

44th APS Annual Conference DARWIN



MEDIA RELEASE

30 September – 4 October 2009

Darwin Convention Centre, Northern Territory

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Psychology conference - key media opportunities

Three in four Australian women want to be slimmer, body image pressures are being felt in Australian children as young as eight and children are more likely to experience bullying in the playground than online or by SMS – these are some of the research topics being presented at the Australian Psychological Society's 44th Annual Conference in Darwin from 30 September to 4 October 2009.

Psychologists are available for interview on the following topics and full copies of media releases are available on request. To coordinate an interview please contact Elaine Grant on 0412 683 068 or Ellise McLoughlan on 0428 445 097.

Girls hung up on weight, while boys focus on muscles to feel good

Body image pressures are being felt in Australian children as young as eight, a preliminary psychological study has found.

According to the study of 101 children, aged between eight and 11, girls compare their bodies more negatively than their male counterparts.

"We found 25 per cent of girls compared their weight to their peers, while 26 per cent of boys compared their muscles," said Associate Professor Lina Ricciardelli, psychologist and study author from Deakin University.

"Girls were more likely to focus on their peers who they felt had a better body, particularly on those features they wish they had or could change," she said. "Whereas, boys tended to focus on their strengths and used social comparisons to feel good about themselves, helping to build their self-esteem."

Biggest bullies are still in the playground

Children are more likely to experience bullying in the playground than online or by SMS, a psychological study of 612 students has found.

The study also found the major difference between cyber bullying and playground bullying is that children are more likely to be cyber-bullied by the opposite sex.

"It's unusual for children to bully the opposite sex face-to-face," said study author and psychologist, Dr Kay Bussey, who will present her findings at the Australian Psychological Society's 44th Annual Conference in Darwin this week.

"However, among cyber bullies, it's common for girls to bully boys and vice versa. This perhaps indicates children feel more comfortable bullying the opposite sex in the comfort of their own home when others are not there to witness it."

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Three in four Aussie women want to be slimmer

Three in four Australian women want to be slimmer, according to a psychological study into body image.

“Most women in the study felt their bodies were larger than their ideal size, and larger than what men find attractive,” said psychology researchers Patricia Rodwell and Dr Nerina Caltabiano, who will present their findings at the Australian Psychological Society’s 44th Annual Conference in Darwin this week.

The study of 152 women investigated how Gen Y, Gen X and Baby Boomers perceive their bodies.

“We found Aussie women view their bodies differently over time,” said Ms Rodwell. “As women age and their figures change, so do their feelings about their bodies.”

Bullying causes anxiety in children, study finds

Children who are bullied often experience anxiety and view the world as a more threatening place, a psychological study of 298 children has found.

“As a result of taunting, teasing, threats and social exclusion, children who are bullied often show signs of anxiety, including refusing to go to school, avoiding their peers and physical symptoms, such as trembling or shaking,” said Associate Professor Caroline Hunt, study author from the University of Sydney.

“We know that many adults with anxiety or depression report a history of being bullied as a child or teenager,” said Dr Hunt. “Our study found that children who are being bullied become anxious regardless of whether they are shy or outgoing, which indicates adult anxiety might actually be linked to childhood bullying.”

The ‘yummy mummy’ adds weight to body image concerns

Aussie mums are feeling the pressure to be ‘yummy mummies’, according to a psychological study that investigated the impact of sexy celebrity mothers depicted in the media on women’s post-pregnancy body image.

The study found that almost 50 per cent of mothers feel unhappy about their body, up to a year after giving birth.

“Images in the media of gorgeous, slim women who have just had a baby have added to the perception that women must lose weight soon after giving birth,” said study author and psychology researcher, Lucia Bongiorno.

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