Kia ora tatou

A warm welcome to all our new students, both undergraduate and postgraduate. Predictably, our student numbers have expanded some more this year, especially in our year 1 classes. We continue to negotiate with the University to provide us with more space, and refurbished space, in Easterfield. Hopefully, we will have good news to report by July this year. In the meantime we continue to build our academic staff, with Alia Martin just having arrived (see this edition of Psychobabble) from a Postdoctoral position at Harvard University. Alia is an outstanding researcher publishing cutting-edge research on infant cognition. She will also be teaching a new second-year course in 2016 on life-span psychology. Welcome Alia.

At the risk of boring everyone to tears, I thought I would describe a little of what academic staff actually do. Academics, of course, do teaching, thesis supervision, research, and a lot of writing of articles, books, and grant applications. We know this, I hear you say! But they also, along with our Professional staff, run the administrative and managerial machinery that is largely hidden, but is indispensable to the functioning of our school. We have six committees, with about 5 or 6 staff on each one, representing Research, Ethics, Postgraduate Programmes, Technical and Physical Resources, Teaching and Curriculum, and Outreach/Marketing. They meet every month, with the head of each committee bringing their ideas and concerns to a monthly meeting of an Executive group composed of the six heads plus the Head of School (me) and Bart Ellenbroek (Deputy Head). This group then helps set the agenda for a general staff meeting (also held each month). Many staff are also involved independently in attending committees, workshops, and whatnot at the University level, and one of my main jobs is interfacing between our School of Psychology and the wider university, especially the Faculty of Science.

If you want some light relief after reading the last paragraph, take a look at the link below, highlighting a recent article written by our resident comic genius – Dr Matt Crawford.

All the best for your studies this year – may they go well.

Best wishes
Garth Fletcher

http://www.salon.com/2016/04/06/donald_trumps_insult_haiku_scholars_are_having_a_field_day_parsing_the_poetics_of_trumps_idiolect/
Welcome to new staff

With the start of the new year we are once again welcoming more new staff to the school.

**Dr Alia Martin**
**Lecturer**

Dr. Alia Martin will be creating and directing the VUW Infant Cognition Center, a new lab where she will study how babies and young children think about the social world around them. In her role as Lecturer in Developmental Psychology, Alia will be coordinating a new course called Lifespan Development (PSYC 238) in Trimester two.

Alia is from Ottawa, Canada, and began her career in developmental psychology as an honours student at McGill University where she studied infants’ understanding of communication. Alia received her PhD in Psychology in 2014 from Yale University, where she studied children’s helping behavior, and expanded her research to comparative psychology, studying rhesus monkeys’ theory of mind. Most recently, she completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University, where she focused on how infants and children use their theory of mind and social understanding in their communicative interactions.

Alia is very excited to be in New Zealand, to join the staff at VUW, and to begin building the Infant Cognition Center. The lab’s work will focus on how babies begin to make sense of what others around them are thinking, feeling, and communicating in social interactions, including helping, expressing desires or emotions, competition, and more. She is interested in fostering new collaborations and meeting enthusiastic students interested in getting involved in baby research, so come by EA504 to chat anytime! Outside of the lab, Alia enjoys exploring the city on foot or bike, rock climbing, delicious food and tea, and traveling to new places.

Alia is located in EA504, extension 6962.

**Amanda Holdaway**
**Casual Administrator**

From Monday, 11 April we will have Amanda Holdaway join us as a Casual Administrator. Amanda has worked in the School of Engineering so is very familiar with admin team roles and the university processes.

Her main job will be assisting with the marketing/outreach in the school and also providing cover for the admin team during absences etc. One of her first priorities will be working on getting the staff profile info updated on the web.

Amanda is located in EA630.
Tirta Susilo: APS Rising Star

Congratulations to Tirta who was recognised as one of the Association for Psychological Science’s (APS) rising stars for 2015. Tirta’s citation read:

“Susilo’s creative research on face perception and prosopagnosia has made substantial contributions to the science of visual cognition”.

According to the APS, “the designation of rising star recognises outstanding psychological scientists in the earliest stages of their research career post-PhD whose innovative work has already advanced the field and signals great potential for their continued contributions”.

Of the 122 academics recognised with this distinction in 2015, Tirta was the only academic from New Zealand and one of only 6 in Australasia.

Farewell to Doug

On the 11th of March we said farewell to Doug Drysdale who, after 25 years as the School of Psychology technician, has retired. There was a great turn out, and plenty of stories of Doug’s time with the school including his legendary ability to build pretty well anything, even a tardis.

Doug isn’t planning on slowing down however, he will be continuing his jaunts around the world - first stops are Mexico and Cuba!
New student reps for the Ethics Committee

There has been a changing of the guard on the Ethics Committee with Robert Michael stepping down as the student rep after 3 years. Committee chair Ann Weatherall thanks Robert, saying he’s been “absolutely amazing in his commitment”. The two new student representatives are PhD candidate Robbie Taylor and MSc candidate Kealagh Robinson. Ann commended them both for their well-crafted expressions of interest, which you can read below.

Robbie:
I am interested in being part of the ethics committee. First year students are important for the research programme in the school, therefore ethical issues related to these students are also important. I can provide particular insight into ethical issues as they pertain to students as participants because I am exposed to these issues in my current position as IPRP administrator. It will be beneficial for me to know more about the ethics because I am often asked questions and advice from researchers related to IPRP and students as participants.

I am also interested in ethical issues pertaining to online data collection methods. These online collection methods are becoming increasingly popular, and bring different ethical problems compared to on-campus data collection. I use some of these online data collection methods myself, so I am aware of some of the ethical issues that are important.

Kealagh:
This morning during the Thesis Orientation you mentioned that you were still accepting expressions of interest for a student representative to serve on SoPHEC.

Ethics are a foundation of worthwhile research and I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn more about ethical issues and conducting psychological research. I have been a research participant throughout my undergraduate and honours here at VUW and I enjoy reading about new research across psychology. I believe that I would be an asset to your committee.

David Edmonds off to Hong Kong

David Edmonds has been awarded a full Fellowship to undertake his PhD studies in Hong Kong. David will pursue a PhD in Sociology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, under the supervision of Dr. Christian Greiffenhagen.

David says that although he’ll be 'switching' disciplines, he will not be forgetting his roots in psychology or at VUW. “My PhD project will be an interactional study of cognitive neuroscience experiments. In fact, I plan to video record TMS experiments being undertaken right here in the school to use as my data. It will be very interesting to open up the 'black box' of interaction between experimenter and subject in psychology experiments. So often we treat it as a confounding variable that adversely effects our results. However, we can't forget that these interactions help produce our results, so understanding this is crucial for understanding how psychological knowledge and practice is produced and accomplished. I want to thank the School, especially my supervisor Ann Weatherall, for all their support, guidance and encouragement over the last six years- yes it has been that long! I look forward to returning to the School in the future, maybe even to present my findings? But first, this Masters thesis has to be finished.”

Congratulations David, we wish you all the best in Hong Kong.
A Victoria University of Wellington project has launched a new graphic novel to help spread the word about how young New Zealanders struggling with self-harm can seek help.

A Change is the second graphic novel developed by the Youth Wellbeing Study, a research project led by Associate Professor Marc Wilson from Victoria’s School of Psychology, and supported by the Health Research Council of New Zealand.

The novel tells the story of Ash, a young person who struggles with non-suicidal self-injury and the barriers for seeking help. The story was developed by a group of young people from the Wellington Boys and Girls Institute, with help from youth worker Rod Baxter.

During the launch of A Change last week, Jack McKinlay from the Boys and Girls Institute said “If this novel benefits just one person, it’s all worth it. Youth wellbeing can be swept under the carpet and it needs to be better recognised.”

Wellington-based research indicates that up to half of secondary school students have self-injured at least once by the time they leave school.

The novel was illustrated by Ant Sang, award-winning illustrator of the popular television series bro’Town. Ant also worked on the team’s first novel, A Choice, two years ago.

“This comic highlights the importance of ‘just being there’ for people who struggle with self-injury—not trying to ‘fix’ the problem, but rather offering support, distraction and friendship without judgement,” says Dr Jessica Garisch, Research Fellow at Victoria University and coordinator of the Youth Wellbeing Study.

“We've had some incredible feedback already from youth workers, teachers and most importantly young people.”

The Youth Wellbeing Study investigates the factors that place young people at the risk of self-injuring, and develops resources for young people, their families/whanau, and people who work to support them.

“We’re interested in understanding the strengths that young people have—how these are damaged and how they’re fostered,” says Associate Professor Wilson.

Both graphic novels can be downloaded online.