



Olympic effort!

The School of Psychology was well represented at the Beijing Olympics with our very own Neil McLean a member of the Australian Olympic team as one of three Psychologists working with the Australian Men's Hockey team.

This is the fourth Olympic Games Neil has attended having also been a member of the Australian Olympic team in Barcelona, Atlanta and Athens. In Beijing the Men's Hockey team defeated the Netherlands 6-2 in the Bronze medal playoff to win a medal, with Germany, the eventual Gold medalists, winning through to the Gold medal game only after their semifinal against the Dutch was decided by penalty strokes.

In the other semifinal Australia was 2-0 up against Spain early in the second half, however Spain managed to eventually clinch the game with a goal just two minutes before full time.

Neil notes that the Olympic Games provide an excellent chance to showcase the profession and a terrific opportunity to apply what we know about the psychology of human performance in such a demanding setting. The hockey team performs across the two weeks of Olympic competition and with a game every second day it is a great challenge to keep the team physically and psychologically at peak performance.

PICTURED RIGHT: Neil McLean, centre of frame, shares gold medal glory with the mens hockey team in Athens



Educational and Developmental Graduate Students Linking Research to Practice

Graduate students in Educational and Developmental Psychology have recently had the opportunity to expand on their skills while participating a number of exciting research and professional development activities run by staff in the School's Child Study Centre.

For several years Dr Steve Heath and Mandy Nayton from the Dyslexia SPELD Foundation have been running the course "Changing the Future" which is designed to help teachers and other professionals understand literacy development and work with dyslexic children. The course has been extremely popular and this year was packaged as a Selected Topic for students in the M Psych and Grad Dip and Cert in Educational Psychology programs. (See the School website for details on these programs and on Changing the Future).

Students have been developing skills in the assessment of phonological skills (and earning some money doing so) by testing preschool children and their parents as part of an ARC-Linkage project, "Parents as Partners", designed to help parents improve the pre-literacy skills of their children through carefully designed games and

enjoyable activities. Other students have learned about the challenges of running groups by participating in a project on "Relationships after Divorce" which has been developed for mothers who are separated or divorced from their partners and for their teenage children. Both mother and adolescent programs have been running in parallel and reductions in stress and improved relationships have been reported from both groups.



Father and daughter try out materials specially written for the 'Parents as Partners' program by former graduate and current Research Associate, Gemma Boyle



School Conference 2008

Well, there is only one word for it, Success! The 2008 School of Psychology Biennial Conference went off without a hitch. Set within the spectacular surroundings of the Old Brewery on the banks of the Swan River, the conference provided a jam-packed exhibition of the progressive and innovative research being conducted within the School, and the day was destined to be a winner.



Louise Ewing, Zenobia Talati, Jan Fletcher, Linda Jeffery

PhD student, David Erceg-Hurn's critique of the Meth Project (which has since been featured on an ABC National Radio interview on the 12th of December) and Louise Ewing's presentation of her Face Lab research on 'hotties' and 'notties' were widely considered highlights of the day.

Congratulations to Claire Nulsen who came away with the Alan Richardson Memorial Prize with Claire Mein and Zenobia Talati also receiving well deserved commendations. Emma Grinter was awarded the prize for best poster.

The post-lunch entertainment led by Martyn Churcher was once again a stand-out for many. Andrew Page wowed the audience with his rock-star entrance, air-guitaring to Metallica's 'Enter Sandman'. Mike Anderson provided much amusement with his extremely enthusiastic 'buzzing in' for every possible question, despite occasionally having no idea what the answer was, during the 'Spicks and Specks' style quiz. All in all it was a very interesting day!

The Conference closed with an inspiring and highly topical keynote address from Dr Carmen Lawrence that reflected on Psychology's pivotal role in the sociopolitical landscape. For those unable to attend on the day, Dr Lawrence's address can be heard online at the School of Psychology webpage, www.psychology.uwa.edu.au

The Conference Organising Committee would like to heartily thank all those involved in making the 2008 Conference a great success. Thanks go to our generous sponsors Must Winebar, Swan Valley Tours, The University Club, The Co-Op bookshop, Barrett's Bakery, Liquor Baron's Dalkeith, Vintage Cellars Dalkeith, Vintage Cellars Nedlands, Unicredit Nedlands, Brumby's Bakery & Broadway Pizza.



Carmen Lawrence and Gill Rhodes enjoying post-conference drinks

COPWA Collaboration

The UWA School of Psychology continued this year to enhance its industry links with a closer relationship with the APS College of Organisational Psychologists WA. The arrangement to increase collaboration between COPWA and the School, allows better access to the University's extensive facilities, improved contact with visiting international academics, and closer engagement between industry and UWA students, staff and Alumni.

Head of School Associate Professor David Morrison said UWA was pleased to showcase its strong support for the professional community in WA through sponsorship of the College. "UWA already offers the widest choice of applied programs in Western Australia. We work very closely with industry and are continually seeking ways to strengthen our industry links. Sponsorship of COPWA allows us to provide further support to those involved in our Industrial & Organisational Masters and PhD programmes through closer contact with the professional community. Our students in particular will benefit from access to the excellent networking and professional development opportunities provided by the College. As a strong supporter of COPWA, UWA is very pleased to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the professional community through this arrangement."

COPWA Chair Paul Syme said the sponsorship provided excellent opportunities for the College to offer more to its membership. "The College Professional Development events in particular have been very well attended and have offered an excellent opportunity for the Organisational Psychology community to network, interact and continue to develop their knowledge and skills. In the next 12 months we will see a greater emphasis on utilising UWA and visiting international academics to deliver contemporary professional development to our locally-based professionals. The relationship with UWA will also enable COPWA to offer more effective and comprehensive services to all layers of its memberships which includes students, postgraduates and the broader psychology community"

2008 Achievements and Awards

Congratulations went to Steve Lewandowsky and Shane Rogers who each received an Excellence in Teaching Award.

Terri Robertson, was awarded the Jean Rogerson Honours Studentship for the top performing honours student in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Davina French was made a member of the NH&MRC Psychology and Psychiatry Grant Review Panel

Saruchi Chhabra won the APS prize (to top student at the end of fourth year) and was recently published in InPsych, the bulletin journal of the Australian Psychological Society.

Elizabeth Newnham and Brad Farrant each received the GRS Degree by Research Achievement prize in the category of Humanities and Social Sciences (Quantitative), with Brad receiving a special recommendation in the same category.

Jason Bell received the best student presentation award at the Experimental Psychology Conference.

Jason Bell was also successful in winning an APS award for his PhD and one of three Excellence in PhD Research awards.

Shayne Loft, who starts with the School in early 2009, won an Early Career Research Award from the APS.

School of Psychology staff visit Japan



The Head of School, Professor David Morrison and the Head of our Neurocognitive Development Unit, Professor Mike Anderson recently paid a visit to Kobe University in Japan with the Dean of Life and Physical Sciences, George Stewart. David and Mike were invited to Kobe to participate in discussions to establish a Research Centre into Inter-Cultural Psychology. They took the opportunity to share their views of research in a number of forums with both Academic staff and PhD students in the Department of Psychology and took the opportunity to get to know Kobe University and its beautiful surrounds.

Collaborative research opportunities that were discussed during the visit included investigations into whether work in the area of developmental psychology would be affected by differences in education systems; how the meaning of work and work concepts may differ between cultures; how human emotions are expressed and measured in different societies, and whether western based theories of clinical psychology can be applied in other cultures.

The visit followed a University-wide Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2007 between UWA and Kobe University to work towards increasing collaboration between the two Universities. Dave and Mike both noted they were very appreciative of the care and attention taken by their gracious hosts during the visits and hope to return the favour soon for Kobe academics. It is anticipated that other School Academics will also visit Japan in the near future.



School Visitors 2008

Dr Bundy Mackintosh (March–April)

Dr Bundy Mackintosh holds a Scientist position at the Medical Research Council Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit in Cambridge, and is a Senior Lecturer in Abnormal Psychology at the University of East Anglia. Her research interests concern the patterns of cognitive biases associated with individual differences in emotion, with a particular focus on emotional disorders such as anxiety. Her research seeks to increase understanding of cognitive biases and more particularly to develop techniques for modifying or eliminating biases that are detrimental to mental wellbeing, or that might alter drinking and smoking behaviour in alcoholics and smokers. During her visit, she collaborated with Prof. Colin MacLeod, and participated in the co-supervision of DPpsych research.

Dr Colette Hirsch (May–June)

Dr Colette Hirsch is a Senior Lecturer in the University of London's Institute of Psychiatry, who also now holds an external Research Associate position at the University of Western Australia, having won ARC funding together with Prof. Colin MacLeod for collaborative work being undertaken in our School of Psychology. Her research concerns the causal role of cognitive processes such as imagery, worry, interpretation, attention and working memory, in the maintenance of anxiety disorders, including generalised anxiety disorder and social phobia. This work involves the development of novel cognitive interventions to ameliorate these problematic processes and thus reduce anxiety and distress.

Mr Roman Osinsky (August–September)

Mr Roman Osinsky is a senior PhD student working under the supervision of Prof Jurgen Hennig at Giessen University in Germany. His research concerns the biological basis of vulnerability to emotional dysfunction, with a particular focus on the influence of polymorphisms of the serotonin transporter gene 5-HTT. This work investigates the relationship between a known genetic marker of emotional vulnerability (characterized by a short allele form of 5-HTTLPR), and the patterns of attentional bias to threat that underpin individual differences in emotional reactivity to stressful events. During his visit, Mr Osinsky has collaborated with Prof. Colin MacLeod, and has participated in the co-supervision of UWA Honours research. He will return to UWA in 2009 to continue this collaboration.

Ms Anna Baumert (August – October)

Ms Anna Baumert is a senior PhD student working under the supervision of Prof. Manfred Schmidt at the University of Koblenz-Landau in Germany. Her research concerns the cognitive basis of individual differences in the perception of injustice, a personality dimension known as Justice Sensitivity. This work adopts experimental procedures

previously employed to assess the biased patterns of attention, interpretation and memory associated with emotional vulnerability, and adapts these to test the hypothesis that systematic biases favouring the formation of the cognitive representation that emphasise unfairness underpin high levels of justice sensitivity. During her time at UWA, Ms Baumert has worked with Prof. Colin MacLeod and Prof Geoff Hammond to establish a new collaboration, and she will return to UWA in 2009 to continue this collaboration.

Ms Isabel Cabrera (August–October)

Ms Cabrera is a senior PhD student at the University of Madrid, working under the supervision of Ignacio Montorio. Her work investigates the role of attentional and interpretive biases, favouring the processing of threatening information, on anxiety symptomatology in later adulthood. This research adapts previously employed methods of assessing such patterns of cognitive selectivity to illuminate the degree to which age-related changes in inhibitory processing contribute to anxiety-linked cognitive bias in the elderly. The applied goal of the work is to enhance the assessment, prevention and treatment of pathological anxiety in older adults. Ms Cabrera has worked with Dr Romola Bucks and Prof. Colin MacLeod during her time at UWA, to establish a new research collaboration, and she will return in 2009 to continue this collaboration.

Prof. Andrew Mathews (September)

Prof Mathews is Professor of Psychology at the University of California, in Davis, and Visiting Scientist at the Medical Research Council Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit in Cambridge Scientist. He has been a regular annual visitor to UWA, since being appointed Programmatic Distinguished Visitor within our School some years ago, and for much of the past decade he has held ARC funding together with Prof. Colin MacLeod to support collaborative work being undertaken here. This work presently concerns the contributions made by biased attentional engagement with, and disengagement from, threatening information, to individual differences in anxiety reactions to stress, and in the subsequent perseveration of anxiety symptoms following the experience of stressful events.



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