

# e Newsletter November 2017 APA Convention Review

## APA 2017 Convention

### **The 125th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in Washington showcased the best of the profession**

The recent 125<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in Washington, DC was billed as the premier meeting of psychologists from the United States and around the world. It didn't disappoint. All of the APA's divisions were represented including Division 12 – the Society of Clinical Psychology. There were 80 half and full day workshops on offer, as well as more than 1000 shorter presentations. This provided an opportunity to either choose specific topics to explore in detail or conversely to obtain brief exposure to a wide variety of topics. In addition, the exhibition hall included more than 400 different stalls displaying and selling a range of publications, assessment tools and other psychology-related items. Here were the highlights for me:

#### ***Daniel Kahneman***

The major attraction at the conference was the presence of arguably the most influential living psychologist, and winner of the Nobel Prize for economics, Daniel Kahneman. Kahneman, who is noted for his work on the psychology of judgement and decision-making as well as behavioural economics, was joined on stage by a colleague who asked him a range of questions that allowed him to reflect upon his career and to comment on how he sees the future of the profession and psychological research. He spoke about the long and very close working relationship he shared with Amon Tversky and suggested that researchers should move away from criticising and arguing with each other in the literature to instead join together and work collaboratively to develop their hypotheses in a more efficient and productive way. A link to the convention keynote featuring Kahneman can be accessed from the [convention website \(http://www.apa.org/convention/\)](http://www.apa.org/convention/).

Those who are interested in learning more about Kahneman should consider reading the book by renowned author Michael Lewis referred to in the keynote address, *The Undoing Project*, which describes the working relationship between Kahneman and Tversky and how their ideas were developed.

#### ***Aaron T. Beck***

At the grand old age of 96, Aaron T. Beck was not in attendance at the conference, but participated by video link. He was asked a series of questions by the session chair, which allowed him to outline his recent work in cognitive behaviour therapy in which he spoke about utilising the principles of cognitive behaviour therapy with severely mentally ill individuals. He was also able to reflect upon his long and distinguished career and the development of CBT. Listening to him describe difficult concepts so lucidly and clearly was amazing. He still has such a genuine enthusiasm for psychology and for the future of psychology.

#### ***Anke Ehlers***

I was keen to hear Anke Ehlers speak in person, having completed my doctoral dissertation in the area of PTSD and as a result having extensively studied her work. Ehlers provided an excellent address on recent developments in our understanding of PTSD and ideas for the future. It was enlightening to hear just how far things have come in the last decade since my research was completed – in particular, how well the development of PTSD can be predicted from specifically

targeted risk factors. While my research focused on identifying predictors such as social support and specific aspects of the trauma for the development of PTSD, there is now a far greater emphasis on the cognitive predictors of who is likely to develop PTSD and who is not. This presentation led to a trip up to the exhibition hall to locate and purchase a recently published book by Resick and colleagues on cognitive processing therapy for PTSD which applies in manualised treatment form much of the latest research from Ehlers and other trauma researchers.

### ***Martin Seligman***

My conference highlight was the address by Martin Seligman, who received the APA president's Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to psychology as the founder of positive psychology, as well as for his work on the psychological constructs of resilience, learned helplessness, depression, optimism and pessimism. Seligman's address reflected upon his career and tied together the various areas of research he has pursued and finished with his hopes for the future both in the area of positive psychology and psychology more generally. It was interesting to hear of his involvement over the past seven years with the US defence force personnel. He has been doing consultancy work assisting with the implementation of psychological strategies designed to foster greater resilience and to reduce the likelihood of PTSD among personnel. He outlined what he refers to as 'the hope circuit', which is a body of work he is developing for a book to be published in April 2018.

### ***Anthony Greenwald***

Having published in the area of implicit self-esteem as measured by the Implicit Association Test (IAT), I was interested to attend the presentation by Anthony Greenwald, who is the developer of the IAT and arguably the world authority on the measurement of implicit biases. Greenwald outlined current research in the area and highlighted the hidden biases that we as humans are susceptible to from a lifetime of exposure to cultural attitudes about a range of things, including age, ethnicity and social class. Greenwald argued these biases shape our likes and dislikes and our judgements of other people and things and that awareness of our biases can allow us to guard against them.

### ***Phillip Zimbardo***

Stanford University Professor Philip Zimbardo, creator of the famous Stanford prison experiment, delivered an address on his recent work in the area of men and boys. Zimbardo highlighted the impact of online gaming and pornography on the development of young men, which was basically an overview of the first part of his recently published book, *Man Interrupted*. Zimbardo presents a very compelling case for concern for the future of Western society as a result of a generation of boys and young men who are increasingly withdrawing from education, employment and relationships.

Those who are interested in exploring this topic further might like to start by watching Zimbardo's Ted Talk on the topic, which has now received 2.2 million views and was a precursor to him developing his ideas in this area into a book.

The APA convention re-confirmed the value of attending conferences and spending time out of our practice to talk with other psychologists, listen to the questions posed to live presenters and participate in debate and the exchange of ideas. This means gaining exposure to presenters and exhibits you might not normally choose if it means buying a book or paying for their webinar. The APA convention was like visiting an amusement park themed around all things psychology. The next annual convention is scheduled for 9-12 August 2018, in San Francisco, California.

### ***Don't forget our conference***

For those looking for quality PD and networking with other clinical psychologists a little closer to home, the APS College of Clinical Psychologists' conference will be held in Adelaide from 27-29 April 2018. It might be smaller in scope and breadth by virtue of our smaller population, but our conference still promises to inspire attendees with its internationally known keynotes, skilled

workshop presenters and a range of social events designed to keep you going from morning until late.

Drs Scott Miller, David Edwards and Louise Hayes will present on the latest, most interesting and relevant developments in their respective areas of expertise. The conference will also feature more than 20 full-and half-day workshops run by high quality presenters and educators, including six sessions with a special training focus to ensure our clinical supervisors are ready for AHPRA's 30 June 2018 deadline.

Finally, not to be outdone by our American counterparts in their social program, the Australian Psychological Society's Clinical College Conference will offer first-in-best-dressed dinners for 10 with your favourite keynote/workshop presenters. The conference program is currently in its final stages of preparation and we are very excited about its launch on 1 December 2017 – I look forward to seeing you in Adelaide!

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