

WOMEN AND PSYCHOLOGY
AN INTEREST GROUP
of the
AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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From the Editor

This first edition for 2004 is a great opportunity to share some of the presentations made at the annual conference in December last year. I hope and expect that more summaries and reflections will be available in future editions this year. Thanks to Barb Tilden, Julie Winstanley and Cate France for their contributions so early in the year. I have also included a substantial abstract of the paper presented by Jane Ussher and offer Jane space to add to that in a future edition of the newsletter.

I was musing about the state of the world and looking at the content of newsletters from 2003. *In January* last year I was hoping that the war in Iraq might be over – and a year later see that it is not, though it is moving away from public attention. .

In August we published a summary of the APS submission to the Australian Government enquiry into Child Custody. That reported was published in December 2003 after many, many submissions were made. The full report and supporting media releases are available at:www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fca/index.htm

A summary of the report might read something like this: 50/50 joint physical custody was not endorsed (shared parental responsibility was). A Families Tribunal was recommended, however the PM, has recently said that he is "not convinced" on the merits of this idea. A ministerial taskforce, to report by end of June 2004 will be set-up to evaluate the child support scheme. .It is still unclear what the out comes of the enquiry are in terms of Government policy and legal processes, and it seems likely debate will continue for some time.

Both the New South Wales and Victorian Groups have an interesting year ahead. Mark the relevant dates in your diary now. I would love to be able to help broadcast information about events or gatherings in other states or in regional areas since the Victorian and New South Wales groups are primarily capital city based.

From the desk(top) of the Convenor

Welcome to the first edition of the Women & Psychology Newsletter for 2004. I hope you were all able to get some time off over the Christmas break to recharge your batteries. My travels between Sydney, Queensland and the NSW South Coast had an uplifting effect. The countryside was much greener than midyear 2003. Recent rainfalls had made a dent in some of the drought-affected areas nearer to the coast. This should provide some mental relief for families on the land in those areas. Hopefully the rainfall will continue and will provide relief further inland.

The year ended on a good note with the high quality of presentations at the 2003 Women & Psychology Conference at Fairy Meadow NSW. Presenters came from Queensland, NSW, Victoria and overseas. We were delighted that Julie Winstanley from the University of Huddersfield, UK was able to include the conference in her busy schedule in Australia. Her research on Post Natal Depression and the Sure Start program in the U.K. was very interesting. The papers strongly reinforced the continued need for gender specific research. As Colleen has mentioned in her column, this newsletter features abstracts and summaries of some of the papers.

Elaine Dignan Award.

Two women received the Elaine Dignan Award in 2003. Dr. Kathryn Gow of Brisbane and Dr Helen Vidler of Melbourne were declared equal winners for their important work and research in the field of psychology and women. Their endeavours derived from two different areas of psychology: clinical and business/ organisational psychology. The Committee chose not to compare their work on a common basis because one was intended for theoretical communication and clinical management while the other related mainly to organisational psychology and business/community activist applications.

Helen Vidler has been researching aspects of depression. Her PhD thesis, "The Experience of Depression: Women's Perspective" explored the causes for depression in women, the role of self-agency and the significance of interpersonal relationship. Helen is hoping for wider

publication of her research as a book which should further understanding of the nature of depression in women.

Kathryn Gow has been involved in two very different career streams. One relates to a huge amount of work she has done in research, planning, applying organisational psychological principles and in practical implementation of the microfinance project with women and men in rural Viet Nam. Kathryn's second area of merit has been her success as a teacher in psychology education. Katherine was recently awarded the Queensland University of Technology Outstanding Achievement Award for Competence in Teaching over five Campuses.

Presentations at our Wollongong conference by both recipients were thought-provoking and well-received by the participants.

2004 Women & Psychology Conference

A location has yet to be set for the 2004 Women and Psychology Conference. State groups are urged to consider running the conference in their area. Although there is some work to do in organising this major event, the benefits make it worthwhile for the local group by:

- providing a showcase for current feminist research
- allowing local presenters who are unable to travel to other States an opportunity to present their work
- fostering the development of a Women and Psychology group in the State
- encouraging students and young psychologists to attend a professional development activity from a feminist perspective.
- providing valuable experience in conference management.

Please raise this issue in your planning sessions and consider giving it a go. It has proven to be a most worthwhile and rewarding experience.

New treasurer and co-convenor for Victorian Women & Psychology

Precilla Choi has recently agreed to be the Victorian Group's treasurer and co-convenor (with Melissa Noonan). Melissa has held the role of Convenor single handed for several years and is pleased to have someone to share the workload. At the same time Bareah Aboushamat who has been Victorian treasurer has passed on her role to Precilla.

An Associate Professor at Victoria University's School of Human Movement, Recreation & Performance, Precilla moved here from the UK almost 2 years ago - and says "I knew hardly anyone when I arrived so

Women in Psychology ‘pot lucks’ were, and continue to be, a wonderful way for me to meet other women, psychologists and feminists”.

Precilla is an internationally renowned researcher in the areas of gender, health and related physical activity and women’s reproductive health. She is author of the book *Femininity and the physically active woman* (Routledge, 2000) and numerous peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters. She currently directs projects researching men’s health behaviours (including exercise), men’s body image and androgenic-anabolic steroid use, developing physical activity programs for women, and researching young girls’ understandings of femininity.

Precilla spends a lot of her time trying to get research funding as well as managing the School’s research students’ budgets. This experience will be very valuable in her role as the Group’s treasurer. We have already noted that she has excellent organisational skills for the job of co-convenor. Precilla is “looking forward to giving back to the Women and Psychology Group which, gave and continues to give, a lot to me”.

Dori Wisniewski - National Convenor

Conference First Announcement

DOING FEMINIST RESEARCH IN PSYCHOLOGY Friday 13 August 2004

The Victorian group is keen to see more feminist research being supported and promoted within psychology. So we are busy planning a one-day conference that will address the questions of:

- What is feminist research?
- How is it done?
- What are the challenges?
- What makes it all worthwhile?
- Perspectives of the researched

Keynote speakers:

- Professor Jane Ussher, University of Western Sydney
- Professor Jill Astbury, Melbourne University Key Centre for Women's Health/Victoria University

Round table discussants:

- Dr Murray Drummond, University of South Australia
- A/Professor Precilla Choi, Victoria University

The 2nd announcement and call for submissions will be published and forwarded to all Women & Psychology members as soon as possible. If you would like more details, please contact Precilla.Choi@vu.edu.au

NSW Women and Psychology Events for 2004

The NSW Women and Psychology Interest Group meet on a monthly basis for networking, information and skills sharing and professional development for psychologists from a feminist perspective. A planning session was held at the 27th February meeting. When speakers have been confirmed, the program will be posted on the APS Women and Psychology website and circulated to members. Psychologists who would like to present a paper or to discuss some aspect of their work or their research with women and/or girls please contact Dori Wisniewski.

Format is likely to follow last year's with professional development sessions alternating with open forum discussions. This format worked well in 2003 and encouraged more involvement by participants.

The Venue has changed! It is now first floor – the Women's College – Sydney University. First building off the Carillon Avenue gate. (See UBD Street guide for map). 5:30 for refreshments and networking. 6:00 pm for discussion.

Meeting dates for 2004 (Draft Calendar)

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| February 27 th | Planning Meeting and dinner |
| March 26 th | Open Forum – Collaborate or Confront: Working with the values of our clients |
| April 30 th | Getting Started as Women in Psychology |
| May 28 th | Open Forum- Body Image: Shrink or Perish |
| June 25 th | Sue Flatt: Shared Parenting Debate – Issues and Impacts for Women and Families |
| July 30 th | Dr Helen Vidler- Extending the Discussion on Depression and Women |
| August 27 th | Barbara Bicego - Issues emerging on Lesbian Health Needs |
| Sept 24 th | APS Conference (Possible symposium on Women & Ageing) |
| Oct 22 nd | Rosemary Pynor on her latest research. |

Meetings are usually followed by lively discussion over a friendly meal in Newtown. Contact Dori on 0411-353 434 or 02-9534 4434 (a.h.) for any further information

Victorian Women and Psychology Events for 2004

Victorian Group members enjoy our *monthly pot luck dinners which will continue to be the mainstay of our gatherings in 2004*. We have a roster of women who have agreed to host the dinners for the first half of the year, and would welcome volunteers for the latter half of the year. **New people, including students, are very welcome, and gatherings aim to be an informal friendly way to share ideas and stories.** If you would like monthly notification of the host's address, please contact Precilla Choi on Precilla.Choi@vu.edu.au or Colleen Turner on 9214 7824.

Friday February 27

Pot Luck Dinner – Northcote.

Tuesday 16 March

Getting Started as Women in Psychology (For more details see flyer)

At Caraniche - 47 Moor St. Fitzroy 7.30- 930pm

Contact Heather.Gridley@vu.edu.au tel. 0419 113 731

Friday 26 March

Pot Luck Dinner - Caulfield East

Friday 30 April

Pot Luck dinner – West Brunswick

Friday 28 May

Pot luck Dinner – Box Hill

Saturday 19 June

Late afternoon –early evening (*watch this space for more details!*)

A Winter Solstice Celebration to scare away the mid winter Greys

Friday 30 July

Pot Luck Dinner

Friday 13 August

Proposed one day Conference. Hosted by Victoria University

“Doing feminist research – in Psychology?” *watch this space for details*

Friday 24 September

Pot luck Dinner

Friday 29 October

Pot luck Dinner

Co-conveners of Women & Psychology (Victoria) for the coming year are Precilla Choi - Precilla.Choi@vu.edu.au and Melissa Noonan - melissanoonan@lycos.com - tel 0417 104746 – feel free to contact them for any W & P enquiries.

Victorian Group
GETTING STARTED AS WOMEN IN PSYCHOLOGY

FACILITATORS Heather Gridley, Melissa Noonan,
Kim Shearson & Amanda Murfett

WHEN? Tuesday 16th March – 7.30-9.30pm

WHERE? Caraniche, Level 1, 47 Moor St. Fitzroy
(Enter Moor St from Brunswick St - parking available in
Nicholson, Moor and nearby streets)

COST? Women & Psychology members \$5.50*; non-members
\$11*;
Students/unwaged by donation (*GST included)

By popular demand as in previous years, this first meeting for the year 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: heather.gridley@vu.edu.au or ☎ 0419 113 731

2003 Women & Psychology Conference Presentations



Sue Flatt and Barbara Bicego lead discussion on Feminist Ethics in Psychology

Editor's note

The remainder of the newsletter is devoted to short outlines of interesting research, from the Women and Psychology Conference held at Fairy Meadow in November 2003. The theme appears to be women's experience of complex emotions - from views and beliefs about the nature of depression generally to post natal depression, and the impact on women's sense of identity of alcohol dependence. Several of the synopses were referenced while others were not. For consistency and readability I have removed references. If you wish to follow up references for any of the pieces please contact me via email. I have kept those that were referenced and for others I can direct you to the author.- *Colleen*

Experiential workshop on women, motherhood and depression:
Julie Winstanley, School of Human & Health Science, University of Huddersfield.

A synopsis

Postnatal depression (PND) has been estimated to affect 10% of women and has become a progressively expanding and prioritised area for research due to the number of studies which highlight the detrimental effects PND can have on family health and welfare. Research reveals that PND can have a major impact on mother and partner (Boath & Henshaw, 2001), the family (Dudley, Roy & Kelk, 2001), the long-term cognitive, emotional development of baby (Murray, Sinclair, Cooper, Duncornau & Turner, 1999) and mother-baby interactions (Murray, 1997).

A local Sure Start, a UK government initiative (aimed at tackling child poverty and social exclusion) has developed a new mode of social intervention designed to facilitate practitioner - client communication and interactions in an attempt to prevent PND. In a review of literature from the MIDIRS (The Midwifery Digest Information Resource Service, 2002) database, the local Sure Start identified 46 individual 'causal' factors to be associated with PND. From these, the local Sure Start identified 22 particular psychosocial factors, (self esteem, money worries etc) which for the purposes of the 'Journal' were reduced to 18 key factors and one catch all factor.

The 'Maternal Mental and Emotional Well-being Journal' contains a list of the above factors, and women (as part of their normal maternity care) are encouraged to report if any factor/s are troubling them. Through client self-identification it is envisaged that practitioner - client communication and interactions may lead to the increased access and use (by the women) of relevant individually tailored social interventions, which may increase maternal well-being and reduce the prevalence of PND.

The Journal is currently being piloted with 50 women receiving maternity care within the local Sure Start district. It is provided at initial appointment continuing until approximately 7 months postnatal.

My involvement with the local Sure Start programme is as research evaluator of the pilot of the 'Journal'. The evaluation, having gained ethical approval from the Local National Health Research Ethics Committee is now being undertaken. The evaluation utilises predominantly qualitative methods in an attempt to gain an insight into both practitioner's and service user's views and experiences of using the 'Journal' and its effectiveness in terms of promoting maternal well-being.

The workshop had two main aims: the initial aim was to convey information about the research and work currently being undertaken in relation to women, motherhood and depression. It was anticipated that in placing the workshop into such a context, discussions could focus upon issues of maternal well-being and postnatal depression.

The second aim of the workshop was to provide a forum in which the group could exchange 'ideas', 'experiences' and 'knowledge' around maternal well-being, motherhood and postnatal depression.

Debates emerged around definitions of 'postnatal depression'. The local Sure Start and I have found great difficulty in obtaining a specific and

consistent definition of PND, as most definitions originate from medical and diagnostic protocols, policies and psychiatric criteria. These tended to focus on defining postnatal depression in terms of symptomology such as loss of libido, sleeplessness, anxiety and depression. The group debated issues around how such definitions and labels pathologize women in terms of being abnormal, mad and bad, and discussed the effects that such definitions may have on women's well-being.

It was also discussed (in relation to Professor Jane Ussher's earlier presentation on Pre-Menstrual Syndrome - PMS) that there were similarities in the 'ways' that both PND and PMS are constructed as 'something to be eradicated' and how PND and PMS are used to define both the symptoms and the causes of the symptoms.

Finally government programmes and initiatives within the U.K and Australia were discussed, contrasting Sure Start with Homestart and postnatal depression interventions such as the 'Journal' with Australian interventions such as Beyond Blue.

The ongoing silencing of women in families:

An analysis and rethinking of premenstrual syndrome and therapy
Jane M Ussher, Professor of Women's Health Psychology, University of Western Sydney)

Abstract

Traditionally, explanations for premenstrual symptomatology have focussed on the individual woman as the site of difficulties, and as the sole target of intervention. In contrast, from the perspective of a material-discursive-intrapsychic model, this paper focuses on the ways in which 'PMS' is experienced, constructed, and dealt with in family relationships. Drawing on in-depth narrative interviews conducted with women with moderate-severe premenstrual symptoms, it is argued 'PMS' is closely tied to relationship difficulties and responsibilities; familial expectations and attributions for women's behaviour provide a discursive context for behaviour and emotions to be positioned as 'PMS'; and that the ongoing self-silencing and pathologisation of women's emotions in families are key attributes of 'PMS'. This suggests that a consideration of relationship issues should be central to any assessment or intervention for premenstrual symptoms, and conversely, that attention should be given to premenstrual exacerbation of relationship difficulties in family or couples therapy.

**The strength within:
Women dealing with choices, changes and challenges
Depression among young and mid-aged Australian women:
Who is most at risk and how do they cope?**

Cate France, Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health

I am very fortunate to be doing a PhD with Women's Health Australia, otherwise known as the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH). ALSWH is a nationwide project funded by the Department of Health and Ageing to provide evidence-based research data for the development of policy and practice.

With a background in clinical psychology, I am interested to find out about how women cope with feeling depressed. In Australia depression is the leading cause of total years lost due to disability, and the highest prevalence is found among younger people with young women being diagnosed with depressive disorders at rates of up to three times higher than those for young men. Younger women report highest levels of psychological distress in ALSWH. My substudy involves 9,333 women from the younger cohort.

Women from the younger cohort were surveyed in 1996, 2000 and 2003. From the data in the second survey (2000) when the women were aged 22-27 years, it was found that nearly 30% scored 10 or over on the scale used to measure depressed mood, the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D). This is a self-report scale which is not a diagnostic tool: therefore high scores imply psychological distress not a psychiatric condition.

The analysis of the data from the second survey explored the associations between demographic and health-related variables and depressive symptoms among young Australian women. After adjustment for age and rurality of residence, participants with depressive symptoms were likely to be less well-educated, have a history of unemployment, have less income, and be living without a partner than those without such symptoms. They visited general practitioners and medical specialists more frequently, reported a greater number of physical diagnoses over the previous four years, and experienced more physical symptoms. They were also more likely to have used cannabis and other drugs. Additionally, participants currently experiencing depressive symptoms were more likely to smoke, less likely to exercise, and more likely to consume alcohol at unsafe levels or to be abstainers or rare drinkers.

From the group of women who scored 10 or over on the CES-D10 in 2000 (n=2808), I'm interested to look at two groups from the data in 2003: women who continue to struggle with depressed mood and women who are no longer experiencing depressed mood. I'd like to see whether it is possible to predict who may no longer have depressive symptomatology, to look at what women do to make themselves feel better and what recommendations they have for other women. An attitudinal scale will also be included. So far, however, I've run a focus group whose task was to comment on structure, comprehensibility and appropriateness of the substudy survey, and I've also analysed that data from the pilot study (n=27).

From the pilot study of younger women, a number of points emerged concerning attitudes to depression:

- Only one woman strongly disagreed that depression is a medical condition; 65% agreed or strongly agreed.
- None of the women believed that the symptoms of depression can only be alleviated through the use of medication; 87% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- A greater percentage of women believed that natural approaches were better than antidepressants.
- 87% women disagreed with the notion that only women who give in to depression suffer from it.

GPs are the professional group most likely to be spoken to about feeling depressed, followed by psychologists & alternative practitioners.

Partners are likely to be spoken to about the issues, but only about half the women found this to be helpful.

Only 13% of those women who spoke to friends regarded this strategy as unhelpful.

Nearly half the women had taken vitamins/minerals to help alleviate depressed mood.

Housework and walking are the most commonly used physical activity related strategies.

Over half the women change their eating habits during episodes of depressed mood.

It was interesting to me to find that these younger women in the pilot study (now aged 25-30 years) tended to believe that depression is a medical condition which does not require pharmacological intervention.

Mid aged women's experience of depression seems to be different to that of younger women

Dr. Sue Outram conducted telephone interviews with 322 women from NSW in remote, rural and urban areas and found attitudes and beliefs about depression which contrasted quite strongly to those of younger women in my study. Broadly Sue found midaged women very clearly do not consider depression to be a medical problem.

Midaged women with poor mental health do not label it “depression”, but rather attribute it to family, health or work problems, do not attribute it to biological or hormonal factors, nor to childhood trauma and they do expect their problems to recur.

Generally, midaged women prefer informal help from female friends, don't want medication, want counselling and understanding, preferably from psychologists and counsellors though they acknowledge that financial and structural barriers exist.

Identity transformation among women before, during, and after alcohol dependence

Barbara Tilden – Master of Health Psychology, Victoria University
(2003)

Alcohol abuse has largely been viewed as a male problem, both in Australia and overseas, and research reflects this bias. However, recent evidence indicates that 34% of Australian women drink at hazardous levels, markedly increasing the risk of alcohol-related illnesses. Due to the fact that women are more prone to the toxic effects of alcohol, and die at a much higher rate than men, there is a need for gender to be recognised as a significant variable in research on alcohol. This qualitative study, utilising interpretative methods outlined by Dey (1993) and Miles and Huberman (1994), aimed to address this gap in the literature by providing insight into the salient aspects of change in the identities of women before, during and after dependence on alcohol.

Sixteen women, aged 36–70 years, met the inclusion criteria of Alcohol Dependence and Sustained Full Remission, as outlined in the DSM-IV (1994). In an in-depth interview they were asked to describe their perceptions of their experiences relating to their identities over the three time frames in context with their social worlds. While their narrative accounts were individually unique and often complex, striking similarities were found. The three major themes identified were, ‘Injury

to the personal 'I' prior to dependence on alcohol, 'Blocked identity' during dependence on alcohol, and 'Transformed value to the personal 'I' in recovery. The most outstanding feature of these themes relating to transitions in identity was that of 'self-value' to which the relational component was inextricably linked.

Injury to the personal 'I'.

These women suffered injury to their personal identities by their social worlds prior to the abuse of alcohol, which negatively affected self-evaluation. Most of the women experienced difficulties in forming a positive sense of self in their formative years due to prolonged exposure to insufficient validation from significant others. While a few women described erosion of their identities due to damaging events involving their social worlds in mid to later life, in either scenario value to their personal selves was either impoverished, or had become diminished. Their accounts suggested that poor self-esteem became a threat to the equilibrium of their identities and thus destabilization in turn led to negative self-evaluation, emotional distress and the inability to cope.

Blocked Identity

Alcohol was used to 'numb', or escape from emotional pain and the disturbance within their identities. However, for most women in this study the emotional suffering caused by the destructive path of alcoholism seemed to become deceptively merged with the original 'suffering-self' evident prior to the abuse of alcohol. This finding is important because even when their physical, psychological, and social worlds were becoming increasingly diminished as their alcoholism became more pervasive, their 'normal' experience was that of emotional despair caused by the disturbance in their identities. The essential problem here is that they could not envision that 'different' (more healthy and happy) was possible and did not know how to create change. They were stuck, as it were, in their experience of pain. In this respect their identities were blocked where no growth could occur.

Transformed value to the personal 'I'

Poor health was by far the most prevalent theme accounting for the cessation of alcoholism, with five women being hospitalized for alcohol-related illness, and seven others becoming seriously unwell. While a few women did achieve cessation via rational decision making, many women reported that cognitive application alone was ineffective. Relational support from other women in recovery, which had otherwise been missing or seriously impeded, facilitated the discovery of a new-found value within their personal selves and was the most important revelation

for recovery to occur. Gender was implicated as a central factor both in the way Alcohol Dependence developed and the way in which the process of recovery occurred. Their gender and feminine roles often featured as being undervalued by their social worlds, impacting negatively upon identity.

The period of transition was described as a slow process in which identification with other women in recovery was paramount. The metaphor of the 'empty shell' provided by one woman, epitomises the lack of felt value that most of the women experienced in their lives before and during dependence on alcohol. The same woman described herself post dependence on alcohol as now having "an inside as well as an outside" connoting the transition to a valued inner self. The various descriptors used by the women such as, "hole", "empty shell", "void", and "nothing", could be understood to represent the disturbance in the personal identities of most of the women that led to chronic emotional pain. The relational nature of that disturbance meant that positive relational support could be a promising avenue for recovery, which was the case for most women in this study.

While many examples were provided highlighting the disconnection to their inner selves, the most common features in the accounts of recovery were seeking help and support from others, and discovering who they really were. This involved: changing negative thoughts to positive, learning about why they used alcohol, increasing self-esteem, developing meaningful relational connections, and finding a new sense of self-value. This was a process that happened over time as their physical and psychological health improved. When these new values became integrated into their personal and social identities, they developed an integrity within their inner selves that was meaningful and congruent with their own needs.

This study has provided insight into the complex nature of identity processes involved in change and recovery among women with alcohol problems that researchers, clinicians, and academics might be interested in both in Australia and overseas.

Some Comments by Conference Presenters...

'I would like to thank all who took part in the workshop for their valuable insights, Professor Jane Ussher for her excellent thought provoking presentation on PMS and in particular Una Gault and Dori Wisniewski for providing the opportunity to present and take part in such an enjoyable conference'

‘I began to question my sanity when I applied to present at this conference. Flying to the UK with four children two days after the end of the conference, seemed reason enough to stay at home to sort, pack and clean. Fortunately the decision to attend was a good one: I met some fabulous women, heard some exciting presentations and was thoroughly spoilt by the food and company. I boarded that plane far more refreshed than I would have if I’d spent the weekend cleaning out kitchen cupboards, I’m sure!’

‘This conference gave me the opportunity to draw together my thoughts as I progress slowly through this doctorate. Being the first presenter made me rather hesitant because I was unsure about what was considered “acceptable”; however the previous evening of laughter and sparkles plus the horseshoe of encouraging faces helped the nerves to settle’

‘I really appreciated the interest shown by a number of fellow conference attendees who came to talk to me afterwards. Thank you to everyone for your encouragement and support. I look forward to seeing you all at our next conference if not before’



Dori and other conference goers Rosemary & Barbara sing along to the music.