Word from the Top

Some good news on this stormy and wild Wellington day. I am delighted to say that the SoP did very well in the latest round of URF awards with all staff applying receiving grants. Great stuff! I would also like to congratulate Gwenda Willis for her brilliant achievement in securing a Fulbright Senior Scholars Award for 2011. Gwen will be working on an offender rehabilitation project with US and NZ researchers.

At present SoP appointment panels are busy dealing with applications for 3 positions within the school, a Senior Supervising Psychologist in the Clinic, a Clinical Teaching Fellow, and a L/SL in cognitive neuropsychology (replacing Jan). I expect decisions to be made about the first two positions in the next few weeks.

Have a great weekend

Tony Ward
Head of School

What I Did for My Summer Vacation.
by Aidan Tabor

Ok, it wasn't actually summer in this hemisphere, but it felt like it should be. I turned in my master's thesis in March and instead of running away somewhere with lots of hot sand and surfboards, I stayed glued to my computer for the better part of five months. Taciano, my advisor, was awarded a Faculty Strategic Research Grant for me to turn my two master's studies into three publications. That folks, is what I call a fancy card trick.

In the middle of that work, I joined a large contingent of students from the Centre of Applied Cross-Cultural Research presenting at the XXth International Congress of Cross-Cultural Psychology in Melbourne, Australia. Sadly, it was not summer there either, but the presentations were excellent and the Asian food to die for.

After I returned to New Zealand, I kept right on presenting, but this time to government types instead of academics. I have now taken my show on the road to an Office of Ethnic Affairs seminar and to a meeting of the Settlement Division of Immigration New Zealand. Finally, I learned that I was accepted for the PhD programme, so now my summer (winter) vacation is over and I'm back at work again.
PS. Taciano made me write this. So be nice to your advisor or they will make you write one as well.
On Conference Where?

by Dave Harper

All too frequently the most exciting thing to happen at a conference is the end of it and the thing that upsets people the most is the appalling catering ... well if this is your experience then count yourself lucky. A number of brave (and perhaps foolhardy) souls from VUW went to Christchurch in the first weekend of September to attend the annual NZABA conference.

The Friday night started pleasantly enough, but Saturday’s & Sunday’s sessions were somewhat disrupted following the 7.1 quake (to say the least). Although some attendees decided to flee the quake scene on Saturday morning I’m proud to say that all VUW attendees took the pragmatic attitude that since we were all there, and had nothing better to do, we may as well forge ahead with the conference anyway. Luckily the motel that many were staying at allowed us to use their breakfast room. So out came the laptops, and although we had to squint a bit to see the presentations, the conference proceeded with only minor disruptions caused by aftershocks.

Obviously, we would prefer to convey the image of brave and fearless individuals with the strength of science running in our veins. Unfortunately, the main impression people seem to have formed is that we were so nerdy and boring that even if the motel had been reduced to rubble we would still have gone ahead with the conference.

It was only after I returned to Wellington that it occurred to me that if the quake had been much larger New Zealand would have lost around 90% of its behaviour analysts in one go ... a tragedy that does not bear thinking about!

Presentations:
Tan, G., Hunt, M., Hely, L., Harper, D. N. Winning isn't Everything!
Hunt, M., Peters, H. & Greenhow, A. Task dependent temporal discounting
Heather Peters, Maree Hunt, David Harper, Lincoln Hely Probabilistic discounting with differing levels of background income
Harper, D. N., Crowther, A., & Schenk, S. Using the Drug Discrimination Procedure to Study the Stimulus Properties of MDMA ('Ecstasy')

Diversity Forum, Christchurch, August 22-23
by Adrienne Girling

A few weeks ago I went down to Christchurch for the Human Rights Commission’s annual Diversity Forum. I was joined by people from diverse organizations all over the country, including government, NGOs and universities.

The two-day forum covered issues of equality and fairness for all people living in New Zealand, including matters of ethnicity, culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and age.

The speakers and discussions were extremely inspirational. Not only did we acknowledge that disparities still exist, but we talked passionately about concrete steps to overcome them. The forum was also packed with entertainment, again representing diverse communities. The keynote speakers shared their personal journeys in dealing with and experiencing diversity, along with their own struggles with equality. These stories were heart-rending, and I was even moved to tears in places.

James Liu, Colleen Ward and Morgan Davie joined me for the second day of the forum, and we led two sessions as the Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research. Jim and Colleen ran a
session in the morning highlighting recent diversity research, including presentations from Va’aomanu Pasifika, the Department of Labour and Statistics New Zealand.

In the afternoon, Jim, Colleen and I ran a session at the request of Joris de Bres, Race Relations Commissioner, presenting our new report on the discrimination that Asian people face in New Zealand. We opened with research showing that Asian people experience more employment inequity than any other group in NZ, as well as being on the receiving end of much more verbal and physical harassment.

We offered some potential explanations for how they cope with the discrimination they face and described the many positive reasons that they choose to stay in New Zealand. Finally five commentators from the university and public sectors, including Christchurch MP Lianne Dalziel, reflected on the research and offered some potential ways forward.

The report and forum session received a lot of media interest. Jim was interviewed by the New Zealand Press and TV show Asia Down Under filmed our session (which was highly nerve wracking as it was my first presentation as a PhD student—but I made it through).

Jim and Joris both interviewed for Australian media, and Joris appeared on TVNZ’s Breakfast Show and did the metaphorical tango with Paul Henry. In all, it was a great success.

To keep the conversation going, CACR has set up a webpage. It invites further discussion regarding the inequities that Asian people in particular face in New Zealand.

To read and contribute, visit the site: http://issues.co.nz/diversity/issues/.

International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development Conference, Lusaka, Zambia
by Paul Jose

I travelled to Lusaka, Zambia for the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development conference in July, and presented two posters as well as co-chaired and presented in a symposium on adolescent development. The title of my talk was: “Is social connectedness a protective factor against maladjustment in adolescence?”

The answer to the posed question, by the way, is “yes, connectedness generally protects, but it depends on the type of connectedness.” Family and school connectedness protect better than peer or community connectedness.
And let me attach a photo of the question-and-answer period after the presentations finished.

Hmm, well, that’s the wrong photo, but it actually bears some resemblance to some q-and-a sessions I’ve seen. And while I was in Zambia, I did see animals at a nearby game preserve.

All in all, it was a great conference, as I met some key people in the field of adolescent development (e.g., Anne Peterson), and furthered some research collaborations. And Zambia is a very exotic place to visit.

**Publications**


Godfrey, H.K., & Grimshaw, G.M. (in press). Emotional prosody rarely affects the distribution of spatial attention. Laterality


