

Women and Psychology

From the Desk of the Convenor

We are well into the New Year and the annual summer conference in Sunbury is a distant memory. I hope this newsletter finds you still benefiting from your holidays over December and January, and enjoying the last days of summer.

Women and Psychology Interest Group Office Bearers 2008–2010

After diligent and unflagging service to the Women and Psychology Interest Group, Sue Flatt and Helen Vidler have stepped down from their respective positions of treasurer and newsletter editor. I'd like to thank them both for their dedication and the valuable work you have given to W&P. Sue has kept us well accounted for in our budgets and Helen has kept us informed with the many events and items of interest in the newsletter. We now warmly welcome Carmel O'Brien, Treasurer, and Meg Orton, Newsletter Editor.

National Executive

Convenor: Dr. RaeLynn Alvarez-Wicklein
Raelynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au

Treasurer: Carmel O'Brien
psychrespect@optusnet.com.au

Newsletter Editor: Meg Orton
meg.orton@iinet.net.au

Committee member

Dr Helen Vidler
h.vidler@uws.edu.au

Rosemary Pynor
r.pynor@usyd.edu.au

Heather Gridley
heather.gridley@vu.edu.au

State Branch Contacts

NSW: Dori Wisniewski
dori.w@bigpond.com

Queensland: Ann Aboud
ann.aboud@csq.qld.gov.au

Victoria: Dr. Rae Lynn Alvarez-Wicklein
Raelynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au

....(we) thank
them
both for their
dedication
and
valuable work.

Media Watch

Please forward internet, magazine, and newspaper articles that feature issues of interest to W&P. We are trying to keep an up-to-date collection of information and articles for reference and use by W&P groups. It also supports our efforts to bring attention to emerging issues with APS head office and the Board.
Regards –
RaeLynn Álvarez
Wicklein

State Activities

It is great to see that W&P state groups are continuing to be quite active. NSW and Victoria have continued with professional development activities. The Victorian group has also taken to lively discussions at monthly potluck dinners. The NSW is also busy organising the W&P Annual Conference that will be held in Sydney at the end of the year. Details appear elsewhere in the newsletter.

From the NSW Convenor of Women and Psychology

This will be a busy year for the NSW group as we are hosting the 19th Annual Women and Psychology Conference on 5/6/7 December at the Women's College at Sydney University. If you are interested in presenting a paper or workshop at the conference or helping with the organization of the conference, please contact Dr Helen Vidler at helen@shiftdepression.com.au.

The NSW branch of Women and Psychology meets on the last Friday of the month. This year we are following Melbourne's lead and introducing pot luck dinners on alternate months at member's homes or local restaurants.

Venue for the meetings with a guest speaker or open forum is Level 1, Women's College University of Sydney. It is the large building right by the gates on Carillon Ave. (See UBD maps).

If you would like to join our pot luck list and monthly notification of the host's address please contact Dori Wisniewski who maintains the email list at doriwisniewski@yahoo.com.au

March 28 Getting Started as Women in Psychology (Women's College Sydney Uni)

April 18 Pot Luck and Conference Planning Session

May 30 Guest speakers and open forums (Women's College Sydney Uni)

June 27 Pot Luck and discussion

July 25 Guest speakers and open forums (Women's College Sydney Uni)

August 29 Pot Luck and discussion

Sept 26 Guest speakers and open forums (Women's College Sydney Uni)

October 31 Pot Luck and discussion

Dec 5/6/7 Annual Women and Psychology Conference – Women's College Sydney University

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

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

Victorian Women and Psychology

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 APS members to our activities and gatherings with particular encouragement for students to join us as well. The Convenor of Women and Psychology (Victoria) is RaeLynn Álvarez Wicklein, please feel free to contact her for any W&P enquiries (RaeLynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au).

New people are very welcome, and gatherings continue to aim to be an informal and friendly way to share ideas and stories.

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 usually have a potluck that month.

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. A number of our events this year will be held at the Treacy Centre, 126 The Avenue, Parkville, (03) 8359 0101.

Friday 28 March

Potluck Dinner – Burwood 6.30-9.30pm

Friday 9 May

Conversations on Menopause, Seminar with Margaret Harris, 7.30-9.30pm Treacy Centre. Contact RaeLynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au

Wednesday 28 May

Getting Started as Women in Psychology 7.30-9.30pm Treacy Centre. Contact Carmel O'Brien at psychrespect@optusnet.com.au

Friday 6 June

3rd International Conference on Women's Mental Health Report, Potluck Dinner – TBA, 6.30-9.30pm

Saturday 21 June

Winter Solstice Dinner & Movie – TBA, Contact: RaeLynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au

Thursday 17 July

Conversations around "Canvassing the Emotions", with Jill Astbury, Anne Riggs, & Sally Northfield, 7.30-9.30pm Treacy Centre. Contact RaeLynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au

Friday 25 July

Deadline for Elaine Dignan Award, For details see: <http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/wip/awards/>

Friday 15 August

Family Law Seminar, with Fiona Combe, Colleen Turner, & Women's Legal Service, 7.30-9.30pm Treacy Centre. Contact RaeLynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au

Friday 12 September

Pot Luck Dinner – West Brunswick, 6.30-9.30pm

Tuesday 23 – Saturday 27 September

APS Conference in Hobart; W&P Symposium/gathering at conference TBA

All of October

Self-care Month! Look for our special edition W&P Newsletter on Self-care.

Friday 15 November

Thanksgiving Potluck Afternoon Tea & Dinner Planning meeting – Greensborough. Contact: RaeLynn.Wicklein@rmit.edu.au

Friday – Sunday 5, 6 & 7 December

Women & Psychology Conference in Sydney *19th Women & Psychology Annual Residential Conference and AGM*, Sydney, NSW. As more details about the conference become available, they will be posted at: <http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/wip/>

W&P at the APS Conference 2007

We had a small but fierce representation of Women and Psychology group members at the 2007 Annual APS Conference in Brisbane.

Members took part in the Women's Wellbeing Symposium on 27 Sept 07, chaired by Trang Thomas. Some of the topics will look very familiar to those who attended the Women and Psychology conference last year as our presenters were successful in taking their messages to APS:

Carmel O'Brien – *Who says? Respect in report writing and assessment,*

Katie Thomas – *An issue for women: The role of global policy in the institutionalisation of privilege,*

Liz Short – *“Do you want to see the birth certificate with both our names on it?”: Legal parentage recognition of lesbian couples, and*

Kate Murphy – *Generation X women: can they have it all?*

We also attended the 2007 Aborigi-

nal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Psychology Group dinner at the Bendi Lango Art Exhibition. The proceeds from the sale of modern indigenous art of the exhibition will be used to establish further funds to support indigenous students of psychology. The exhibition was held at the Fire Works Art Gallery – a well known art gallery in Brisbane.

We were honoured to be able to listen and talk to Jenny Thompson, an Indigenous Healer and Counsellor, who led a talking circle, and to new and existing members of the ATSIPP group. We also were able to sample different types of bush food and drinks provided by Dillibag Dreamtime Caterers. For more on the exhibition and art works, visit <http://www.bendilango.org.au>

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18th Annual Women and Psychology Residential Conference at Sunbury, Vic

Last year the annual residential APS Women & Psychology Conference was hosted by the Victorian Group at the Victoria University campus in Sunbury, Victoria outside the Melbourne CBD. Our venue was Sunbury Hall on the site of a superb, heritage-listed facility, the former *Caloola* institution that was the subject of Kelley Johnson's book *“Deinstitutionalising Women”*.

The presentations at the conference highlighted feminist perspectives on psychological practice and research with women in which diversity was taken into account. The four day event was filled with new information, a chance to mix with colleagues and friends, and enjoyment the

quiet of the Victorian countryside. We were also blessed with a performance from colleague and talented singer/actor Lizzie Matjacic and her show, *“Hangups, Heartaches, and Headcases: A Psychologist Cabaret”*.

Abstracts from the conference will appear in our next issue of this newsletter.

This year's conference will be held Friday to Sunday – 5th, 6th and 7th December 2008 at The Women's College at University of Sydney. Keep checking for more information on the Call for Papers and the conference in upcoming newsletters

Scholarships and Awards



Madeleine Capicchiano Scholarship

Australian Federation of University Women - Victoria

The Australian Federation of University Women Victoria has established a scholarship to the memory of Madeleine Capicchiano, a student in Psychology at Victoria University, and much loved Women & Psychology member and pot-luck host, who won the E.D.Daniel Scholarship for a 4th year honours student in June 2007. Madeleine died suddenly and unexpectedly in August 2007, after battling major health problems for many years with great courage and spirit.

The Madeleine Capicchiano Scholarship will be offered from 2008 to disadvantaged female students in 4th year/honours programs who are conducting research on issues of human rights and/or social justice at the local, national or international level.

Tax deductible donations to support the Madeleine Capicchiano Scholarship may be made to the AFUW Vic Scholarship Sub-Fund of the Melbourne Com-

Melbourne Community Foundation

- for good, for ever -



If paying by cheque: Make cheque out to Melbourne Community Foundation'

If paying by credit card: Donations can be made using MasterCard or Visa

Credit card name

.....

Credit card number

Credit card expiry dateAmount \$

Signature

A receipt will be issued. Please provide contact details:

Name:

Address:Postcode

Phone:

Date:

I consent to AFUW Vic being informed of my donation (please tick)

Madelaine Capicchiano Scholarship will be offered to disadvantaged female students in 4th year/ Honours programs.

Post to:
Melbourne Community Foundation
 Suite 6, 19-35 Gertrude St.
 Fitzroy Vic 3065

Inquiries: Melbourne Community Foundation
 Ph.03 9412 0412

For information on applying for AFUW Vic Scholarships, see www.vicnet.net.au/~afuwvic

Scholarships and Awards cont.

2008 Elsie Harwood Award

The APS Interest Group on Psychology and Ageing invites submissions for the 2008 Elsie Harwood Award.

The Award is for the best empirical research project in the field of ageing, submitted as part of an accredited fourth year program in psychology, or an accredited Masters by coursework program in psychology.

Eligibility

Students, who in the period since the previous Award was made, have completed a fourth year theoretical essay or empirical research project or an applied Masters coursework thesis in the field of ageing submitted as part of the requirements of an accredited fourth year program in psychology or a postgraduate program and taking note of items (ii) and (iii) below will be eligible for the Award.

(ii) The essay or project must be about ageing but does not necessarily have to involve human participants.

(iii) The work is of a high academic standard.

Issues

At the end of March 2008, the Victorian Law Reform Commission will hand the state Labor government a number of options for changing the law on abortion. The government will use one of these as a basis for decriminalising abortion.

Women and Psychology members might have a range of views on the subject, or there might be a broad consensus that we should take a stand in supporting women's right to choose and access the full range of options when considering whether to continue or terminate an unwanted pregnancy. If you have a view one way or another, please let us know asap – this is a time-limited issue.

The website contacts for the two main (opposing) groups, Prochoice Victoria and the Coalition against Decriminalisation of Abortion in Victoria, are as follows:

<http://prochoicevic.org.au>

<http://www.cadoa.org/>

Prochoice Victoria would like to expand its list of organisational supporters.

Current supporters are:

- Fertility Control Clinic
- Marie Stopes International
- Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
- Reproductive Choice Australia
YWCA Victoria
- Doctors Reform Society of Australia
- Liberty Victoria

If you think the APS Women and Psychology Interest Group should join this list, or become active in any other way on this issue, please email Heather Gridley: heather.gridley@vu.edu.au

And if you would like to read up on some current, local writing on the subject of women's reproductive rights, check the recent Issue 19 of Women Against Violence (edited by Heather!)

Hot off the Press: cont

Violence Against Women With Disabilities

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), the national peak organization for women with disabilities, has recently published a **Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities**. This Manual is made up of four booklets:

A Life Like Mine! - Narratives from women with disabilities who experience violence (52 pages)

Forgotten Sisters - A global review of violence against women with disabilities (112 pages).

It's Not Ok It's Violence - Information about domestic violence and women with disabilities (76 pages).

More Than Just A Ramp - A guide for women's refuges to develop disability discrimination act action plans (92 pages).

Audio, e-text & Large Print PDF versions of the Booklets are included on a CD-ROM which accompanies the Manual.

The cost of the Manual is \$22 (within Australia) which covers postage and handling costs. For all Overseas orders please contact WWDA directly to obtain postage and handling costs.

More information about the Manual and the Order Form can be found at

www.wwda.org.au

*New
stuff to
follow
up*

The WiSER View

WiSER has made its debut into the world of blogging and now has its own blog: **The WiSER View**. We hope the blog will serve to generate discussion of the social and economic issues impacting on women and the broader community.

You are welcome to leave a comment - please note that your comment will not appear on the blog straight away as it passes through a vetting process first - this is in the interests of preventing spam entries. Copy this link into your browser: <http://the-wiser-view.blogspot.com> We hope you'll become an active reader and contributor to The WiSER View!

Hot Off the Press: cont

Feminist psychologist Jill Astbury inducted into 2008 Victorian Honour Roll of Women

Professor Jill Astbury was one of 30 women inducted onto the 2008 Victorian Honour Roll of Women on International Women's Day - recognised for her research in gender, human rights, and family violence.

Professor Astbury is a leading international and Australian researcher in the area of gender and human rights, with a particular focus on violence against women. She has played a central role in making significant changes to policies, systems and service provision in the area of violence prevention.

Her work has significantly contributed to understanding: the cause of violence against women; how violence against women can be reduced or prevented; the health impacts of violence on women; and meeting the needs of women who have experienced violence.

She is committed to ensuring that the experiences of women are accurately represented and translated in research and into policy, and to creating relevant, lasting and meaningful change, for the benefit of women.

On the basis of her research, Jill recently made recommendations about services for survivors of sexual assault, for the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, called 'Working with Survivors'.

The World Health Organization; VicHealth, the Australian Family Institute; and the Department for Victorian Communities are just a few of the organisations for which she has undertaken research, or been a leading research and policy advisor. Currently Jill is the co chair of the Sexual Violence Research Initiative, an initiative of the Global Forum for Health Research.

Jill recently contributed to the development of the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (2007), developed by the Office of Women's Policy, Department of Victorian Communities.

Jill has been a central figure in establishing, documenting and publicising information about violence against women. Such as, the fact that almost one-quarter of Australian women experience violence from a partner or ex-partner at some stage in their lives and that such violence is the leading risk factor for death and disability for women aged 18-44, with the most severe impact being on women's mental health.

Professor Astbury's current PhD student at Victoria University, Heather Young said: "Jill has supported and inspired a new generation of women committed to working to improve the health and wellbeing of victimised women and to promote justice and dignity for all women."

Jill Astbury is Research Professor in the School of Psychology at Victoria University. She previously worked for a number of years at Melbourne University's Key Centre for Women's Health.

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Hot off the Press cont

Global Year Against Pain in Women

real women, real pain

International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) is launching the 'Real Women, Real Pain' campaign to draw attention to the significant impact of chronic pain on women and the lack of attention to this global problem.

Chronic pain affects a higher proportion of women than men around the world, but unfortunately women are also less likely to receive treatment compared to men. This is due to various factors, including societal and cultural norms and economic and governmental barriers. Through this campaign, IASP hopes to provide a voice to these women by drawing attention to this global issue as a first step towards reducing pain and suffering for women around the world.

Facts sheets have been prepared on a range of topics.

- Differences in Pain between Women and Men
- Epidemiology of Pain in Women
- Sex Differences in Pain – Basic Science Findings
- Sex Hormones and Pain
- Gender and the Brain in Pain
- Pain During Pregnancy
- Obstetric Pain
- Dysmenorrhea: Contemporary Perspectives
- Chronic Pelvic Pain
- Endometriosis and its Association with Other Painful Conditions

See the website for more details. www.iasp-pain.org

From the Editor

Greetings from the new editor of the newsletter. I must have been having a particularly optimistic day when I said "yes" to this task. Lets hope the year continues in that optimistic vein.

As you will see I have made some changes to the style of the W&P Newsletter . It is my hope that this will make it more appealing to look at and more approachable to read.

Although it is now a longer document, I am also presuming that, in general, it is read on line, and only individual items of interest are down loaded. As a result, additional pages of newsletter will not come at the cost of more trees lost. Please let me know if that presumption is wrong.

Feedback and suggestions about the Newsletter would be welcomed.
Email me on meg.orton@inet.net.au

Meg Orton

OPINION PIECE

Marion Oke Ph.D., Glenlyon Vic.

a response to an article by Grant Devilly, InPsych April 2007*

As a counselling psychologist in private practice, I feel Grant Devilly (InPsych April 07) misunderstands and misrepresents the understandings and practices of many psychologists in regard to working with individuals around childhood sexual abuse issues. I know of no reliable evidence that so-called recovered memory therapy is widely practised in Australia.

It is a well known phenomenon for traumatic experiences to be blocked from conscious memory, not only in cases of childhood sexual abuse; there are for example many such cases documented in individuals suffering war trauma. Dissociation is included in the DSM-1V-TR (APA, 2000): "Dissociative amnesia . . . The predominant disturbance is one or more episodes of inability to recall important information, usually of a traumatic or stressful nature, that is too extensive to be explained by ordinary forgetfulness." Further, included in DSM-1V-TR (APA, 2000) criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is "inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma."

The dissociative process which takes place when traumatic memory is blocked is described in Dr. Devilly's article in an incredulous way; however many people describe coping with overwhelmingly traumatic situations by 'leaving themselves' or 'putting their mind somewhere else', in other words dissociating. Sometimes such individuals describe an automatic process, sometimes the dissociation is achieved by deliberate effort. It stands to reason that if attention is de-focussed from the situation being experienced, it is more likely not to be remembered, as for example when a student's attention wanders during a lecture. It is feasible that in such a situation some memory trace might be laid down, especially given the event is out of the ordinary or traumatic.

A memory trace is most likely to be brought to consciousness in the context of the person talking about issues related to the traumatic event, such as is likely to occur in a therapy session. This is similar to what occurs in many life situations, for example when childhood friends meet and talk it's not unusual for each to remember different things, and for both people's memories to be stimulated to remember previously forgotten events. Thus it is understandable that memories of childhood abuse might arise spontaneously during or following a visit to a psychotherapist – it need not involve the psychotherapist encouraging such memories.

Jennifer Freyd, Dr. Devilly points out, was asked by her psychotherapist whether she had been sexually abused (a question, I believe, few psychologists would these days feel comfortable to ask). It seems unlikely that such a question would be sufficient to stimulate or 'implant' false memories of abuse, and one may wonder what could be the motivation or mechanism for this to occur? That her parents may have denied abuse that did occur is a more credible possibility, as they would have obvious motives for doing so.

Dr. Devilly states that ". . . the crux of the debate comes down to whether one sees it possible that a traumatic memory of abuse can be filed away . . . and that this memory can be reliably recalled intact" (p. 17). The first part of this statement I have already addressed. The memory being reliably recalled intact is not, in my experience, what usually happens when individuals remember previously forgotten experiences of abuse. The recalled memory is often fragmented, and detail might be hazy or inaccurate. However, detail not being clearly or accurately recalled does not mean the event did not occur. For example, if as sometimes happens, after a car accident people do not accurately recall details such as the colour or make of the other car, it is not usually taken to mean the accident did not occur. However, research carried out by skeptics of 'recovered memory' seems to be based on this principle.

Finally, Dr. Devilly seems to be out of touch with how psychologists (myself included),

OPINION PIECE cont

addressed. The memory being reliably recalled intact is not, in my experience, what usually happens when individuals remember previously forgotten experiences of abuse. The recalled memory is often fragmented, and detail might be hazy or inaccurate. However, detail not being clearly or accurately recalled does not mean the event did not occur. For example, if as sometimes happens, after a car accident people do not accurately recall details such as the colour or make of the other car, it is not usually taken to mean the accident did not occur. However, research carried out by sceptics of 'recovered memory' seems to be based on this principle.

Finally, Dr. Devilly seems to be out of touch with how psychologists (myself included), work with individuals struggling to recover from the effects of childhood abuse. I and many of my colleagues do not advocate or use hypnosis or guided imagery, nor do we believe that memories must be "psychologically excised" by allowing ". . . the expression of these hitherto undisclosed memories" (p. 17). Trauma therapy, a well tried, tested and researched psychological therapy, is what is commonly used. Put simply, this involves the person telling their story, including expression of feelings. There is no pressure for the person to tell more than they wish, and there is no particular emphasis placed on recently recalled memories. Cognitive strategies and management of symptoms such as anxiety are commonly involved.

It is not considered the role of the therapist to make any judgment as to the accuracy or otherwise of the person's story. What is important is that clients are supported in drawing their own conclusions about their own experiences, and that they feel believed and validated. Narrative therapy is another approach often utilised by psychologists working with survivors of abuse. This similarly does not involve any judgment about the accuracy of the person's story, what is important is for the person to gain strength and self understanding through telling and reflecting on their life as a survivor of trauma.

Dr. Devilly argues for the need to "strike a balance" between the dangers of false accusations on one hand and disbelief of genuine claims of abuse on the other, as if the two were equally likely. Yet all enquiries thus far (see for example, the reports of Office of the Victorian Health Services Commissioner, 2005 and British Psychological Society, 1995) have found minimal evidence of the prevalence (as opposed to the possibility) of false memories, and even less of their implantation by therapists; while the evidence for the prevalence of child sexual abuse and the psychological harm caused by such abuse, is indisputable. While psychologists are being cautioned about believing clients' memories of abuse, to my knowledge psychologists have never been cautioned against dismissing reports of abuse, in spite of such dismissal being likely to cause the client much unnecessary distress. Dr. Devilly also falsely polarizes 'science' and 'emotion' - the opposite of 'emotional' is 'unemotional', the opposite of 'scientific', 'unscientific'; a person who perpetrates abuse against others is characterised by lack of empathy, not lack of reason.

**An abridged version of Marion's response was published in InPsych in June 2007; we thought it was worth reprinting in full. Grant Devilly's original article 'If nothing happened, why do I still hurt? An update on the memory wars' can be found at:*

<http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/inpsych/highlights2007/#s5>