



SOCIETY OF AUSTRALASIAN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

Well, it's finally out: The SASP Newsletter for March 2004. Again, I would like to thank those who have contributed directly as my job would be a lot harder without your input. I really do appreciate the response I have been getting. Acknowledgment also, to those who I have pinched from – i.e., taking information from emails, bulletin boards, etc.

Although I take full responsibility for this issue (and not getting it out a few weeks earlier), I intend to diffuse future responsibility to my fellow colleagues who have joined the SASP newsletter editorial committee; Mariëtte Bernsden, Ian McKee, and Yolanda Martins

Mariëtte is a recent appointee at Flinders who obtained her doctorate from the University of Amsterdam under the supervision of Joop van der Pligt. Her major research interest is the social context of emotions, with particular interest in guilt and regret and also in the emotion of passionate love. She has previously collaborated with Russell Spears in the area of illusory correlation as well as carrying out research on time discounting with Joop van der Pligt. Previously, whilst still resident in the Netherlands, she attended the SASP conference in Melbourne.

Ian is a long-standing member of the Flinders School of Psychology and is finishing off his PhD, studying revenge, under the supervision of Norm Feather. He is a recent lecturer appointee within the school. Broadly speaking, his research interests are in the area of the social psychology of justice.

Yolanda is a relatively recent appointee at Flinders. She completed her Ph. D. at the University of Toronto under the supervision of Patricia Pliner. Her primary research interests lie

in the interaction of social, cultural and individual difference variables involved in human eating behavior. Specifically, she has an interest in individuals' attitudes towards foods, disgust as a food-related emotion, self-presentational issues in human eating behavior and body image, and consumption stereotypes.

With the aid of these colleagues, I hope to not only maintain the standard of the newsletter but to bring it out a little earlier than is currently occurring.

Several changes in SASP, as detailed later, are worthy of mention. I would like to thank Kip Williams for his valued contribution to social psychology in Australia as well as to SASP. On behalf of the SASP membership, I wish him and his family well in their future. I also wish the incoming President (Debbie Terry) and Treasurer (Nick Haslam) all the best and it seems obvious that SASP continues to be in good hands.

Finally, don't forget the SASP conference in Auckland (and check out my travel tip later). It will surely maintain the high standards of previous conferences and, in particular, reinforce the friendly, helpful and welcoming feeling of the SASP conference. I think the latter particular applies to SASP's treatment of postgraduate students and I think we should all congratulate the organizers and speakers involved in the inaugural Australian Summer School (see report below).

Paul Williamson
SASP Editor (Sole, at present, but with some future help)
Flinders University

REPORTS

President's Report

It is with a tremendous amount of emotional ambivalence that I have decided to accept an offer of Professor of Psychological Sciences at Purdue University, beginning in August.

I have had the most wonderful time in Australia for the last 7-1/2 years, and consider myself to be incredibly fortunate to have worked at two excellent universities: University of New South Wales and Macquarie University.

My wife Cindy, and our boys Cooper and Dylan, are also quite sad to be leaving Australia. Our move was primarily driven by a need to be home with family. In both of our families, our parents have been hospitalized recently and the need for them to know our boys, and for our boys to know their grandparents, has become all the more pressing.

I have met, worked with, and collaborated with a highly gifted group of social psychologists, post-graduate students, and honours students. With the risk of missing a few names, I would like to give my special thanks to: Joe Forgas, Julie Fitness, Ladd Wheeler, Trevor Case, Bill von Hippel, David Cairns, Mike Hogg, and Lynne Forster-Lee; also to Rick Richardson and Neil Brewer (neither of whom is a social psychologist...yet).

I have been extremely lucky to have supervised two fantastic post-graduate students, Lisa Zadro and Cassie Govan. Thanks also to Chris Cheung, Wilma Choi, Wayne Warburton, Karen Gonsalkorale, Lara Dolnik, and Simon Laham; excellent post-grads with whom I've collaborated. And, there are countless others who have made my experience here rich and unforgettable.

I have also been very fortunate to have been embraced by SASP and to have been elected your President. You cannot know how much of an honour this is for me, and I thank you. I will be a fan of and ambassador for Australasian social psychology forever. Although I don't have the statistics, I believe we have per capita one of the largest and most active social psychology organizations in the world. In the US, I will

continue to forge links and opportunities with SASP.

I look forward to seeing you all at the SASP conference in Auckland. It promises to be an excellent conference and my hat is off to the University of Auckland organizers. Also, I'd like to pay tribute to the organizers of the Summer School, which by all accounts was a fabulous experience, and the first of many to come. I hope that SASP can become the sponsor of this annual event.

Thanks again, and I'll see you in Auckland!

Kip Williams
President SASP
Macquarie University

SASP Office Bearers

I am delighted to announce the results of our recent nomination process for the positions of SASP President and Treasurer. Our incoming President is Professor Debbie Terry, University of Queensland - she will take over when Kip Williams finishes his term next year.

Our new Treasurer is Dr. Nick Haslam, University of Melbourne, who will be taking over from Janine Webb in June this year. Sincere thanks to Janine, who has successfully steered SASP through a minefield of tax and GST-related matters. She has been a meticulous book-keeper and the accounts are in excellent order.

Congratulations to Debbie and Nick, and thanks for your willingness to take on these important roles. SASP is in good hands.

Julie Fitness
Secretary, SASP
Macquarie University

SASP AFFILIATED CONFERENCES

Inaugural Australian Summer School in Social Psychology

The Inaugural Australasian Summer School in Social Psychology was held from the 6th to the 11th of February at the ANU Kioloa Coastal Campus near Bateman's Bay, New South Wales. Twenty-five students from nine universities

around Australia and New Zealand attended, completing a five-day workshop in one of three streams:

- Dr Craig McGarty (The Australian National University) and Dr Colin Leach (University of California, Santa Cruz) led students through an examination of theoretical and methodological issues of group-based identity, opinion, emotion and action, via the process of preparing a grant application.
- The stream led by Dr Deb Terry and Dr Julie Duck (both from The University of Queensland) focused on the upcoming federal election as an applied context to examine stability and change in intergroup relations. This group developed a research question, outlined a conceptual model, and designed a questionnaire for a study of individual and group-based predictors of a desire for a change in government.
- Dr Nick Haslam (The University of Melbourne) and Dr Michael Halloran (La Trobe University) led students through discussion of essentialism and relativism and their relationship to social psychology theory and research, based on a series of selected readings.

The work of the core streams was interspersed with special presentations by Dr Craig McGarty (A Technique for Dealing with Non-independent Data), Dr Michael Platow (Giving Professional Presentations), and Professor John Turner (The Origins and History of the Social Identity Tradition).

The venue was very peaceful, in a fantastic beach location, with resident wildlife (kangaroos, tree snakes, and, of course, flies and mosquitoes). Highlights included Craig ("the Activities Director") conducting a trivia quiz, midnight walks along the beach (and the standoffs with the kangaroos on the way), teaching Colin to play cricket on the beach, watching mobile phone withdrawal sufferers walking around with arms in the air trying to get reception, and relativism in action as the Victorians enjoyed the warm surf while the Queenslanders found the water too cold.

Overall the Summer School went off without a hitch. Everyone had a great time (both at work

and at play), and students evaluated the experience very highly. The students rated the learning, facilities, and organization positively (all above 4 on a 5-point scale), with glowing comments in terms of academic usefulness and networking with other postgraduates. The staff and students involved were in favour of making this a regular event. This Summer School sets a precedent for further attempts to provide postgraduates with this valuable learning and networking experience, and demonstrates that Australasia has a vibrant and interested postgraduate community who must be afforded as many opportunities for professional development as their international peers. Clearly, a regular Summer School would be a viable and worthwhile addition to the services offered by our organization.

Many thanks from the organizing committee, to the people who helped make the summer school such a success:

- The sponsors – SASP, La Trobe University, The University of Melbourne, and The Australian National University.
- The academic staff - who generously dragged themselves away from work and family commitments to lead core streams or give presentations.
- The postgraduates - who brought along enquiring minds and a sense of fun.

Julian Oldmeadow, Chris Tanti, Maree Daly
Summer School Organising Committee

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

SASP 2004 Auckland

The provisional SASP conference programme is now on the web, so check it and if there are any problems, please get back to me ASAP. It is, at this stage, provisional, although we would request that you only ask for a time change if it is absolutely imperative (e.g., you'll be on a plane at that point - though please don't book your flights with that excuse in mind!). Some people unfortunately have to be early Sunday presenters, it's just the way things are. We have opted for a slightly later (9.30) start though...

Check out the programme at:

<http://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/psych/sasp/programme.htm>

Ginny Braun (and the organizing committee)
University of Auckland

Travel tip (for those going to Auckland)

If you are heading north (e.g., towards the Bay of Islands) after or before the conference, take a small detour to the town of Kawakawa. It is a railway town and has little of general interest BUT it has the most interesting public toilets (about half way down the street on the right hand side as you come in from the main North-South highway). A little known but definitely quirky (and, in my humble opinion, a must-see) highlight of any trip to New Zealand (Editor).

7th Annual Sydney Symposium of Social Psychology

The 7th Annual Sydney Symposium of Social Psychology meets again at Coogee Beach on the 15-18 March.

This year's theme is "The Social Outcast: Ostracism, Social Exclusion, Rejection, and Bullying."

Presenters include Roy F. Baumeister (Florida State University), Marilynn B. Brewer (Ohio State University), John T. Cacioppo (University of Chicago), Louise C. Hawkley (University of Chicago), & Gary G. Berntson (Ohio State University), Geraldine Downey & Rainer Romero (Columbia University), Naomi I. Eisenberger and Matthew D. Lieberman (UCLA), Susan T. Fiske (Princeton University) & Mariko Yamamoto (University of Tsukuba), Julie Fitness (Macquarie University), Lowell Gaertner & Jonathan Iuzzini (University of Tennessee) Wendi L. Gardner (Northwestern University) & Megan L. Knowles (Northwestern University), Michael A. Hogg (University of Queensland), Jaana Juvonen & Elishiva Gross (UCLA), Jessica L. Lakin (Drew University) & Tanya L. Chartrand (Duke University), Mark R. Leary (Wake Forest University) Geoff MacDonald, Rachell Kingsbury, & Stephanie Shaw (University of Queensland), Jaap W. Ouwerkerk (University of Amsterdam), Paul A. M. van Lange (Free University, Amsterdam), Marcello Gallucci (Free University, Amsterdam), & Norbert L. Kerr (Michigan State University), Cynthia L. Pickett (University of

Chicago), Kristin L. Sommer & Yonata Rubin (Baruch College-CUNY), Dianne M. Tice (Florida State University), Jean M. Twenge (San Diego State University), Kipling D. Williams (Macquarie University), Joseph P. Forgas (University of New South Wales), William von Hippel (University of New South Wales), & Lisa Zadro (University of New South Wales).

Information about the Symposium (and past Sydney Symposia) can be accessed at: <http://www.sydneyssymposium.unsw.edu.au/>.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Comings and goings

LaTrobe

The social psychology group at La Trobe Uni has recently gone through a transition phase. Our "original" team has departed: **Yoshi Kashima** moved to Melbourne Uni in 2000; **Margaret Foddy** returned to Canada in 2002 (to Carleton University in Ottawa); followed by **Michael Platow** who shifted to the ANU last year. We hear they are all happy and productive in their new(ish) homes.

We have also seen several PhD students fly off (some of them actually finishing their theses!): **Julian Oldmeadow** has recently left for a post-doc at Exeter, UK, after helping to inaugurate and oversee this year's successful Australasian Summer School in Social Psychology (see related article); **Melissa Lehmann** is submitting her thesis as we prepare this article, and she is already in her new job as an organisational psychologist; **Anthony Lyons** has earned his PhD and is taking up a position in Newcastle UK. (Other recent PhD grads include **Allison McIntyre** in 2000, and **Cedric Vears** and **Richard Bradshaw** in 2001). We wish them well!

Despite these departures, social psych is still strong at La Trobe, bolstered by the members of our "new" team: **Art Stukas** arrived in late 2000 and quickly launched his research in both basic (e.g., self-fulfilling prophecies) and more applied (e.g., volunteerism) areas of our discipline; **Michael Halloran** started with us in 2002 and is now at the Bendigo campus, helping to build a close and strong research link across campuses (involving both staff and students), with his work

in the area of culture, identity, and political attitudes; finally, **Emi Kashima** has joined us this year from Swinburne, bringing her on-going projects and new research ideas concerning stereotypes, culture, and social identity. Add to this our group of more than a dozen doctoral and masters students who meet regularly and sometimes work collaboratively on research topics of shared interest, as well as on their own research topics for degrees.

We are also part of a strong network of social psychologists in the Melbourne area, comprised of staff and students from the University of Melbourne, Swinburne, Deakin, Monash, and La Trobe. We meet regularly to have a good time (talking about research, of course) and to stimulate each other with thoughtful responses to presentations of our work. We welcome international and interstate visitors through open seminars. This month, UM hosts a colloquium by Wendi Gardner, and LTU hosts a talk by John Cacioppo. The pair agreed to come down south extending their stay in Sydney after the Sydney Symposium. Last year, we welcomed Tom Pyszczynski, and in previous years, Russell Spears, Mark Snyder, Toshio Yamagishi, Stephen Wright, and many others have visited. So, if you are coming down (or up, or over) to Melbourne on business or pleasure, please let us know!

Art, Michael, & Emi

Other members

Tim Kurz (who completed his PhD at Murdoch University in 2003) has recently taken up a post-doctoral research fellowship at Queen's University Belfast in Northern Ireland, working with Professor Noel Sheehy. Tim is heading to the land of rainy weather in early March 2004.

Other news

Joe Forgas received the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award from the Australian Psychological Society in Jan. 2004. He was also awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship for residency in the Bellagio Study Centre for 2004 and was the invited Keynote Speaker at the recent annual conference of Italian Social Psychologists, Bari, Italy.

Kip Williams presented his work on ostracism at a Max Planck Institute Conference on 'Making

Minds' in Irsee, Germany (28-31 January). He gave a Kurt Lewin Institute Post-graduate workshop in Amsterdam at Free University, 4-5 February, on 'The Power of Social Exclusion.' There were approximately 35 post-graduate students from The Netherlands attending. He also gave a Departmental Colloquium and led an honors seminar on the same topic at Leiden University (27 January). Kip will also be presenting his work (published in Science in collaboration with Naomi Eisenberg and Matt Lieberman at UCLA) on the 'Pain of Social Exclusion' at the Australian Pain Society Conference in Canberra (10 March), is giving a talk on 'Trial Tactics' at the NSW Crown Prosecutors Conference in Wollongong on 13 April, and is presenting his work with Karen Gonsalkorale on ostracism at the Midwestern Psychological Association meeting in Chicago on 30 April.

BOOKS BY MEMBERS

Platow, M.J. (2002). *Giving Professional Presentations in the Behavioral Sciences: A Practical Guide for Novice, the Nervous and the Nonchalant.* New York: Psychology Press.

This text provides guidance on how to give professional presentations in the behavioral sciences and related fields. It is written specifically for students and professionals with little or no experience giving presentations and for those who are particularly anxious about public speaking. It is a book targeted at postgrads and young academics (although certainly undergraduates and honours students would find it helpful if they have to give presentations). Basically, it gives some simple advice for giving presentations, advice that is not always available from our supervisors or other mentors. I go through a whole range of things, including knowing the right goals to getting the fonts right on your overheads. Anyway, I think many postgrads would find some value in the book

Forgas, J.P. & Williams, K.D. (Eds.) (2002). *The social self: Individual, interpersonal and intergroup perspectives.* New York: Psychology Press.

Forgas, J.P. Williams, K.D. & von Hippel, w. (Eds.) (2003). *Social judgments: Explicit and implicit processes.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Forgas, J.P. (2003). Affective influences on attitudes and judgments. In: R.J. Davidson, K.R. Scherer and H. Goldsmith, (Eds.) *Handbook of Affective Sciences* (pp. 596-618). Oxford University Press.

Forgas, J.P. & Smith, C.A. (2003). Affect and emotion. In: M. Hogg & J. Cooper (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of social psychology* (pp. 161-189). London: Sage.

Eich, E., & Forgas, J.P. (2003). Mood, cognition, and memory. In A.F. Healy & R.W. Proctor (Volume Eds.), *Experimental Psychology* (pp. 33-61). Vol. 4 in I.B. Weiner (Editor-in-Chief) *Handbook of psychology*. New York: Wiley.

BOOK REVIEWS

Fiske, S.T. (2004). *Social beings: A core motives approach to social psychology*. John Wiley.

Carr, S.C. 2003. *Social psychology: Context, communication and culture*. Milton, Qld: Wiley.

Two new texts worthy of consideration for adoption. These attempt to take a different approach to the coverage of the material. Both are interesting and indeed challenging in the ways that they look at the classic and the more modern studies in social psychology.

The first to be considered is by a well known and highly regarded author in the field. Susan Fiske is well known to all who have an interest in experimental social psychology and the social cognitive paradigm. She uses what she terms five core motives which can be seen to underlie social behaviour and she organises each chapter, which in turn deal with the standard topics in social psychology, in terms of the themes of these motives, using several different motives within each chapter. The five motives, combining to give the acronym BUCET, are Belonging, Understanding, Controlling, Enhancing Self and Trusting. So, for example, in the chapter on Attitudes and Persuasion the basic concepts are viewed through the lenses of understanding and belonging, of cognitive processing and involvement, commitment and value expression. This chapter is, however, very standard fare and any teacher would have little

difficulty in adapting the content to whatever structure or themata they had used previously. This, to a degree, is an advantage of the text. While the core themata are present, that presence does not provide a structure that is unamenable to other perspectives.

A very considerable amount of literature is packed into the text and there is heavy sampling from classic and modern studies. As one would expect from a text written by a primary author in the field of social cognition, the chapters Ordinary Personology and on Making Sense of Others are very good, as is a very useful perspective on Close Relationships where there is a very full coverage of the challenges of understanding the growth and the outcomes of interdependence. The chapters on Small Groups and Social Influence, in that order, interestingly, rather than what is often the other way around, are also good and these really benefit from the core motives approach.

The early coverage of methodology is the weakest chapter in the book. While standard themes are introduced they are all covered quite briefly. Some of the most important work on research design and the interpretation of data have come from social psychologists, such as Don Campbell and Tom Cook and Campbell's classic 1969 article, "Reforms as Experiments" is only briefly and perhaps misleadingly referred to, while the central work on true and quasi experiments is not covered at all, with the reader only referred to modern texts in methodology. Ethical concerns of social psychological investigations are only given cursory treatment.

Carr's book is centred around the themes on Context, Communication and Culture. This is useful, although the early presentation of the definition of "Context" seems somewhat tautologous; "the whole of social psychology is about social context".

There are four parts to the text. The first is Analysis and this interweaves a history of social psychology through social influence, morals and methods. The second is concerned with Behaviour, and fixes on crowd behaviour, leading from social facilitation through group dynamics, inter-group behaviour to the influences of the media. Part Three is concerned with Cognition and the fourth with Affect. Part three is good with a really interesting account of work on first impressions, attribution and

heuristics. Throughout this part and all others there are excellent examples taken from the literature, the popular press and the personal experiences of the author. There was for me a real sense of life and relevance of the material for the students which could be drawn from this presentation. The section on Affect draws together attraction, love and aggression.

The author has explicitly attempted to set the classic and experimental studies of social psychology in a modern context of concern with globalisation, multiculturalism, a perception of increasing inequality and the effects of the media and the Internet. This can be risky in use, as one cannot expect the modern student to have the same values and expectations that were those of the modal student of twenty years ago, so the need for the consideration of the issues within a context of "even-handedness" of coverage is necessary. But in the era of "graduate attributes" in Australian universities, where social justice, globalisation and communication are recommended attributes, a text that makes these explicit is a welcome contender for use. The coverage of ethical issues is more effectively embedded in the treatment of the studies and the student should draw from this the relevance of the work and also the dangers of becoming an applied social psychologist.

While all of these features of Carr's text make interesting reading and are often thought provoking, making one look at earlier studies in a new light, they may get in the way of enabling an adoption of the text. A teacher would have to take a new approach to the ordering of material in the course to link it with this book and this may put many off. It is too good a book to make a reference text, and anyway it has insufficient coverage for that. So instructors will need to examine this book carefully and, if they decide to use it as a set text, they will have to re-vamp their courses considerably.

There is an additional factor that teachers may wish to take into account. Both texts have a good deal of visual material. Fiske's is entirely in black and white, while Carr's features colour. But the content of the visual material is very different. Fiske features diagrams and many data charts, with the reader examining the shape of the curves and the nature of the interactions. Carr also features diagrams, and the diagrams are based upon data interpretation, but there is a paucity of exposure to actual experimental data.

Either approach can be defended, but the teacher who wants to emphasise the exploration of data in a course could be disappointed by Carr's approach.

These two books are attractive contenders for adoption as course texts. Fiske will be the choice of those who want a fairly standard presentation, with linking themes, based upon an encyclopaedic knowledge of the field, with referencing to match, as would be expected from an editor of the *Annual Review of Psychology* and the fourth edition of the *Handbook of Social Psychology*. Fiske's text cites approximately two thousand papers while Carr cites (only) twelve hundred. Carr's text as an interesting and integrated approach, with direct applied appeal, but any teacher will have to make more effort to structure the course to fit the text. Both texts repay attention and work and serious consideration for use.

J. Michael Innes
University of Adelaide

OTHER NEWS

Australian Unity Wellbeing Index

Results of the eighth survey for the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index, conducted in August 2003, show that wellbeing in Australia fell slightly from its highest levels recorded in June, but remain above the lowest levels recorded in the first survey in April 2001. The Personal Wellbeing Index, which measures people's satisfaction with their own lives, fell 0.4 percentage points to 75.4%. The National Wellbeing Index, which measures satisfaction with living conditions in Australia, fell 0.9 points to 60.8%. Neither fall is statistically significant. The fall probably reflects the dissipation of the sense of relief and satisfaction over what seemed at the time a rapid victory over Iraq. That boost in morale had built upon previous rises in wellbeing following the September 11 and October 12 terrorist attacks. These events appear to have produced a stronger sense of community and patriotism, and a greater appreciation of life. This explanation was supported by significant increases in the June survey in the personal domains of safety and future security, and a large increase in the national domain of national security; satisfaction with the national domain of government also rose significantly.

By contrast, in this August survey, satisfaction in all seven personal domains fell to some extent. Satisfaction with government fell by 2.3 points and that with national security by 1.6 points, both significant. These falls support the explanation that the shifts in national wellbeing are being primarily driven by world events. The fall in government satisfaction negates the previous rise. The rise and fall in the government's stocks have happened before: they fell in March 2002 from their highest levels at the time of September 11; rose again in November after the Bali bombings; fell in March 2003 in the lead up to the Iraq war; and rose again in June.

The pattern suggests these event-caused boosts in support for Government are inherently short-lived and/or the benefits were lost by subsequent events. In March 2003, the event was the disclosures about the children-overboard affair; a year later, it was the commitment to a war on Iraq, opposed by a majority of Australians at the time; and most recently, it was the evidence that the government, either wittingly or unwittingly, had misled the people about the reasons for the war.

As well as the standard wellbeing index questions, each survey includes additional questions on specific issues. The eighth survey asked people how strongly they felt a sense of belonging in Australia; how strongly they felt they shared their core values with the average Australian; and which one of five qualities – our natural environment, our sense of democracy, our lifestyle, our sporting culture, or our multicultural society – made them feel most connected to Australia.

Overall, people rated their sense of belonging at 85.4% - a high score – and their sense of shared values at 71.6%, a moderate score. Both scores increased with age: belonging from 81.6% for those aged 18-25 to 91.1% for those 75 or more; shared values from 69.2% for those 18-25 to 75.5% for those 66-75. Women scored higher than men, especially for belonging (87.3% vs 83.3%). Both belonging and shared values declined with rising income, although the difference was only significant with shared values (74.5% for those on household incomes of \$15,000 or less vs 67.8% for those earning \$91-120,000).

Almost half of Australians (49.8%) chose lifestyle as the main reason they connected to Australia, with the proportion choosing the other qualities ranging from 10.8% for environment to 14.7% for multiculturalism. Those who chose the environment and multiculturalism scored significantly lower on shared values than those who chose lifestyle, sport and democracy. People who chose sport had a high personal wellbeing score at age 18-25, but a low score at 26-45. This might reflect that at the older ages they are less able to actually 'live' their choice because of family and work pressures and/or they are past their sporting prime. There was little age-related difference in wellbeing among those people who chose the other national characteristics.

The latest survey also asked people if they owned a pet and how much they cared about it. There was no difference between pet owners and non-owners in either personal or national wellbeing. People in low-income households were less likely to own a pet, but cared more about it if they did, probably because this group contains a large number of elderly people who live alone and for whom their pet is very important.

A third special subject area related to contentment and happiness. Overall, people rated their contentment at 76.8% and their happiness at 78.6%, both relatively high scores. Unlike life satisfaction, however, happiness and contentment showed no significant increase with income, varying by only 1.6 percentage points and 2.0 points respectively, compared with 4.3 points with life satisfaction. As with life satisfaction, however, women scored significantly higher than men, and the elderly higher than the young.

Other findings of the eighth survey include:

- Younger people, especially those aged 26-35, are vulnerable to the impact of low incomes (less than \$15,000), experiencing much lower wellbeing than older people.
- Satisfaction with health drops more with age in men (down 9.2 percentage points) than women (6.0 point). The drop in males is sharpest between 18-25 and 26-35 and for women between 36-45 and 46-55. In the case of women the fall is probably tied to menopause; with men, the reason is unclear, but may be

- linked to reduced leisure and sport and increased work and family pressures.
- The percentage of people who say they feel sad when recalling September 11 appears to have stabilised at about 50% over the past year, down from 90% immediately after the terrorist attacks. However, the intensity of that sadness has barely changed, averaging about 70%. This stability suggests the score is being influenced by what people perceive is a socially appropriate level of distress. Intensity of sadness decreases with income and increases with age.

The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index is based on quarterly telephone surveys of more than 2,000 adult Australians in all States and from metropolitan and country areas. The Index consists of two main values: the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI), which is the average level of satisfaction with seven aspects (or domains) of people's personal lives; and the National Wellbeing Index (NWI), the average level of satisfaction with six aspects of national life. The values are expressed as a percentage of the maximum possible score, so representing varying degrees of satisfaction (not the proportion satisfied). Additional questions are asked in each survey to study the effect of specific issues and events on wellbeing.

Cummins, R.A., Eckersley, R., Lo, S.K., Okerstrom, E., Hunter, B., & Davern, M. (2003). *Australian Unity Wellbeing Index: Report 8.0 – The Wellbeing of Australians – Feeling Connected to Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Centre on Quality of Life, School of Psychology, Deakin University. (pp 1-178). ISBN 0 7300 2605 1.

“CLASSIFIEDS”

In the last SASP newsletter, an item was included about RAPLink. RAPLink Inc (Regional Action Partnership Link) is a self-funded, not-for-profit organisation staffed by volunteers that acts as a link between communities and the resources, skills or information they need to help them develop community projects.

RAPLink are carrying out a survey, RuStic (rural students in the community). The survey is aimed at developing ways of getting rural students to

appropriate tertiary education and/or post-school skills training, with the aim of trying to get graduates to take their skills back to their own or other rural communities. It is also looking at ways of encouraging migration TO rural communities. They are looking for psychologists to assist with the survey returns and this may be a matter of interest to social psychologists. Those who have an interest can contact Elizabeth Murphy (by email: raplink@ozemail.com.au).

John Champness

Carolyn Hafer (Brock University, Ontario, Canada) and I are conducting a quantitative synthesis of experimental research on the belief in a just world. Currently, we're searching for unpublished manuscripts reporting experimental tests of any aspect of belief in a just world theory. If you have such a manuscript that you would like to share with us, could you please forward a hardcopy to Carolyn Hafer (Department of Psychology, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, L2S 3A1, CANADA) or to myself (Psychology Dept, 1251, av centrale, BP 47, 38040 Grenoble cedex 9, France) or send it via email to laurent.begue@upmf-grenoble.fr. Thank-you for your help,

Laurent Begue