position as a leading publisher of scientific, medical, legal, and business content". Reed Elsevier will withdraw from this sector during the course of 2007, subject to honouring its obligations to existing partners...

This is an encouraging win for concerned voices, and, as David says, "It was great to see a large multinational corporation change its practices in response to the concerns of conscientious individuals". It was also a quick win – the about face coming in just over two months of campaigning. While one could also be thinking about the power of market forces in Reed Elsevier's decision, that is a power that consumers (and producers) of materials have in a Western Capitalist system, and one that has at times proven to be effective as a protest tool.

We thank David for bringing this to our attention.

### **Research on Human Nature Is Cause For Optimism**

From [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)

Published on Friday, June 29, 2007 by [The Morning Call](#)

by Gary Olson

*"We have a pending fortuitous marriage of science and morality of the most profound sort."*

The non-profit Edge Foundation recently asked some of the world's most eminent scientists, "What are you optimistic about? Why?" Neuroscientist Marco Iacoboni cited the new experimental work into the neural mechanisms that reveal how humans are hard-wired for empathy. Recall that empathy is more than compassion or sympathy with another's situation. Empathy requires being able to "put oneself in another's shoes," make a distinction between self and other, and then act on that perception. Empathy recognizes the other's humanity.

We now know from brain imaging and psychological experiments that the same brain circuits are mobilized upon feeling one's own pain and the pain of others. We know that separate neural processing regions then free up the capacity for an appropriate response. And scientists at the National Institutes of Health have discovered that altruistic acts activate a primitive part of the brain, producing a pleasurable response. Morality appears to be hard-wired into our brains.

Overwhelming evidence also indicates that the roots of prosocial behaviour, including moral sentiments like empathy, precede the evolution of culture. Some 40 years ago, the celebrated primatologist Jane Goodall wrote about chimpanzee emotions, social relations, and "chimpanzee culture," but experts remained sceptical. That's no longer the case. According to the famed primate scientist Frans B.M. de Waal, "You don't hear any debate now." The feelings of empathy identified in monkeys and apes are both the roots and counterpart to human morality, a natural inheritance from our closest evolutionary relatives.

And, following Darwin, sophisticated studies within biology suggest that large-scale cooperation within the human species, including with genetically unrelated individuals within a group, was favoured by group selection. There were clear evolutionary benefits in coming to grips with others.

Because morality has biological roots and empathy is at its centre, we have a pending fortuitous marriage of science and morality of the most profound sort. Of course the most vexing problem that remains to be explained is why so little progress has been made in extending empathy to those outside certain in-groups. Given a global society rife with violence, why doesn't our moral intuition produce a more peaceful world?

Here I tend to agree with Iacoboni's suggestion that externally manipulated, massive belief systems, including political ideologies, tend to override the unconscious, pre-reflective, neurobiological traits that should bring us together. For example, the fear mongering of artificially created global

scarcity may attenuate our empathic response. Another is the military's refusal to allow putting a face on U.S. wounded and dead soldiers in Iraq. As Prof. Robert Jensen puts it, "The ways we are educated and entertained keep us from knowing about or understanding the pain of others." This all conspires to make it harder to get in touch with our moral faculties and benefit from some valuable insights flowing from the new research on empathy.

First, the insidiously effective scapegoating of human nature that claims we are only motivated by greedy, dog-eat-dog, individual self-interest is now scientifically undermined. This rationalization for predatory behaviour is transparently false. Second, recent research indicates that economic inequality is linked to high rates of biodiversity loss. Scientists from McGill University suggest that economic reforms may be the prerequisite to saving the richness of the ecosystem and urge that "If we can learn to share the economic resources with fellow members of our own species, it may help to share ecological resources with our fellow species." It's entirely consistent to draw more attention to the potential for inter-species empathy and indeed, eco-empathy.

Finally, as de Waal implores, "If we could manage to see people on other continents as part of us, drawing them into our circle of reciprocity and empathy, we would be building upon rather than going against our nature." An ethos of empathy is an essential part of what it means to be human. Is it too much to hope that we're now on the verge of discovering a scientifically based, Archimedian moral point from which to lever public discourse toward an appreciation of our real moral sentiments, which in turn might release powerful emancipatory forces?

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**Using Psychology to Help Abolish Nuclear Weapons: A Handbook  
By Marc Pilisuk and Jamie Rowen**

At <http://www.psysr.org>

While it was released in April 2005, this Handbook from Psychologists for Social Responsibility is as relevant today as it ever was.

It is designed to provide information about the potential contribution that psychology can make in our efforts to abolish nuclear weapons. It is supported by the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues and is

produced under the auspices of Psychologists for Social Responsibility (a member of the Abolition Coalition). Dr. Marc Pilisuk, co-chair of the PsySR Action Committee on Global Violence and Security is conducting the project with the assistance of Jamie Rowen.

The handbook aims to be useful for the following audiences:

- Abolition coalition activists and organizers,
- Peace movement activists,
- Supporters of other progressive causes,
- Psychologists who wish to apply their professional knowledge to the task of abolishing the dangerous threat of nuclear weapons, and
- Any member of the public concerned with preventing nuclear war.

The writers' intentions are to share some knowledge and ideas to increase the efficacy of people and groups working to abolish or reduce reliance on nuclear weapons and to remind psychologists of some handles for professional involvement in this issue. The Handbook allows you to look up a general group that you might wish to understand or to influence. It also includes a list of psychological concepts that can be applicable to the tasks of both understanding and action in the human response to weapons of mass destruction. These terms may be helpful for psychologists and others to frame discussions of nuclear weapons policies.

To download the Handbook, follow the link from

<http://www.psysr.org>

### **A Reminder: Launch of the Peace Education Online Communities**

Inviting your Participation! ([www.c-i-p-e.org/forum](http://www.c-i-p-e.org/forum) <<http://www.c-i-p-e.org/forum>> )

The Peace Education Center, IIPE, and Global Campaign for Peace Education invite you to participate in a new global online initiative "the Peace Education Online Communities." The Peace Education Online Community is an interactive website that enables members of the global community to communicate and interact with each other through a number of tools including: online discussions, collaborative working spaces, an updatable calendar of events, member profiles, reports of institutes, the sharing of files and papers including sample curricula and best practices from local communities, and much, much more. This web-based initiative was developed to support the members and participants of the International Institute on Peace Education, Community-based Institutes on Peace Education, and the Global Campaign for Peace Education, and other concerned educators. For questions, comments, or more information contact [peace-ed@tc.edu](mailto:peace-ed@tc.edu) <mailto:peace-ed@tc.edu>



