Word from the Head

Since John is on a trip to the UK and Sweden, it has fallen unto me to start this month Psycobabble with a few words. It is kind of a strange thing to do so, since I’m still somewhat of a newbie in the School, although I do feel very much at home already. As you will have noticed on campus, the second trimester has started and many of us are busy with teaching our future psychologist and neuroscientists.

The School has also seen a number of successes in the last few weeks. Penny Tok, who is a PhD student of Jason, won the Grand Prize at the 3 minute Thesis competition this year. And if that is not enough, Allanah Casey, supervised by Devon, won the poster prize award at an international conference in Toronto. But not only our postgraduate students are doing great, James just won a prestigious international 3 year grant, and rumour has it that another staff member also received a very large grant, but we will have to wait until next week to hear more about that.

And, just look at the papers that have been published in the last period. It really shows the school, or better the people in the school are dedicated to their work which results in high quality teaching and research.

Bart Ellenbroek
Acting Deputy Head of School

News in the School

Postgraduate Corner

- Penny Tok won the People’s Choice Award AND the Grand Prize at the 3-Minute Thesis Competition. Penny will now be flown to Perth to represent VUW at the Australasian Postgraduate Competition. Penny blew the competition out of the water with her talk on Inner Speech and Autism. Congratulations and good luck in September

- Allanah Casey presented this poster at a conference in Toronto about a fortnight ago. It is based on collaborative research that began with Sophie's
Psyc 489 and continued when she was a summer research scholar. The poster won the graduate student poster prize from about 80 other entries. Both students got a very nice certificate and $250 Canadian cash prize.


Victoria Students' Psychology Society

It should come as no surprise that heading into Trimester two, Psyc Society is starting off with a bang. The kind of bang that results in a murder on campus, chaos of sorts, and a mystery to solve. Our upcoming event is a Murder Mystery Day. Throw away the preconceived ideas; it’s not what you expect. Get a team together, get your detective on, and we look forward to seeing you for what is bound to be a great time. In celebration of finding the murderer, a party will be held, the winning detective agency will be named, and the fun will continue.

For further information about VSPS go to: www.victoria.ac.nz/psyc or contact via email: vicpsycsoc@gmail.com or facebook: ‘Victoria Students' Psychology Society’

$US60, 000 Grant!

Prof. James Liu with an international team of colleagues has won a $60,000US grant to study "The Benevolent Authority Model of Societal Organization." This grant was awarded by the Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange in Taiwan. Academics from China, Taiwan, Singapore, the USA and New Zealand will be co-investigators on this three year grant.

The first few paragraphs of the grant's abstract read thus:

For the past half century, one of the most sustained developments in global society has been the rise of East Asian societies in both political stability and economic prosperity. The emergence of Japan after defeat in World War 2 was followed by the rapid development of the four dragons; now China has experienced unrelenting growth for 30 years. Commentators like Redding (1990) have attributed this to the Confucian underpinnings in these societies, but what this entails in terms of psychological ramifications and socially shared beliefs and practices is only now beginning to be understood.

Contemporary cross-cultural psychology considers all of East Asia to be collectivist (group-oriented) and high-power distance (hierarchical) societies (Hofstede, 1980/2001): however, a large portion of the non-Western societies in the world could be labeled “collectivist and hierarchical”, but no region has experienced the combination of political stability and economic growth as East Asia in recent years. A part of the solution has been put forward by indigenous Chinese organizational psychologists, who have identified the beneficial effects of a style of leadership that “combines strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity couched in a personalistic atmosphere.” (p. 91, Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, & Farh, 2004). This “paternalistic leadership” style has adaptive advantages for organizational efficiency in societies where rule by law is less entrenched and less capable of managing difficult situations than committed social relations. It is also attuned to societies high in inequality because it binds social relations into a system of mutually reinforcing obligations where the weaker person offers their loyalty in return for protection from the stronger. This in place, they can work together towards a beneficial long-term goal. Given the overwhelming preference for Western forms of management in the global literature today (Pellegini & Scandura, 2008), our research asks: what aspects of paternalistic leadership are culture-specific to Confucian societies, and what elements of it can be transported to other societies (like the Philippines and New Zealand). That is, can East Asian economic miracles be exported?

There have been few attempts to translate the insights of organizational research into a general
model of culturally Chinese societal functioning. An exception is the benevolent authority model of Liu, Li, and Yueh (2010). The three elements of paternalistic leadership (authoritarianism- strict and disciplinary use of rewards and punishments, benevolence- providing support for subordinates in a caring way, and morality- setting a good moral example) have been too closely tied to patterns of dyadic exchange in their conceptualization and measurement to be easily extended towards defining how an entire society might relate to its leadership. New concepts are needed to (a) situate the findings of organizational psychology within the context of culturally Chinese societal settings, and b) examine how and whether the political functioning of culturally Chinese societies deviates from the liberal democratic assumptions of Western theories as a function of societally shared beliefs and practices about benevolent (vs. prejudicial) authority.

Happy Feet
If you haven’t been in Wellington or NZ you might not have heard of the little emperor penguin that was found on Peka Peka beach on the Kapiti Coast. Dubbed Happy Feet, the little penguin has become a celebrity of sorts, but probably better behaved. Aidan Tabor and her two children were lucky enough to get a couple of shots of Happy Feet while he was in her neighbourhood. Very much a cross-cultural encounter.

Where’s Ron…?  
If you haven’t seen Ron lately you shouldn’t be surprised to learn he’s off globetrotting around the world in glamorous places, here’s an update on what he has been up too.

Unexpected furore about a just published article from Ron Fischer and former PhD student Diana Boer published a study in the July issue of JPSP on the relative importance of autonomy versus wealth for the well-being of nations. They conducted three independent meta-analyses examining levels of general well-being, anxiety and burnout spanning 63 societies. A press release by APA and a feature in sciencedaily.com about the article (see http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/06/110614100521.htm)
created a small storm. Diana and Ron have been inundated with questions by journalists and psychologists around the world.

The article was featured in Time.com, major newspapers around the world (such as Times of India and Die Welt in Germany), on-line news channels, governmental websites, blogs and internet health sites. Ron has been asked to contribute an article for Harvard Business Review and APA Monitor is planning an interview and short piece on the article. The last search on google (with the author names and study keywords) showed over 30,000 entries. Diana talks about the surprising effects of this article on the issues.co.nz website (see http://issues.co.nz/diversityissues/Does+Money+Make+You+Happy%3F).

IACCP Summer School in Istanbul, Turkey
Ron has been organizing the first PhD Summer School in Istanbul, Turkey, a new program sponsored by the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP) to provide specialized training by international experts to post-graduate students. In addition to its educational benefits, the programme is designed to facilitate cross-cultural contact and understanding among future academic leaders and to broaden their academic vision. A total of 40 students from Europe, Asia and Africa participated in the two day event held at Koc University. There were three academic streams covering Acculturation (run by Prof David Sam, Norway), Self & Identity (run by Dr Vivian Vignoles, UK) and Applied Psychology (run by Dr Ron Fischer, NZ).

Students participated in lectures and then worked in small groups on core problems in cross-cultural psychology. The enthusiasm and motivation of students was amazing. Despite having never met each other before and engaging with problems that are often not directly connected to their PhD studies, the students came up with highly innovative and useful proposals for addressing these problems. Some of the groups even managed to find secondary data to present preliminary analyses (with state-of-the-art multilevel modelling and bootstrapped mediation analyses) in the final plenary session. In addition to these academic feats, the group bonded and many new friendships and collaborations emerged.

The students have already set up google and facebook groups to stay in touch and to continue the projects that emerged during the summer school. A blog run by students and young academics is also in the works (watch this space and check iaccp.org on a regular basis).

The summer school has received so much positive feedback that IACCP has already decided to continue and expand the programme. Ron has been asked to lead the organization for next year’s International Conference in South Africa.

While attending the IACCP conference in Istanbul, Turkey both Colleen and Ron were able to catch up with many former students. Very stimulating sessions with high-level talks were had…..plus a stunning night with a boat cruise on the Bosporus and local music, delicious food and ice-cold Yeni Raki.

Publications

In the Media
Taciano was interviewed for this week’s issue of the Listener on some of his research on environmental engagement. You can see the article here: http://www.listener.co.nz/current-affairs/science/why-the-hold-up-on-co2-emissions/

Maryanne Garry has stuff to say on Stuff - http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/5287282/Google-effect-frees-up-brain-power


COMPETE to work out who the Kelburn Campus Killer is by solving clues around Uni. Be in to win huge prizes! Everyone welcome – with special deals for psycsoc members.

At the end of the day when you’ve worked out who-dunnit, meet in Hunter lounge at 5pm for a BLOODY GOOD PARTY, where the murderer will be revealed and the winners can claim their prize!

THURSDAY
JULY 28th

SIGN UP: 8-10am
EASTERFIELD FOYER
(by the lifts)

Prizes: 5pm
HUNTER LOUNGE

$5 per team or FREE for members