

## WOMEN & PSYCHOLOGY INTEREST GROUP NEWSLETTER

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### *From the Editor*

Welcome to your first edition of the newsletter for 2007.

In this edition we have reproduced the abstracts of presentations from the recent annual Women in Psychology conference held at Victoria University Sunbury campus in December 2006. Some photos from the conference are included to show those of you who couldn't come along what you missed out on. Also included is the official feedback along with a compilation of emails that followed on afterwards. They have been included for you to view so that those of you who couldn't attend can get a feel for how well the conference was experienced by those who did attend. I sincerely recommend to you to try and come to the annual conference this year and it will again be held in Sunbury Victoria and details will follow. I was shocked, having moved from Victoria to NSW three years ago, to see how dry the Sunbury hillside vegetation around the campus had become. As I walked between buildings (when I ventured off the path) the barely surviving grass crackled under my feet. Hopefully by December 2007 there will be some rain.

Also included in this edition are the calendars of forthcoming meetings in NSW and Victoria for the year ahead and contributions from the state conveners.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter and I look forward to receiving comments, notices and any brief articles (2 – 3 pages) or contributions for the next edition.

*Till next edition, Helen*

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### **From the NSW Convenor of Women and Psychology**

The NSW branch of Women and Psychology meets on the last Friday of the month. The only exception is October when the meeting occurs on the last Wednesday.

Venue for the meetings is Level 1, Womens' College University of Sydney. It is the large building right by the gates on Carillon Ave. (See UBD maps).

Most meetings feature a guest speaker or open forum discussion. PD points are applicable.

Students and visitors are welcome. Psychologists interested in presenting a paper or facilitating a discussion should contact the NSW coordinator, Dori Wisniewski at [dori.w@bigpond.com](mailto:dori.w@bigpond.com).

Meetings are often followed by a friendly meal in Newtown where friends can catch up and new participants can learn more about the group.

### **Calendar of Events for first half of 2007**

**March 30<sup>th</sup> - Rina Daluz** - "Transcending Understanding: One Filipino woman's journey as a psychologist".

**April 27<sup>th</sup> - Helen Vidler** - "Women identify the things that help them recover from depression: Progress data from research at Logan Women's Health Centre using the SHIFT-Depression Inventory". Dr. Helen Vidler is an Adjunct Research Fellow, University of Western Sydney.

**May 25<sup>th</sup> - Eugenia Castro** - working title- Assessment and Treatment models for women who are experiencing imprisonment and after release from prison.

**June 29<sup>th</sup> - Karen Willis**, NSW Rape Crisis Centre, 'A model for responding in-real-time, on-line, to victims/survivors of sexual assault'.

**July 27<sup>th</sup> - Nicole Jones** - "Mindfulness: is it a useful therapy for women -insights from research"

Speakers for Aug 24<sup>th</sup>, Sept 28<sup>th</sup>, Aug 26<sup>th</sup>, Oct 24<sup>th</sup> (Wed.), and Nov 30<sup>th</sup> are still to be confirmed.

SPECIAL LATE NEWS for NSW:

**'Towards Better Practice: Enhancing collaboration between mental health services and women's domestic violence services'**

A one day conference exploring domestic violence, mental health and collaborative initiatives.

Speakers include: Dr Carole Warshaw M.D.

Professor Cathy Humphreys

Associate Professor Jude Irwin

Dr Lesley Laing

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2007, 9.30 – 4.30pm, Rozelle Hospital Conference Room. Main Administration Building, Cnr Church and Glover Sts, Rozelle

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*Victorian Women and Psychology Interest Group  
Calendar of Events for 2007*

You will see from the schedule below that this is to be a very busy year for the Victorian Group. Further notification of events will be emailed nearer the time and published in the APS Victorian State and Women & Psychology Newsletters. A reminder that APS Women & Psychology Interest group extends invitations to all APS members to our activities and gatherings with particular encouragement for men and students to join us as well.

W&P Members continue to enjoy our pot luck dinners. We have a roster of members who have agreed to host the dinners for this year (see below) and have kept the dates to the first Friday of the month for potlucks. For the W&P events scheduled intermittently between potlucks, more information about the dates will be forwarded early in the year – also of note, if we have a W&P event scheduled for a month, we will not have a potluck that month.

*New people are very welcome*, and gatherings continue to aim to be an informal and friendly way to share ideas and stories. Some potlucks might have specific business to discuss but notice will be given of this.

If you would like to join our pot luck list and monthly notification of the host's address please contact RaeLynn Álvarez Wicklein who maintains the email list at [Raelynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au](mailto:Raelynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au)

**Friday 2 February**

6.30-9.30pm Pot Luck Dinner – in Burwood

### **Wednesday 28 March**

*Getting Started as Women in Psychology*

7.30-9.30pm Treacy Centre. Contact

[heather.gridley@vu.edu.au](mailto:heather.gridley@vu.edu.au) tel. 0419113 731

### **Friday 4 May**

Pot Luck Dinner – in Abbotsford

### **Tuesday 12 June**

*Supervising Ethical Practice with Women*

7.30-9.30pm Treacy Centre. Contact

[Raelynn.wicklein@rmit.edu.au](mailto:Raelynn.wicklein@rmit.edu.au)

### **Friday 6 July**

Pot Luck Dinner – in Pascoe Vale

### **August TBA**

Joint session with Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Interest Group. Enquiries

[heather.gridley@vu.edu.au](mailto:heather.gridley@vu.edu.au) tel. 0419 113 731

### **Friday 7 Sept**

Pot Luck Dinner – Northcote

### **\* Tuesday 25 – Friday 29 September**

APS Conference in Brisbane; W&P Symposia

W&P dinner/ gathering at conference to be

announced – **closing date for submissions to**

**conference 26 Feb 2007**

### **October TBA**

Joint Forum and Workshop with Psychology and Substance Use Interest Group. Treacy Centre

Contact [Heather.Gridley@vu.edu.au](mailto:Heather.Gridley@vu.edu.au) tel. 0419113

731

### **Friday 2 Nov**

Planning meeting – Montmorency

### **Thurs 6<sup>th</sup> – Sun 9<sup>th</sup> December**

*18<sup>th</sup> Women & Psychology Annual Conference*, Sunbury,

VIC. Because of the wonderful feedback from last

year's conference, we are extending this year's

another day! Enquiries: [Raelynn.Wicklein](mailto:Raelynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au)

[@rmit.edu.au](mailto:Raelynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au)

Also in review of this year, I am forwarding request for representatives to volunteer for a multi-state committee for the [Elaine Dignan Award Selection Committee](#). I would like at least 1 person from each state group to participate to have a representative group. The representatives also need to be a member of APS.

What's involved? Reviewing and commenting on ED nominations sent in and voting for an ED winner. I'll post them around to the group (postage reimbursed) for review, organise the plaque, award letter, and cheque that go with the award.

If you have any questions, suggestions, wish to participate, etc. please contact me.

PS:

Professor Trang Thomas is organizing a symposium for Women and Psychology for the APS Conference in Brisbane this year. Any potential presenters please contact Trang. Details are given earlier in this newsletter.

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## APS Women and Psychology Interest Group Victorian Group GETTING STARTED AS WOMEN IN PSYCHOLOGY

FACILITATORS Heather Gridley, Carmel O'Brien, Madeleine Capicchiano,  
& RaeLynn Wicklein

WHEN? Tuesday 27th March – 7.30-9.30pm

WHERE? Treacy Conference Centre, 126 The Avenue, Parkville

COST? Women & Psychology members \$5; non-members \$10  
Students/unwaged \$5 or by donation

*By popular demand as in previous years, this seminar is designed to introduce new members, especially students and recent graduates, to the Women and Psychology Interest Group, and to invite you to explore some of the issues facing women as beginning psychologists. The Interest Group brings women together as practitioners, consumers, academics and students of all ages and a range of backgrounds. This interactive session will review the current requirements for APS membership, College membership and State registration, and consider ways in which the group might support new graduates setting about locating themselves in the “real” world. The focus of the evening will be generated by participants themselves, but we expect to cover such questions as:*

- How have others managed the transition process from graduate to practitioner?
- How are requirements for registration and APS membership impacting on students and graduates?
- What's fair play in the volunteer and professional training sectors?
- What difference might a feminist approach to supervision and mentoring make?
- What does being a member of the Women and Psychology Interest Group involve?
- In what ways can the group be supportive of young or beginning psychologists?

Contact person: Madeleine Capicchiano, Email: [madeleinec@wcig.org.au](mailto:madeleinec@wcig.org.au)

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## **Queensland Women in Psychology**

Ann Aboud is hoping to host a dinner for the Women and Psychology SIG during the APS conference in Brisbane this year.

The invitation to work together to coordinate activities for women in psychology for Brisbane and Queensland is still open and Ann welcomes anyone who would like to make a contribution. There is immediate need for this assistance as Ann cannot do the work on her own. Please contact Ann: [ann.aboud@csq.qld.gov.au](mailto:ann.aboud@csq.qld.gov.au)

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## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA – Women in Psychology**

**A big hello to all you wonderful women in psychology over in WA. We have a great offer from Jodie Moyle to be the point of contact for women who would like to get together at the Western Australia chapter. Please contact Jodie at: [j.moyle@ecu.edu.au](mailto:j.moyle@ecu.edu.au)**

**Living and Working with Diversity as Women in Psychology**  
**APS Women and Psychology Interest Group**  
**17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> - Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2006**  
**Sunbury Hall, Victoria University**

**Conference evaluation**

The 2006 annual residential APS Women and Psychology Conference was hosted by the Victorian Group on the site of a superb, heritage-listed facility, the former Caloola institution that was the subject of Kelley Johnson's book *De-institutionalizing Women*. Those who were present were very much aware of the history of the place, especially at night as the wind blew across the hilltop campus of what is now Victoria University.

The Conference numbers were relatively small, which contributed to the sense of intimacy throughout the time we spent together; yet the standard of presentations was extremely high, as evidenced by the unanimously positive ratings given by respondents on all items of the 'official' APS Professional Development evaluation sheet.

We include here some qualitative feedback from participants, via the evaluation sheets and ensuing email exchanges, as a way of giving all W & P members some sense of the conference experience, and encouraging you all to consider making the trip to Sunbury in 2007 – there was much enthusiasm for the idea of holding the conference in the same place again (air conditioning is promised by then!) – but we need an equally enthusiastic committee to take up the task of organizing it, while RaeLynn Wicklein, Eugenia Castro and Heather Gridley spend the year recovering from the task of organizing this one!

**Comments:**

- › Excellent Event!
- › An, excellent, excellent conference with a great depth of intellectual, critical, evidence based material. Well prepared and facilitated. Excellent organisation.
- › Very good conference – Sessions this year met the W&P IG criteria. Hopefully the next conference will focus on these criteria. Location, refreshments etc all very compatible and reasonably priced.
- › Congratulations to RaeLynn, Heather and Eugenia. Thank you for giving marginalised women voice through the conference.
- › Excellent conference with opportunities for discussion and sharing of ideas.
- › This was useful, erudite, well run and highly educational. All presentations were relevant and sophisticated and learned. Well done! I would like to hear these speakers at an APS National Conference.
- › I found the conference presenters very well prepared. Their work contributes to the promotion of women – locally and internationally.
- › Fantastic event. Main critique is time problem of presentations scheduled for 30 minutes going overtime, due to discussion. I recommend they are 40 minutes. 30 for presentation and 10 for questions/discussion. More active time facilitation.
- › Venue worked well. Need some guidelines re speaking (CR groups/buttons suggestions!)

Summary and abstracts from '**Living and Working with Diversity as Women in Psychology**' conference follow.

There were many wonderful presentations covering a variety of issues important to us all as women in psychology. We were welcomed to the conference with great organization of venue and accommodation and the dinner out in Sunbury on the Saturday night was an exotic Indian adventure.

The conference was opened and closed by **Trang Thomas** who is currently **Professor of Psychology at RMIT** and a director on the Board of APS. Trang was the first woman appointed full professor at RMIT. She was APS Director of Science between 2001 and 2005 and Trang has been on the board of SBS, the Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority, the National Health and Medical Research Council, and was Assistant Human Rights Commissioner. In 1976, she founded one of the first APS women's groups. Trang's research interest continues in the field of ageing, racism, migration and women's issues. Trang has received several awards including the Alumni Achievement award from the University of NSW, the Inaugural Distinguished Alumni award from La Trobe University and was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

Workshops were provided on Friday evening, Saturday morning and afternoon by **CaAtherine Meredith** '**Clearing Out the Clutter**', and '**Walk and Hear the Laughter**' and '**Stop, Breathe & Smile**'

CaAtherine has over 25 years experience in the stage and film industries, with her experience extending through producing, directing and writing, as well facilitating motivational workshops. She has written several plays and short film scripts. During the research process for her play SEESCAPE, about domestic violence, she interviewed several abusers and the police from a DV Unit. In 1995 CaAtherine spent 18 months interviewing the sex workers in Perth massage centres and escort agencies, which resulted in the successful play IMPROMPTU, due to debut in Melbourne in May 2007. Four years ago CaAtherine formed a women's group called Platform of Women. Platform of Women came about because "I constantly meet wonderful women with amazing stories and I wanted a way of bringing these women together... Each month I invite a woman to share a story, whether it be how she immigrated to Australia or the top ten songs that changed her life. I've learnt so much about some extraordinary women". Platform of Women will resume again in February 2007.

Details:

CaAtherine Meredith

Community and Transition Coordinator, Student Services Group  
RMIT University - City Campus

Melbourne, VIC 3001  
Tel: +61 3 9925 5217  
Email: caatherine.meredith@rmit.edu.au



**Cath Smith** from the **Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS)** then began the presentations for the day with her Opening Keynote

The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) is the peak body for the social and community service sector in Victoria and advocates for the development of a sustainable, fair and equitable society. Members reflect a wide diversity ranging from large charities, sector peak organisations, small community services, advocacy groups and individuals active in social policy debates.

Cath has been CEO of VCOSS for four years, following 20 years in the non-government sector. She is keen to help strengthen the community sector's voice in public policy debates, and in relationships with the private sector, government and the broader community. Before VCOSS, Cath spent most of the 1990s working in international development; playing various senior roles in advocacy, operations, marketing and communications management at Community Aid Abroad (now Oxfam Australia). Prior to that, from 1985 to 1991, she worked in policy, fundraising and campaigning roles for the environment movement.



Since her return from maternity leave in September last year, Cath continues to co-chair the DHS-Human Services Partnership Implementation Committee; represents the combined Victorian peaks forum on the working group for the Community Sector Investment Fund and sits on the Community Building Ministerial Advisory Committee.

Presenter's details:

Cath Smith, CEO, Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS)  
Level 8/128 Exhibition St, Melbourne 3000  
Tel: +61 3 9388 2543 Fax: +61 3 9654 5749  
Email: Cath.Smith@vcoss.org.au

**Heather Gridley** from **Victoria University** led a panel discussion in the morning on the Saturday which framed a consideration of the social policy implications of the presentations to follow. Then at the close of the conference on Sunday, Heather led a panel discussion seeking reflections regarding the cultural diversity of presentations over the two days.

Details:

Heather Gridley, Department of Psychology  
Victoria University, Footscray Park Campus  
PO Box 14428  
Melbourne City MC  
Victoria 8001  
Tel: +61 3 9688 5224  
Fax: +61 3 9688 4324  
Email: [heather.gridley@vu.edu.au](mailto:heather.gridley@vu.edu.au)

The first presentation on the Saturday was from **Antionetter Butler Wilks** discussing her research.

**'Brides and Caregiving: Cultural, Social and Psychological Resources of Older Filipino Migrants'**

*Abstract*

This study explores the special circumstances Philippine-born brides encountered and the cultural, social and psychological resources they used to cope with their care-giving roles. These women pose particular challenges to the community because large numbers of young Filipino women, who migrated in the 1970s and 1980s as young brides/ spouses or fiancées of Australian men, settled in remote areas. Many of these women are now caring for their ageing husbands or parents. This cross-cultural research is being conducted in three stages. Stage one is a qualitative semi-structured interview designed to elicit the main themes used in framing the Filipino Care-giving Experience questionnaire for stage

two. Stage three is a qualitative individual interview of a small number of Filipino women focusing on the influence upon the quality of relationships and on their wellbeing and coping. This paper will discuss significant results from the quantitative data analysis of stage two. With their unique migration circumstances, Filipino brides/spouses who are living in metropolitan and rural Victoria were interviewed. The questionnaire included information on pre-migration circumstances, migration adjustment, acculturation, care-giving role, psychological health, social support and styles of coping. (Wilks, A.B., Thomas, T., & Xenos, S.)

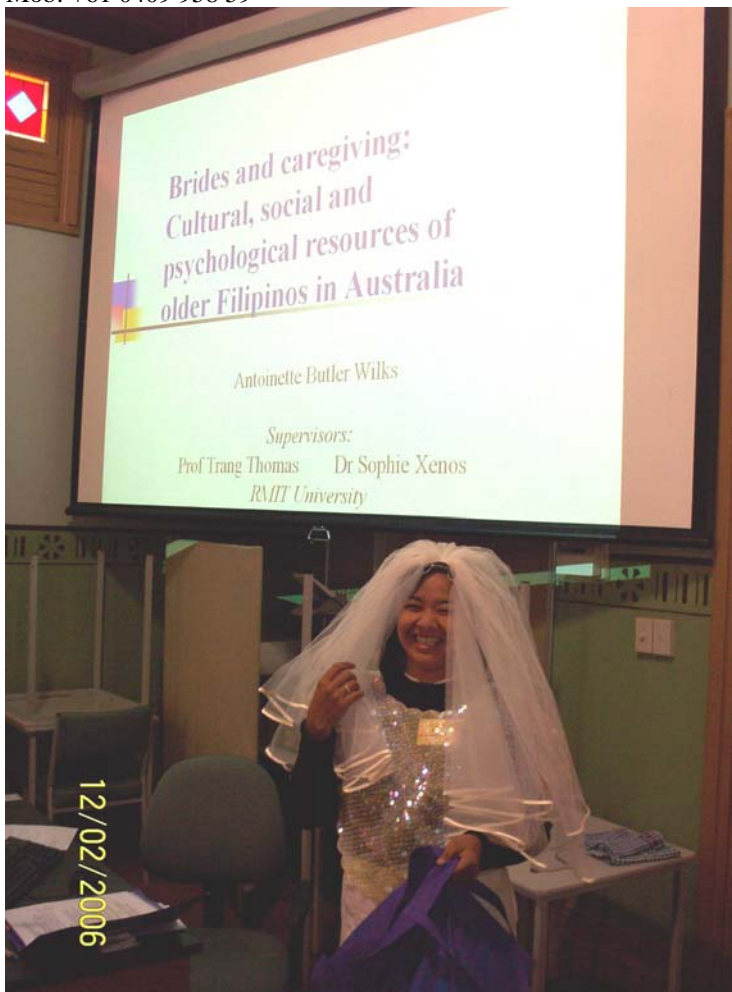
Presenters' details:

Antoinette Butler Wilks

RMIT University

Melbourne, VIC 3001

Mob: +61 0409 958 59



We then heard from **Melissa Noonan** in relation to the use of an outcome measure in therapy '**Evaluation of Outcome Directed Work**'

*Abstract*

Inner South Community Health Service (ISCHS) provides a community counselling service, with a focus on low income, marginalised and disadvantaged people. The service is in high demand for counselling services and frequently has long waiting lists resulting in a need to manage the demand for these services. ISCHS emphasises professionalism, innovation and a commitment to utilising evidence-based practice in order to provide the best possible service to counselling clientele. Staff at ISCHS were interested in the evidence-based approaches to counselling service delivery developed by Scott D. Miller and his colleagues in the USA. Of particular interest was the use of the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS), (Duncan 2004). The ORS measures client feedback and helps determine what is useful and effective for client change.

Ms Noonan undertook a Research Fellowship through PCHRED to explore (a) the extent to which clients were achieving positive change in their functioning, (b) the effectiveness of Single Session Therapy (SST) as a demand management tool, and (c) the extent to which a positive therapeutic relationship was evident. Recommendations for further research and practice implications as well as limitations of the study were explored in the presentation.

Presenters' details:

Melissa Noonan, Psychologist

Inner South Community Health Service (ISCHS)

<http://www.ischs.org.au/> E-mail: [mnoonan@ischs.org.au](mailto:mnoonan@ischs.org.au)

Tel: +61 3 9690 9144 Mob: +61 0417 104 746

This was followed by a presentation by **Ana Eugenia Castro** entitled '**Women's Narratives of Incarceration as Related to Problem Gambling and Their Recovery**'

*Abstract*

Gambler's Help Western provides counselling services at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) to female prisoners incarcerated for problem gambling-related crimes. This paper presented the demographic characteristics and stories of twenty five women and narrates how they became involved in illegal activities in order to finance their gambling. Ana discuss the experiences of the women prisoners dealing with incarceration and recovery. Case studies were utilised to explore underlying issues of problem gambling such as domestic violence, sexual assault, grief, and racial discrimination.

Presenters' details:

Ana Eugenia Castro

Gambler's Help Western

PO Box 147

St Albans Vic 3021  
Tel: +61 3 9296 1234;  
Fax: +61 3 9366 2086  
Email: Eugenia.Castro@isispc.com.au

We were enlightened by a **Workshop on Publishing** presented by **Virginia Braun** from University of Auckland who is also Co Editor of **Feminism and Psychology**

*Abstract*

Feminism & Psychology: An International Journal is the leading international forum for cutting-edge feminist research and debate in - and beyond - psychology. The journal aims to foster the development of feminist theory and practice in psychology, and publishes in a range of formats (e.g., research articles, spoken word pieces, review essays, observations & commentaries) on a wide variety of topics relevant to feminist psychology.

The aim of this workshop was to demystify all stages of the publication process, with the intent of giving participants information to assist in publication success.

Virginia, incoming co-editor (with Nicola Gavey) of Feminism & Psychology, is a senior lecturer in the Dept of Psychology at University of Auckland. She teaches qualitative research, feminist & social psychology, and researches around sexual health & women's gendered bodies. Virginia & Nicola are very excited to be bringing the Editorial Office of Feminism & Psychology to the Southern Hemisphere!

Presenters' details:

Virginia Braun, Co-Editor of Feminism & Psychology  
Department of Psychology, City Campus  
University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92019, Auckland Mail Centre 1142  
Aotearoa, New Zealand  
Tel: +64 (0)9 3737599 extn 87561 Fax: +64 (0)9 3737450  
Email: [v.braun@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:v.braun@auckland.ac.nz)

Jill Davies then presented her work '**Women managers and the new managerialism: A clash of cultures?**'

*Abstract*

Jill is a PhD student at Monash University and has been a psychologist for over 30 years – mostly in Education, and latterly in the welfare sector. Her project is relating to the

decision-making process for women managers who in midlife decide to move from employment in organizations to self-employment.

The paper examined the understandings women managers have developed of their experiences of *new-managerialism* and more feminist approaches to management skills that have led to their decisions to leave organizational employment and work for themselves. One central theme in this project is the observation that seniority in an organization is combined with an overtly gendered culture that leaves little space for women unless they, too, become masculinized. This is indeed a crisis of identity precipitated by culture, where the choice is either to negate one's own gender (if female) and become compliant with the mainstream masculine, and thereby *exile these women from themselves and make them agents of individual and social destruction* (Luce Irigaray, 1989), or retain/regain their gendered selves and leave.

Presenter Details:

Jill Davies

150 Tooronga Road

Glen Iris VIC 3146

Tel: +61 0407 051 105

Email: Wisework@bigpond.net.au or Jill.Davies@education.monash.edu.au

The next presentation was from **Carmel O'Brien** entitled '**Respect in report writing and assessment**'

*Abstract*

Psychologists are often called upon to write assessment reports for use by courts, government authorities and agencies. Assessments are requested for women and children whose situations, experiences, values and goals may diverge greatly from those of the assessing psychologist and from persons allocated to work with them or act on their behalf. While assessment tools can help overcome individual bias, much report-writing involves judgements and the formation of recommendations that will tend to reflect the writer's own values. This paper raised issues about the potential for respect and disrespect shown to women in report writing as well as some assessment pitfalls, shortcomings, strengths and ideas. Discussion was then generated around addressing these issues.

Carmel is a counselling psychologist who frequently works with families who are involved with the Children's Court and Family Court, and with families referred by DHS. She has conducted her part-time private practice in eastern Melbourne for the last 8 years. She also manages the clinical services programs for a large community agency, including general counselling, clinical supervision and support programs for women. Carmel is

also National Secretary for the APS, Child, Adolescent and Family Interest Group. Her special clinical interest is the recovery of women from the impact of family violence. She has experience in report writing for courts, Workcover, Victims of Crime and DHS.

Presenters' details:

Carmel O'Brien  
psychrespect@optusnet.com.au

**And then Katie Thomas, who traveled over from Perth for our conference, presented a keynote paper entitled 'Weak Bodies: The Erasure of Women and Children in Global Discourse and Response to HIV'**

*Abstract*

This research was developed on the basis of advice from Somali community members on appropriate ways of gathering data within their community and was an investigation of Somali women's understandings of community engagement and mental health. Somali cultural and community life is still primarily oral with the writing of Somali emerging only 50 years ago. Findings emerged from the research about the strengths of an oral culture facilitating relational development and community belonging for all of its members. Women in this community identified solidarity – social responsibility to nurture each other – as their means of 'resistance' to oppression. This presentation highlighted having a social responsibility to nurture in order to facilitate resistance. For example: How can we nurture resistance in each other? What does relational solidarity mean and how can we develop a community that creates a space of support for women?

Katie is currently involved in supporting research documenting the leadership and resilience of migrant and refugee women, the health status of women in Papua New Guinea, Australian Indigenous leadership, governance and trauma recovery and development impacts on Indigenous communities in Latin America.

Presenter Details:

Dr. Katie Thomas, Psychologist  
Centre for International Health, Curtin University of Technology  
GPO Box U 1987 Perth WA 6845  
Tel: +61 8 9266 3115 Fax: +61 8 9266 2608  
Email: Katie.thomas@curtin.edu.au

Finally we bring to you the presentation from **Marion Oke** based on her PhD research '*Journeys of Identity: A Narrative Analysis of Mongolian and Australian Women's Stories of Survival, Recovery and Remaking of Self Through and Beyond Domestic Violence*'.

Marion is a psychologist in private practice in Ballarat and Melbourne. She works part-time as a counsellor at Relationships Australia, Kew and in 1996 Marion spent 12 months

working as Consultant at the National Centre Against Violence which, at that time, was the only women's shelter and counselling service in Mongolia. She has since made five return working visits to Mongolia.

Marion has provided the newsletter with the paper below as a brief summary of her PhD research and this is presented below as a special feature.

## **MONGOLIAN AND AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S JOURNEYS OF SURVIVAL, RECOVERY AND REMAKING OF SELF THROUGH AND BEYOND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

### ***Summary of the research***

My feminist, narrative research privileges women's voice. It comprises a cross-cultural narrative analysis of 11 Mongolian and 11 Australian women's stories of survival, recovery and remaking of self following domestic/intimate partner violence. I identified plots and themes of individual autobiographical narratives, around general themes of survival, recovery and remaking of self, with a major focus on narrative identity. Relevant canonical narratives, being general stories of lives arising from dominant discourses in a particular culture, were also identified. The research process was discursive and reflexive, with myself as researcher, hearing, bearing witness to and reflecting on the women's stories. The women responded to their own stories, which were then shared among participants, allowing further reflection and response.

Similarities between the Mongolian and Australian stories stood out above differences, however there was some evidence that the Mongolian women may have moved further away from the violence and its effects than their Australian counterparts. The Mongolian women were undertaking their journeys of survival and recovery in a context of major societal crises, the aftermath of the collapse of the Socialist state and the Mongolian economy. Perhaps, even within this context, the cohesive nature of the Mongolian women's family support, particularly strong support from their mothers, strengthened their narrative identities, giving them resilience.

### ***Identified common themes or story-lines***

Women's stories of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood: the naive self; Violation and survival: the divided self and the lost thread of meaning; Breaking down and breaking through: the lost self and the finding of new meanings, the beginnings of recovery; Reconnecting in the context of family, friends and acquaintances; Legal issues: women's encounters with the criminal justice system and the family law court; Women's interactions with medical and helping professionals; Women connecting and journeys of narrative identity within group contexts; Reconnecting with the self through reading, writing and inner, spiritual and philosophical practices and ideas; Commonality and narrative identity in the context of study, work, travel and relationships; Narrative identity, reflections and plots.

## ***Conclusions***

### ***Similarities stood out above differences***

Commonalities and parallels between the Mongolian and the Australian women's narratives are evident in every aspect of their journeys of survival and recovery. All the Mongolian and Australian women's experiences of violence were emotional and embodied, taking place in patriarchal cultural contexts. Recovery involved reconnecting within themselves and with others and rejecting old patriarchal beliefs.

***Most women initially idealised relationships and marriage***, this being supported by Mongolian and Australian societal and familial canonical life-narratives. Most also experienced an early violence-free time in the marriage or relationship.

***The women lost their narrative identity or sense of continuity of self to overwhelming embodied, emotional experiences*** such as anxiety, depression, confusion, and self-blame. Several women also experienced a dissociated state, a sense of 'doubleness' or of leaving the self. Experiences such as denial and dissociation, whilst initially representing coping strategies in the face of overwhelming emotional pain or threat of annihilation, inhibited recovery of self.

***Most women experienced 'breaking down and breaking through'***; new strength to begin the journey away from the violence arising in the context of overwhelming desperation, loss of hope and loss of self. These turning points were often in the context of imminent loss of life, from being killed or from desperation leading to suicide.

***A reconnecting period with others*** and within themselves was part of the women's recovery of self, when they sought support from family, friends and services such as counselling and support groups. All the Australians and a number of the Mongolian women undertook professional individual and/or group support. The Mongolian women who did not receive counselling made successful recoveries of self in the context of support from family and friends.

***Women's engagements with their respective legal systems*** was usually a stressful and difficult endeavour in both Mongolian and Australian contexts, with women's stories not being believed in court and some women losing custody of their children. One Australian woman found the legal process difficult but strengthening; one Mongolian woman found it supportive. A number of women had interactions with police; while several women experienced being helped, one Australian woman experienced neglect by police to act in the face of violence.

***Solitary reflective practices***, including reading, writing, meditating and religious practices, helped facilitate the stream of consciousness and meaning making needed for development of narrative identity. Several Mongolian and Australian women found writing allowed for expression of feelings, reflection and increased self-compassion.



*Being engaged in paid or voluntary work* provided the women with a context for connection with others, a sense of purpose and an income.

*Undertaking education*, for the majority of the women, enabled a new life course, new knowledge, reconnection with the world and a strengthened, empowered narrative identity. I thus conclude that for women moving away from domestic violence, education is likely to facilitate a sense of empowerment, purpose, agency and independence, the perfect antidote to being controlled and oppressed.

***The narrative, feminist research approach***

The Australian and Mongolian women's stories of survival and recovery from domestic violence are rich in comparative data. Participants were invited to tell stories with a dominant plot of survival and recovery. Particularly empowering and in some cases therapeutic for participants, was telling their stories, hearing them read and having the opportunity to reflect on them.

I concluded that a feminist, narrative research approach privileges women's voice, encompassing both the complexity of context and individual difference and the generating of broader ideas and understandings that facilitate action.

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The announcement of the **Elaine Dignan Award** Winner for 2006

Congratulations to **Dr Isabel Fernandez** for her research

**'Research in Emotional Consequences of Endometriosis on Quality of Life of Women and Their Partners'**

Dr Isabel Fernandez carried out a national exploratory study about the impact of endometriosis on well-being and quality of life. The study is comprised of three parts. The study began with an exploration of the experiences of women with endometriosis. The outcome of this investigation led to an awareness of the importance of the experiences of partners of women with endometriosis and the lack of psycho-educational material available for women and for health care providers. Both of these issues were subsequently addressed in the study.

Isabel's follow-on work on the perspective of male partners of women with endometriosis was recently published in the *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*. Isabel

analyzed of combination of questionnaire and interview data revealing several common emotional themes relating to living with endometriosis. These strong emotions included low mood, anxiety, and powerlessness and contributed to a grief-like process much like that experienced by their female partners, with some also reporting acceptance and relationship growth. Isabel applies the clinical significance.

**Please also see special request from our National Convener in Victorian News section for volunteers to assist with a multi state committee regarding this award for 2007**

**Conference feedback** that was compiled from the evaluation sheets and provided by Raelynn indicate that the conference in December 2006 was a wonderful event. Those of us who attended certainly know what we would miss if we don't go again next year! Don't forget to look out for registration form in future edition of newsletter. **See feedback below:**

**Comments:**

- Excellent Event!
- An, excellent, excellent conference with a great depth of intellectual, critical, evidence based material. Well prepared and facilitated. Excellent organisation.
- Very good conference – Sessions this year met the W&P IG criteria. Hopefully the next conference will focus on these criteria. Location, refreshments etc all very compatible and reasonably priced.
- Congratulations to RaeLynn, Heather and Eugenia. Thank you for giving marginalised women voice through the conference.
- Excellent conference with opportunities for discussion and sharing of ideas.
- I hope that the presenters provided handouts.
- This was useful, erudite, well run and highly educational. All presentations were relevant and sophisticated and learned. Well done! I would like to hear these speakers at an APS National Conference.



**Special Report on Women & Girls with Eating Disorders from Professor Marilyn Safir, Israel. Date: Feb 19, 2007 3:04 PM**

The American Psychological Association has issued the following news release:

**Sexualization of Girls Is Linked to Common Mental Health Problems in Girls and Women-Eating Disorders**

A report of the American Psychological Association (APA) released today found evidence that the proliferation of sexualized images of girls and

young women in advertising, merchandising, and media is harmful to girls' self-image and healthy development.

To complete the report, the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls studied published research on the content and effects of virtually every form of media, including television, music videos, music lyrics, magazines, movies, video games and the Internet. They also examined recent advertising campaigns and merchandising of products aimed toward girls.

Sexualization was defined by the task force as occurring when a person's value comes only from her/his sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics, and when a person is sexually objectified, e.g., made into a thing for another's sexual use.

Examples of the sexualization of girls in all forms of media including visual media and other forms of media such as music lyrics abound. And, according to the report, have likely increased in number as "new media" have been created and access to media has become omnipresent. The influence and attitudes of parents, siblings, and friends can also add to the pressures of sexualization.

"The consequences of the sexualization of girls in media today are very real and are likely to be a negative influence on girls' healthy development," says Eileen L. Zurbriggen, PhD, chair of the APA Task Force. "We have ample evidence to conclude that sexualization has negative effects in a variety of domains, including cognitive functioning, physical and mental health, and healthy sexual development."

Research evidence shows that the sexualization of girls negatively affects girls and young women across a variety of health domains:

**Cognitive and Emotional Consequences:** Sexualization and objectification undermine a person's confidence in and comfort with her own body, leading to emotional and self-image problems, such as shame and anxiety.

**Mental and Physical Health:** Research links sexualization with three of the most common mental health problems diagnosed in girls and women—eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression or depressed mood.

**Sexual Development:** Research suggests that the sexualization of girls has negative consequences on girls' ability to develop a healthy sexual self-image.

According to the task force report, parents can play a major role in contributing to the sexualization of their daughters or can play a protective and educative role. The APA report calls on parents, school officials, and all health professionals to be alert for the potential impact of sexualization on girls and young women. Schools, the APA says,

should teach media literacy skills to all students and should include information on the negative effects of the sexualization of girls in media literacy and sex education programs.

"As a society, we need to replace all of these sexualized images with ones showing girls in positive settings-ones that show the uniqueness and competence of girls," states Dr. Zurbriggen. "The goal should be to deliver messages to all adolescents-boys and girls-that lead to healthy sexual development."

Full text of the Executive Summary, Report, and tips on "What Parents Can Do" are available at:

<http://www.apa.org/pi/wpo/sexualization.html>

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