

Three Journeys in Feminism and Community Psychology

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Reflections on life stories from those who began their journeys with psychology in the transformational decades of the 1960s and 1970s are now appearing, often with reflections on interrelationships between personal, professional, and political experiences and contexts. In this article three women psychologists from Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand with over 150 years of connection to psychology between them reflect on their career-long journeys with feminism and community psychology, and their shared commitments to social justice. We recall our first encounters with psychology, our growing awareness of social inequities outside and within psychology, and the challenges and achievements that came from insisting that careers made room for values. We go on to consider how we are each continuing such efforts in our older years, and in different times from those that shaped us. Our three life stories illustrate how creativity, effort, privilege, commitment, and luck allowed us to confront the mainstream and align our work and workplaces with values of inclusion, equity, and justice. At the same time, we acknowledge that we are not entirely the authors of our own lives, which have been shaped by dear colleagues, by privilege and adversity, by changes achieved and resisted within psychology, and by the wider forces of social change over the decades.

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Community and feminist psychologies, emerging in Australia and New Zealand from the 1970s onwards, are sub-groupings of psychology characterised by challenges to the mainstream. Their challenges have been embedded in wider social critiques around gender, race, colonisation, sexuality and inequality, and they provided platforms for social activism inside and outside of psychology. Other radical constellations in psychology also emerged over the decades, including critical psychology (Parker, 1999; Prilleltensky, 1989; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002), radical mental health groupings (Chesler, 1972; Laing, & Esterson, 1964; Szasz, 1974 [1961]), and indigenous psychologies (Dudgeon et al., 2014; Waitoki & Levy, 2016). Taken together, all these groupings have built a significant history involving psychologists who have careers that blended scholarship, practice and activism within and outside of psychology.

With the passing of time autobiographical reflections by pioneers in these forms of psychology are being published, enhancing understanding of psychologists' lives in historical and social context (e.g., Feminist Voices, 2024). These provide insight into creative career paths taken as individuals sought to incorporate activism with their scholarship and practice. As well as emphasising social justice, they also contain reflections on difficult issues around the power and privilege of being members of helping professions in relation to the less powerful individuals, groups and communities (which may be their own) towards which they directed their efforts.

Several examples from this kind of autobiographical literature follow. They are selected from a multitude partly because of their connections to at least one of we three authors, but

also because they illustrate the points we wish to make. Community psychologists Anne Mulvey, Heather Gridley and Libby Gawith (2001) traced back the roots of their involvement in social justice and feminism partly to their Irish Catholic identity, shared across different countries. Jane Ritchie (2001), from Aotearoa/New Zealand, linked her feminist research on child-rearing back to her own experiences of motherhood and described the influence of her work on the next two generations in her family.

Abby Stewart's early career query resonated with us. She asked whether psychology was "capacious enough to include all the things I cared about?" (Stewart, 2022, p.309). Gaining a conjoint faculty position within women's studies and psychology enabled her to answer the question affirmatively and to develop her work on institutional change in higher education as well as other forms of feminist activism. Ian Lubek describes turning away from experimental social psychology towards critical and historical social psychology and then late in his career, as a tourist in Cambodia, experiencing an epiphany which led him to becoming a community health psychologist and an activist, his work including campaigning against international beer companies complicit in the AIDs epidemic amongst local "beer girls" (Stam et al., 2018).

Pulling out the themes around scholarship, practice, and activism in a collection of autobiographical accounts, Jamila Bookwala and Nicky Newton (2021) note the very different career trajectories of pioneering women in psychology, but highlight commonalities in younger years in being exposed to, or participating in, broader forces such as the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam war, and the Women's Rights movement. These experiences led them to act as "agents of influence and transformation" (p.346) in their professional lives, both within their profession and outside it.

Bookwala and Newton also stress the importance of "linked lives", citing the work of Glen Elder, who throughout his work on the life course emphasised that lives are inherently interdependent, with the lives of individuals shaping and being shaped by others' lives. Likewise, work that we have been closely associated with frames activism as a group rather than only an individual effort. Meg Bond and Anne Mulvey (2000) tell of the history of their involvement in group efforts to incorporate women and feminist perspectives in a community psychology organisation and to encourage advocacy for women's issues. They also point to the fact, which should not be ignored, that those trained in community psychology often leave the field for other activist work. As Mulvey (1988) had observed, both feminism and community psychology focused on social policy, advocacy, empowerment, the demystification of experts, and prevention ahead of cure. But in Australia Gridley and Breen (2007) observed that it was some years before there was a critical mass of feminist women in community psychology making similar connections. Hilary Lapsley and Sue Wilkinson (2001) describe the development of feminist psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the activism associated with it in a Special Issue of *Feminism in Psychology*. These are just some of many accounts of how efforts by groups of feminist psychologists have changed psychology and also created feminist community psychology.

This article arose from a presentation by the three authors, Hilary, Heather and Colleen, at the Australian and New Zealand Psychological Society Members Choice Symposium held in Wellington, May 2023. The three of us each identify with feminist and community psychology one way or another. Baby boomers, we were born less than 10 years apart in Australia or New Zealand post-WW2. We met at around the same time, linked up by the same feminist community psychology colleague and friend, the late Judith Cogle. She had organised a symposium titled *The Psychology of Oppression and Empowerment* at the 4th International Congress in Psychology (ICP) in Sydney in 1988. This was a life-changing event where Heather and Hilary met, along with other like-minded women mainly from Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom. Around the same time Cogle introduced Colleen to Heather as a potential supervisor.

We three are good friends and between us have accumulated around 150 years of experience in psychology and its associated fields, including community and feminist psychology, plus having decades of involvement in feminist and other social activism. We thought it might be useful to share our experiences with a younger audience at the Wellington symposium. We put together a fast-moving presentation to give participants some idea of how each of us came to psychology, how we then came to critique the discipline, and the activities we have been involved in through the decades (Lapsley et al., 2023).

In working up this article from our conference presentation, we changed the structure a little to improve narrative flow. We began by placing ourselves in the context and times we grew up in and developed our views and values. Context is important! Instead of decade-by-decade snapshots of our lives, illustrated with appropriate images, we divided our time periods into thirds, each of us contributing a section to each period. These time periods cover our first encounters with psychology and our growing understanding that psychology as a discipline needs to be critiqued, and its patriarchal nature resisted. We have also nodded to the fatigue that can set in after decades of doing this. We note with some irony that this division of our career life courses does bear some resemblance to Eriksonian stages of identity, generativity, and integrity, reminding us that many aspects of mainstream psychology are no doubt ingrained into our thought processes!

A Snapshot of Seven Decades

Our educational and professional journeys span seven decades from the 1960s to the 2020s. Those decades have been tumultuous and fast-paced across the world and in our Australasian corner of that world. As a way of conceptualising the context of our careers, we brainstormed key public events that have impacted on our journeys through the decades as we remember them.

Growing up in the 1960s we remember the Vietnam war, though none of us took part in the protests. We also remember Peter, Paul and Mary and the Beatles. At the time only a small number of careers were seen to be appropriate for women, mainly nursing, teaching, secretarial work or hairdressing. Aboriginal people were not counted as citizens until 1967, and Australia still maintained the White Australia Policy which was finally abolished in the early 1970s. The Polynesian Panthers were Aotearoa New Zealand's version of the Black Power movement in the USA. We agreed that the 1970s were peak feminism. *The Female Eunuch* was published in 1970 and helped to liberate women's sexuality, with Germaine Greer memorably visiting New Zealand as well as Australia; around that time the contraceptive Pill became widely available. Many more women resumed studying and accessed university. Domestic violence and sexual assault began to be taken seriously in our countries and the first women's refuges and rape crisis centres were established. The single parent benefit (domestic purposes benefit in NZ) along with "no-fault divorce" gave women more chance to flee an abusive or unsatisfactory partner. Both countries had a period of free tertiary education, though Australia was later to that than New Zealand. Gay liberation and lesbian activism began the process of acceptance of LGBT lives.

The dismissal of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy were memorable political events in Australia, while New Zealand was gloomily dominated by conservative Prime Minister Robert Muldoon and the National Party for nearly a decade from the mid-1970s. The Australian Race Discrimination legislation was passed in 1975, the same year as International Women's Year and a Sex Discrimination Act. Following some equal pay legislation in the 1970s, in 1987 New Zealand established its Human Rights Commission, outlawing sex discrimination in certain contexts.

The 1980s were a confused decade for feminists and other activists. Although women's studies courses at universities were becoming popular, there was a considerable backlash

against feminism that has continued ever since. In New Zealand the 1981 Springbok Tour protests supported the eventual dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, but also drew attention to racism at home. The threat of nuclear war, brought home to New Zealand with the 1985 bombing of the Rainbow Warrior in Auckland's harbour, spawned the development of peace psychology. Also, Australia celebrated its Bicentennial of British settlement in 1988 with scant respect for the Aboriginal people dispossessed by colonisation. The HIV/AIDS epidemic impacted all of us and in New Zealand there was a huge battle before legislation decriminalising male homosexual acts was passed. The slogan 'Greed is Good' caught on until the 1987 stockmarket crash.

The 1990s were characterised by neo-liberalism in politics and in economics. Globalisation became a new form of colonialism and the backlash against feminism intensified. There were many wars internationally, intensifying a global refugee crisis that continues to this day. Huge anti-war demonstrations in both New Zealand and Australia naturally enough failed to stop the first Gulf war or the invasion of Iraq a decade later. Computers appeared on every desk and typing pools disappeared, the World Wide Web made its first public appearance and we all got email addresses. The 2000s were characterised by yet more wars - the second Iraq war began in the shadow of the 9/11 attacks in the US and the number of refugees across the world continued to increase. Australia was an enthusiastic member of the "Coalition of the Willing", without authorisation from the UN. The 'Tampa crisis' a month before 9/11 saw an immediate hardening and weaponising of Australian refugee policy, and the "children overboard" incident signalled the rise of disinformation in politics and the launched an offshore detention policy that is still in operation.

During the 2000s the mental health recovery movement took off, foreshadowed by earlier psychiatric patients' rights activism. New Zealand's Mental Health Commission, set up in 1996, fostered service user rights and a recovery-oriented approach to mental health services and Hilary is proud to have been professionally involved in this. Climate change was beginning to be taken more seriously and factored into politics and economics. Australians started covering their rooftops with solar panels thanks to subsidies. But Australia was still exporting coal and beginning to export the brilliantly marketed 'natural' gas. In 2007 Australia elected a Labor Government primarily on a climate platform and in 2010 its first female Prime Minister. New Zealand had Helen Clark as Prime Minister, leading a Labour Government from 1999 to 2008.

The 2010s seem relatively recent to us and climate change became even more pressing, though Australia's conservative government spent 10 years avoiding the issue. In 2018 Greta Thunberg mobilised the world's young people by striking from school. Heather and Colleen are proud to have some connection to the young people who led the first School Strike for Climate in Victoria in November 2018, soon after Thunberg's lone protest. In 2019-20 the east coast of Australia burnt for months in a mega fire culminating in catastrophic loss of bush, wildlife and human housing. There have since been mega fires across the world. Campaigns against 'dirty dairying', with its contribution of methane gas to the atmosphere and its wrecking of the health of our rivers, took off in New Zealand.

In 2017 after a long consultation period First Nations people in Australia presented the Uluru Statement from the Heart to the then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who almost instantly rejected its three-pronged request for Truth, Treaty and Voice. The ensuing process culminated in a devastating defeat of the 2023 Referendum proposal for Constitutional Recognition and an advisory body to Parliament, to be known as the Voice. Marriage equality fared better in another protracted process culminating in a 2017 plebiscite with a 2:1 outcome in favour of same-sex marriage, which had been legal in New Zealand since 2013. In 2018 Jacinda Ardern became New Zealand's youngest Prime Minister and the first to have a baby while in office.

The coronavirus pandemic has dominated the first third of the 2020s. Worldwide lockdowns meant the cancellation of most travel, while workplaces, schools and universities pivoted awkwardly to online learning and working from home, with the aim of limiting the loss of life especially to vulnerable and elderly people until an effective vaccine could be developed. New Zealand locked down hard and successfully in preventing the spread of the virus before vaccines became available. Australia's record was more patchy. The rapid development of vaccines lowered the impact of the pandemic, but an unexpected outcome has been the rise of the anti-vax movement, and the viral (!) spread of wider and wilder conspiracy theories reflected a breakdown of trust in national leaders. In this context, social media has hastened the onset of the age of misinformation, polarisation and “alternative facts”.

First Encounters with Psychology

Innocence and Insight – Hilary

I've been doing psychology in one way or another for nearly 60 years. At age 16 I devoured Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (strangely compelling) and Hans Eysenck's trilogy popularising psychology (oh dear, some years later racism/IQ testing certainly stained his reputation). I do think my early interest in psychology stemmed from my mother's sudden death when I was 11 years old and the subsequent disintegration of our family life from happy to miserably tangled up. My 14-year-old atheism and unsuitable older boyfriend were a step too far for my Presbyterian minister Dad's liberal attitudes. Emotion was something I was not good at – frozen grief as well as family culture - and so I loved reading about ‘neurosis’ and mental illness, where plenty of emotion was embedded. At the University of Auckland, in my element after dropping out of Teachers College in 1966, I coped well with rats and stats in my psychology classes. I was fascinated by child development studies, passing my third-year exams while about to give birth to my second child. Today I would be seen as a young mother at ages 20 and 22, but it wasn't uncommon then (and the unsuitable boyfriend was an excellent father). I joyfully read A.S. Neill on alternative schooling and became a laissez-faire parent, imagining that bringing up children was just a matter of nurturing the blank slates. Feminism hit in the early '70s and the world became full of possibilities, awakening my critical faculties in relation to patriarchy, marriage, child-rearing, sexuality... and psychology, of course. After completing a PhD in the history of psychology and three years as a junior lecturer, my academic career ground to a halt (I had been warned that history of psychology was not a good career choice but I'm stubborn!) and I stepped away from the academic path into an exciting research position with an activist national mental health NGO.

“Good Catholic Girl” to “Bubbles of Competence” - Heather

My early years revolved around family, church (Catholic), school - the teachers, all women, especially the ‘better’ nuns, were strong role models. My introduction to psychology and in a way to feminism came via my family – my mother's mental health issues were referred to as “nerves”. We all picked up a commitment to social action from our father's involvement in supporting returned servicemen and women, and in anti-communist activity within the union movement. Ok, so we didn't inherit his politics, just his willingness to act on his beliefs. The motto of the Catholic youth movement we organised our social life around was “See, Judge and Act” – a precursor to critical reflective practice?

The first in my wider family to go to university, I enrolled in an Arts degree in 1969, eventually majoring in Latin and Psychology (by process of elimination). My interests, friendship circle and centre of gravity remained local, but university life, with the Vietnam war moratoriums and debates raging, acted as an incubator for my later involvements. I went on to

do a Diploma of Education, still unclear about my career direction. With my psychology major as a get-out-of-jail card if teaching didn't work out, I joined the Australian Psychological Society (APS) as an affiliate member. I didn't think much more about it and had no idea how important that membership would turn out to be.

I taught in high schools for several years, during which time I was politicised by The Dismissal (of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam by the Queen's representative, the Governor-General). I discovered feminism via colleagues who still form the nucleus of my 40-year-running book club – we read books like *The Women's Room* and *1984*. Returning in 1978 from seven months overseas, I enrolled in a Graduate Diploma in Educational Counselling as an accredited pathway to registration as a psychologist. But I would meander for four more years in working world wilderness before I could claim the title – and the identity.

At the start of the 80s I landed a fixed contract at a teachers' college, then found myself back teaching junior Latin before signing on half-time as a clinical psychology registrar in a hospital setting (unpaid, in exchange for training and supervision). I juggled multiple bits of paid work... substitute teaching, tertiary tutoring, and a memorable stint at the Preston Women's Learning Centre, which was a house linked to a TAFE/Polytechnic catering to women who were returning to education and the workforce in the slipstream of the 70s' second wave feminist revolution. I wrote to a former supervisor that I was beginning to experience "bubbles of competence". It all came together in, yes, 1984, when I was offered not one but three positions within a month. With my supervisor's encouragement I chose "the one that will challenge you most".

Becoming Me – Colleen

I found feminism in my teens thanks to babysitting families with great bookshelves. Feminism became and remains my first love and my first framework. Psychology came much later. I was the first in my family to go to university, so for me that was an act of rebellion. My father suggested typing lessons and marriage. My Psychology major, all rats and stats, was not as compelling as my other majors in English and Australian/Pacific History. I joined the Commonwealth Public service after I graduated and found it by and large to be a supportive and surprisingly varied place to work.

My first Social Justice job was at a dockyard, part of the Department of Defence in the early 1980s. I became the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, largely because I was a woman. There were not many of us in the dockyard, and legislation requiring organisations to overcome discrimination had recently been introduced. I had no special skills or training for this role and there was little detail in the legislation about implementation.

I returned to study to finalise my psychology training after a year of travel in South, Central and North America, during which time the dockyard was privatised. This time I learnt more about the practice of psychology and in particular community psychology. I returned to the paid workforce implementing Equal Employment Opportunity across local government in Victoria via a role within the local government union.

Meanwhile I met Heather Gridley and other mentors I nicknamed "fairy godmothers". Those strategic and talented women initiated me into the weird world of psychology. While it's an identity I still struggle with, my godmothers steered me towards community psychology, the radical edge of psychology. Community psychology with a feminist twist has been my framework and toolkit ever since.

During the 90s I worked in areas where huge societal changes were taking place including the HIV/AIDS pandemic, globalisation and its impact on Australia's manufacturing industry. I worked for the AIDS Council at the tail end of that pandemic. My role was to convince local councils in Victoria to provide care for people living with HIV/AIDS. With the support of unions and a strong educative focus we did it!

Next I worked for an immigrant women's health organisation that provided health education in woman's first languages in clothing factories at the very time most factories were closing and immigrant women lost their long-term livelihood. Towards the end of the 90s I was unlucky enough to experience neoliberalism in action. Much of the world including my home state of Victoria took to privatising essential services via a mechanism I nicknamed "Compulsive Competitive Tendering". I found myself asking skilled, diverse, experienced underpaid Aged Care workers to vote their own wages and conditions *down* in order to keep the role of Aged Care provision locally based.

Peak Enlightenment and Enthusiasm

Feminist Activism and Psychology - Hilary

The 1970s and 1980s were a heady time for me and most of my friends. I contributed to *Broadsheet*, New Zealand's feminist magazine, on topics such as sex role stereotyping, and found my intellectual home in women's studies, which was then community-based. At the Mental Health Foundation the Director and I read up on community psychology texts, especially Julian Rapaport's (1977), and launched nationwide campaigns on topics including sexual abuse, domestic violence and postnatal depression. I came out as a lesbian – leading to family upheaval - and drafted the New Zealand Psychological Society's submission on Homosexual Law Reform. I served on a governmental Committee of Inquiry into Pornography and briefly chaired the Films and Video Recordings Board of Review.

In 1988 Professor Jane Ritchie, who sadly passed away in 2023, offered me a position in Women's Studies at the University of Waikato, where I spent the next twelve years. There I was involved in a study of domestic protection orders with Ruth Busch and Neville Robertson, which had quite an impact on law and policy; I introduced lesbian studies into the women's studies curriculum; and I worked with Linda Waimarie Nikora and Rose Black on a pioneering bicultural narrative study of mental health recovery, *Kia Mauri Tau!* (2002). It is notable that three of these four colleagues are community psychologists! I also made connections with Australian feminist and community psychologists, including Heather Gridley, at the International Congress of Psychology in Sydney in 1988, and these ties were solidified through Women in Psychology annual conferences on both sides of the Tasman.

That same Congress was where I met Sandra Schwarz Tangri, who became a wonderful mentor, opening up her circle of US feminist psychologists and so enabling me to spend time in the States researching my dual biography, *Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict: The Kinship of Women* (1999) (still my most fun project ever and my ill-advised history of psychology PhD came in handy after all!). Sue Wilkinson, longtime editor of the journal *Feminism and Psychology*, was also at the Congress. She and her partner Celia Kitzinger took a keen interest in feminist psychology in Australasia, and this was reflected in the international outlook of the journal. Wilkinson (1990) examined some of the strategies employed by academic-professional societies to contain women's attempts to organise within their national psychological societies in five countries, with particular attention to comparisons between the UK and Australia.

Being a Psychologist, Doing Psychology – Heather

My role as psychologist in the inaugural Melton Community Health Service was the best job I'll ever have. Once there, I stopped focusing on myself and started thinking, "What have I got to contribute?" In Eriksonian terms it seemed I'd finally resolved my extended identity crisis. I found myself working with a brilliant bunch of people starting a health centre together. Although my background was in teaching and counselling, I soon came to understand how the context of this rapidly expanding but under-served outer suburban setting was impacting on

my clients' lives and wellbeing. The work crystallised my feminist consciousness and ignited my involvement with community psychology. Discovering the newly established Board of Community Psychologists (aka the Community Board, later College) within the APS offered me a framework for my role, which expanded accordingly to encompass advocacy for new and improved services that mostly only reached as far as the inner West at best – health, education and transport were top of the list. Helping to bring post-secondary education to Melton drew me into the orbit of the new Western Institute that would eventually morph into Victoria University.

At this time my feminist activity was mostly locally focussed. I participated in consultations and lobbying around the establishment of sexual assault and women's health services in the western region. Sexual assault was the nub of my learning in my time at Melton. It had scarcely been mentioned in my training, No mention of gender or power or patriarchy. But from my feminist social worker colleagues, and indeed from a steady stream of women tentatively disclosing that "Something happened to me when I was X years old...", I learned the most basic of responses – to listen, then "I believe you, you are not alone, and you are never to blame".

I joined the staff of the newly hybrid Victoria University (VU) in 1990. I went there for a break after experiencing burnout in Melton but I stayed for 20 years. With my background in secondary and tertiary teaching, it felt like a homecoming, possibly a backward step. I taught in the social work and counselling programs as well as a unit in history and theories of psychology. My main involvement in the community psychology program was via supervision of student research until the Masters was established in 1994. I taught the ethics and professional practice units and eventually coordinated the whole program, including practicum placements.

I had no formal training in community psychology, but I absorbed a lot from people like the inimitable Arthur Veno, one of several activist social psychologists from North America who introduced aspects of community psychology into university psychology courses here; he launched *Network* (now the *Australian Community Psychologist*), the only Australian journal devoted to community psychology, and later co-edited a textbook that foregrounded social change agendas reflecting local and regional priorities in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (Thomas & Veno, 1992). In 1988 with debates raging in Australia around "celebrating" the bicentenary of white settlement, the Sydney Congress made no mention of Aboriginal issues at all except for one photographic display with photos of Aboriginal skulls. Australian and New Zealand community psychologists were embarrassed and outraged, alongside many other groups in the community. It was Arthur who devised the strategic response that eventually led to the first Indigenous address at an APS Conference. Those actions set off their own "nuclear chain" of events that galvanised Australian psychology to start coming to terms with its own complicity in the colonisation process (Gridley et al., 2000).

I hadn't had much of a sense of feminist activity within psychology or the APS until the Women and Psychology Interest Group hosted its first residential weekend conference in Bowral in December 1990. A major undertaking was the development, eventual adoption and subsequent periodic review by the APS of a set of ethical guidelines for psychological practice with women (Gridley, 2022). We owe a great deal to women like Una Gault, Pat Strong, Jeanette Shopland and Joan Beckwith as feminist researchers and practitioners who led and sustained us during those times.

I needed to undertake further study to justify my status as an academic. I enrolled in a Masters in Women's Studies, and was introduced to poststructural feminist scholarship, as well as feminist critiques within psychology. By now I was doing more thesis and professional supervision, so I focussed my research on feminist models of supervision in psychology.

In collaboration with Women's Health West I became involved in researching "women-sensitive practice" by GPs – a euphemism for sexually intrusive/abusive medical practice. I helped design a counselling unit on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault using a socio-political framework. The unit was recently rebadged as "Trauma and Counselling", washing away both the community context and feminist analysis.

Towards the end of the 90s I reached a choice point – I was becoming increasingly involved in the APS on several fronts – the College of Community Psychologists; the Women and Psychology Interest Group; and the Ethical Guidelines Committee. And I was also being urged to undertake a PhD if I wanted to advance my academic career. Unlike Abby Stewart, I didn't think I could "choose both"! So I threw in my lot with 'empowering our natural communities', as Ingrid Huygens termed it, and was elected to the APS Board as Director of Social Issues.

I rounded out the millennium with a sabbatical in Lowell, Massachusetts with feminist community psychologist Anne Mulvey, who had spent time in New Zealand and Australia in the early 90s. We had been galvanised by her challenging article identifying commonalities and tensions between these two values-based perspectives on mainstream psychology (Mulvey, 1988).

The new millennium brought new surprises as well as challenges. Australian psychologists concerned about human rights and social justice were mobilised to advocate for refugees detained locally and offshore for the "crime" of seeking asylum by boat. VU welcomed Isaac Prilleltensky, a key international figure since the 1980s in the development of critical and values-based approaches to psychology (e.g., Prilleltensky, 1989; 1997). Isaac established a Wellness Promotion Unit that undertook collaborative, community-based projects, and his supportive leadership opened up opportunities for me to participate in these projects and write for publication. But the three funded evaluation projects I was involved in all encountered difficulties that confirmed my sense that project management was not my forte.

Community psychologists continued to meet in places like Perth, Tauranga, Atlanta and New Mexico, but there was a growing movement to de-centre the field away from the dominant Anglo-North American context. In 2006 Colleen and I attended the International Conference in Community Psychology, held in Puerto Rico (technically still in the US but at least bilingual), the first of nine to date. The feminist psychology gatherings became less regular, held most recently in Australia in 2016 and in NZ in 2013.

In 2006 drastic cuts were taking place at VU, so when the APS Executive Director offered me a newly-created position as Manager of Public Interest, she must have been surprised at how quickly I accepted! My role was to enhance APS contributions to community wellbeing and develop positions on matters of public interest and social justice. I gathered a "dream team" of community and environmental psychologists who formulated position statements, government submissions, media releases and resources for psychologists and the general public on issues like racism, refugees, climate change, and marriage equality.

The first Women and Psychology gathering at Bowral had adopted the image of a white ant subverting psychology's patriarchal foundations from within, and I mischievously envisaged the Public Interest team as a critical community psychology colony of white ants inside APS HQ. We tried to see how our in-house activism could flow back into both the organisation and the profession. We worked with limited success to articulate and apply a social determinants of health approach to psychological practice, against the tide of increasingly homogenised and medicalised frameworks necessitated by the politics of healthcare rebates.

Soon after I arrived at the APS I found myself acting as a kind of midwife for the birth of the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association under the leadership of Pat Dudgeon, and this was followed by the development of the first APS Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

RAPs have deservedly been derided as attempts to blakwash colonialist institutions, but having the Indigenous psychologists driving the process meant there were several enduring outcomes.

While I was tucked away in the Ivory Tower, community and feminist psychologists were fighting their own battles – the former in the perennial struggle to stave off threats to either the VU program or the standing of community psychology as an endorsed area of practice. The feminist campaign was another perennial – this time centred on the development of APS practice guidelines for psychologists working with clients who have experienced intimate partner abuse or violence. Each of these campaigns was successful, sort of – but all are up for renegotiation right now.

Embracing Diversity - Colleen

In mid-1999 my beautiful baby girl was born three weeks before I turned 42. That event was transformational: becoming a mother reshaped my life and the focus I took from then onwards (D'Arcy et al., 2011). Within a year I was a single parent fighting for my own equal employment rights and rediscovering the limitations of parental leave provisions from a consumer perspective.

Around that time I was elected Director of Social Issues for the Australian Psychological Society. It was an interesting, flexible and I think useful role for my maternity leave. Even though I was 42, I was routinely called “that nice lass” by the then President - a lesson in avoiding being patronising to remember in my 60s.

I changed my work focus to match my life focus and began a series of roles related to parenting and Early Childhood Education. I learnt about Action Research and developed my qualitative evaluation skills. I had spent my teenage years in a “poverty postcode”, defined as a geographic area with higher than average economic disadvantage and a stigmatised reputation. I knew from experience that in reality most are interesting multicultural communities with strong local connections. Now I had returned well equipped to working as a change agent in several such postcodes, managing, evaluating and seeking funding for innovative projects for culturally diverse families and communities.

I learnt the power of playgroups as a connecting and supporting force for parents, usually mothers. Playgroups are regular semi structured get-togethers of parents and their babies and pre-school aged children. I learnt that culturally and linguistically specific playgroups were a great way to connect families most at risk of isolation. We had some spirited discussions about the value for mothers and children of language-based playgroups, as opposed to multicultural playgroups facilitated in English. As usual the correct answer is that both are important!

My next life challenge, mirrored by a parallel work challenge, was wrangling teenagers. My own child became a teenager and lost all the sunny chattiness of middle childhood, replaced by the angst and silence of her teenage years. About that time my work life moved postcodes from the northern to the western suburbs of Melbourne and I switched cultural communities from the Turkish, Syrian, Iranian and other “Middle Eastern” communities to very specifically working with newly-arrived South Sudanese youth in the outer western suburb of Melton. My challenge was to design a program for South Sudanese youth at risk of disengaging from school, later broadened to young people from refugee backgrounds. So naturally I thought of playgroups and drew on that concept to create a group mentoring program. They have similar aims of connecting and engaging while skills are developed. I really enjoyed working with teenagers and the tertiary student mentors we recruited for the program. Some mentors were from the same cultural and linguistic communities as the young people they mentored.

Finally, I can say something specifically about community psychology. The youth mentoring program recruited a Victoria University Community Psychology staff and student team as its evaluator. The evaluation supported us in being awarded Multicultural Education Program of the Year in 2017! Community psychology students also based their theses on the

mentoring aspects of the program. From a feminist perspective one of my first wins was persuading funders that “at risk youth” includes girls as well as boys, silent and withdrawn as well as stropic and combative individuals.

Keeping On Keeping On

Later Career and “Retirement” - Hilary

The 1990s saw a reversal in the fortunes of feminism and women’s studies in New Zealand as elsewhere, the feminist backlash being embedded in a trend towards social and economic conservatism. My department at Waikato was hit and the university environment began to feel more damaging than supportive, despite some wonderful colleagues. I took a technical “early retirement” and moved to Wellington to take up a policy and research position at New Zealand’s Mental Health Commission. There I spent an eventful few years working alongside mental health service users to pioneer a recovery model. With the Commission’s ending in sight, a study leave period in Edinburgh allowed me to secure a four-year position managing health services research with Scotland’s Chief Scientist Office. It was a late in life OE, as New Zealanders call their overseas experiences. Helping support the research programmes of others turned out to be a relaxing break from the heady mixture of research and activism that had characterised the middle years of my career. However, the call back to doing my own research became insistent and while in Scotland I was able to conduct a small project within a larger longitudinal study of ageing (Lapsley et al., 2016). Ageing research was becoming an exciting field in the UK, and I felt drawn to it as someone getting older myself, just as feminism had drawn me in as a young mother.

A brief research management role back in New Zealand enabled me to explore what was going on with ageing research here, and after I took retirement (again!) I found a role with a longitudinal study of advanced aging (LiLACS NZ) at the University of Auckland. Then, by a tremendous stroke of luck I was invited to work alongside Māori scholars at the university’s James Henare Research Centre, where I’m still based. We work with kaumātua (Māori elders) from different tribal areas to understand what wellbeing is for them and often I’m the only Pakeha in the team. I love my colleagues and I love the kaumātua we spend time with. They are very aware of ongoing struggles around racism and the impact of colonisation but despite the disadvantages they’ve lived through, their wellbeing is pretty robust, supported by the esteem in which they’re held as elders and by their engagement in their communities. What we do is truly community psychology, although my colleagues would not call it that, bringing more of an Indigenous studies/anthropology lens to the work (Muru-Lanning et al., 2023). For a change I’m not working on struggles that impact on my identities (except, of course, my identity as a citizen member of a group complicit in colonisation); rather, I’m working alongside to support my colleagues and taking direction from them. Somehow that form of stepping back yet fully engaging fits my own psychological needs as I transition to older age.

I should say, though, that in the first years of my latest “retirement” I convened New Zealand’s Women’s Studies Association, which is of course a deeply political role but also one that upholds scholarly values. There were lots of good things to come out of reviving the Association, but towards the end struggles within feminist and lesbian politics around trans issues became divisive. I worked to steer the Association through a path that upheld the rights and dignity of trans people, but I’m saddened to see that in recent times conflict around this issue has heightened.

I do observe that the older I get, the more conflict-avoidant I am, although I’m no less concerned about the state of the world. I believe that community psychology – and the values underpinning it – has a tremendous amount to offer, both within and outside the discipline of psychology. As a fellow traveller (and member of the New Zealand Psychological Society’s

Community Psychology Division), I appreciate it being around and I sincerely hope it survives current threats.

Resisting the R Word - Heather

I never expected to teach at a university, nor to end up on the Board of the APS, nor indeed to work there, although I have been connected with the APS for 50 years.

Unlike Hilary, I didn't fall in love with psychology, and unlike Colleen, I've never felt comfortable calling myself an activist. I don't think psychology is the best place to start if you want to change the world. But this is where I landed and I've tried to make a difference within my sphere of influence. I parted ways with the Catholic Church the more it veered away from the spirit and promise of Vatican II. So I've fought to keep community and feminist perspectives alive and flourishing within psychology and the APS, despite a constant feeling of swimming against the tide. The trans-Tasman community and feminist psychology gatherings sustained me through stormy seas over the years, and nurtured the cross-fertilisation of ideas and connections into the 21st Century.

We have ongoing debates in community psychology about visibility and identity. The VU community psychology Masters, the only one of its kind in Australia, was tailor-made for the community it serves, against all the constraints of the neoliberal takeover of the education sector at large. As it once again faces closure, we have to decide how much it matters. I don't want the field to die for obvious reasons, but I also think it doesn't matter if it's called community psychology or something else, as long as the work gets done.

Looking inside and outside at the same time is important. As someone who's stayed firmly within the APS/psychology orbit for over forty years, I still find myself asking whether professional associations are the best site for activism 'in our own backyard', or do they mainly provide us with a useful power and evidence base from which to direct our efforts outwards towards influencing policies and initiatives that matter to people and planet? We have to consider what psychology's contribution is to a problem and any potential solutions. I would love it if we could influence the science and practice of psychology itself a bit more. But psychology is a powerful institution, so we can at least draw on that to make a difference to people's attitudes towards same-sex marriage, racism, refugees etc., and we have each tried to do that in our own way. Many feminist and community psychology scholars and practitioners have been active in public debates and campaigns. Today, movements like #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter and Extinction Rebellion are attracting widespread support in the community, but most of the action is taking place outside psychology.

Five years ago, a major restructure brought my time at the APS to a close, and pointed me towards the next phase of my life. I returned to VU in a sessional teaching role, as well as supervising Community Psychology placements. Supervision is something I continue to enjoy doing – it's rather like I imagine grandparenting might feel: it keeps me engaged with a new generation, and gently leads me from Erikson's task of Generativity vs Stagnation into tackling the era of Integrity vs Despair. (I'm interpreting Erikson loosely here – I'm well aware of the critiques of stage theories).

The Catholic in me has never needed to believe in an afterlife - Hell would be simply to end one's life with a sense of wasted time and missed opportunity, while Heaven would be feeling that I'd done my best with the sense and resources I had. This new phase that I'm resisting calling Retirement has presented personal challenges – a dose of shingles, a fractured kneecap, and much more painfully, the loss of treasured friends, mentors and colleagues. There are moments of despair too in our collective failure to do what is needed to save the planet from extinction, to end entrenched conflicts fanned by vested interests, or to respect the rights and sovereignty of First Nations peoples, especially here in Australia. But one thing about getting older is having lived through constitutional crises and nuclear threats, and seen the

defeat of neoliberal regimes that looked like lasting forever. Indeed the first quarter century of my life saw just one change of government at state and federal levels, and of course, just one Queen in 70 years. Viewed through that lens, my third quarter century has been much more exciting thus far. What's going to keep my motor running into the fourth quarter?

Navigating Freedom – Colleen

The year I turned 60 was BIG. It was my daughter's final school year, she turned 18 and I became an orphan when my beloved dad died. All this led to an ongoing belief in living now, not waiting. Dad would approve - he lived a full 92 years.

There have been more challenges relating to paid work in my 60s. The community services sector is surprisingly competitive, unforgiving and as I discovered, ageist. This led me to moving in and out of paid work in a lengthy "transition to retirement". At the same time I ramped up my activism and took an even greater interest in climate change and how to prevent, adapt, and avoid being totally paralysed by increasingly catastrophic climate change events. This combination of factors led to some interesting short-term roles, for example seed gathering in a mountain ash forest, and some others more suited to my background and my fitness level!

The 2020s began hideously for me and many others. Mega fires burned for weeks across the southern and most populated parts of Australia. My retirement house situated in remnant bush within a coastal village miraculously survived while six others in my street burnt down. Everyone in the village fled to the beach taking their dogs, cats, chickens and horses with them. I was not there and only learnt my house had survived several days later.

I subsequently moved to the coast mid-pandemic, leaving my daughter to fill the inner Melbourne house with young people. I joined the Greens party and local climate activist groups including Knitting Nannas. I've searched the forest for evidence of greater gliders and spotted quolls with more familiar kangaroos and the huge variety of birds returning home since the fires. I've enjoyed watching the spotted gums shed their burnt and blistered skins and emerge shining and white. I am finding great joy in walking through the rejuvenating bush with my kelpie goddess, and in swimming in the ocean nearly every day.

My paid working life now spans 50 years and I'm finding my current stage of navigating freedom the most challenging yet. It has upsides though! Of course there are always immediate issues to be solved. Most recently I've been volunteering with hundreds of locals to support the Australian Indigenous Voice to Parliament Referendum. I felt a great sense of obligation to support this modest reform, and right now I'm feeling tremendous sadness and some anger at its resounding defeat.

Reflections

We know women's history tends to disappear, and that without recording history we may be doomed to repeat the "bad things". This article outlines some of the changes in our world over the span of our careers from the 1960s to the 2020s, as they have impacted on us and our communities.

We three are a tiny cross-section of women of our age. Women with children, without children, children early, children late, straight and gay, although all from a broadly Anglo-Celtic heritage. We have been part of the academy, the community, and the psychology profession. We have lived and worked in different contexts over the last seven decades, and what hangs our journeys together is our strong feminist values and our related desire to dismantle the structures of systemic oppressions in the contexts in which we work. Sometimes that has been working within the structures as managers and academics, other times we have taken up opportunities to run projects, or serve on committees of professional, political and community organisations aiming to promote gender equality, peace, inclusion and an end to

discrimination. We have all done our share of marching, singing or tree-sitting for a better world. Much of the fun of writing this paper has been exploring our similarities and differences, and learning still more about one another's life histories before they overlapped.

We all attended university at a time where it wasn't the norm for any school leavers, least of all girls/women. Hilary had strong family models for her choice, but Colleen and Heather were "first in family" to take the step. We all followed a teacher training track, but only Heather stayed teaching for more than a year or two before changing career direction.

bell hooks (1990), in conversation with Mary Childers, noted the importance of simultaneously acknowledging our sources of privilege and oppression. As women operating within a peripheral branch of psychology in "tucked-away" corners of the world, claiming space to share our stories is a form of empowerment. Insofar as we are white, relatively affluent professionals with access to a dominant form of truth-making (the refereed journal), if the right to do the telling stops with us, we are shoring up our own privilege. Thus we finish our reflections with discussion of the important "so what" issues of power and privilege and how we have each tried to use our opportunities for the benefit of humanity. We consider what advice we might give or questions we might ask of the next generation of feminists, community psychologists and others.

Hilary

For me the commonalities and differences in our stories are really interesting. I liked the way it has emerged that we invented our own pathways. None of us was formally trained in community psychology because it was a discipline that emerged as we were beginning. Likewise, I was not trained in women's studies, which became part of my academic career, but learnt about it "on the side" when it was a community-based movement.

Working in diverse organisations, particularly mental health ones where I was close to service users, helped me understand much better my own power and privilege as a highly educated white woman, whereas if I'd stayed in the Ivory Tower the knowledge may have stayed more theoretical and less felt. Although to contradict that (and life is full of contradictions!), working with my colleagues in a university Māori research centre has been humbling and has led to a much better appreciation of situations that I understood less well because they arise from struggles I have not needed to wrestle with.

In relation to making things better in workplaces, I enjoy leading a team but I'm not a natural manager. I'm far more comfortable at managing up than down (youngest child syndrome). This tendency has kept me from senior leadership roles, on the whole, something I have absolutely no regrets about, because I love being in the thick of projects. I've tended to shape my work to my skills and values as far as possible, and if a considerable gap emerged between values and organisation, as happened once, my solution was to move on, although I should have leapt faster.

My advice to younger psychologists is to stay true to yourself and your values, and take risks as well as opportunities. Ending up at the top of the heap is probably far less satisfying (as far as I can discern) than enjoying the company in the middle and knowing that you followed your own path!

Was psychology "capacious enough to include all the things I cared about?" Perhaps yes, but I was unable to maintain my early foothold in academia, although I've come back to it now. The upside is that I'm sure I have had a much richer and values-oriented career because I was forced to branch out.

Heather

I have had mixed experiences of time spent being both powerful and powerless - as a white English-speaking person squatting on an ancient land, and as a woman from a working-class family and neighbourhood whose great-grandparents fled famine and oppression, I came to feel I could speak and act on things that mattered to me, but I've also had a strong sense of being on the side of the underdog, understanding things from the bottom up and really relating to struggle. What matters is to stay accountable for how we use that power and privilege, and, like Laura Brown (1997), keep on asking "Whose needs are being met here?"

I'll park my car anywhere where it doesn't say you can't, and in my work life I've similarly considered it better to ask for forgiveness than permission. (My team at APS became a little too fond of that mantra). I've tried to find commonalities with people I would once have viewed as opponents. Sometimes that can feel duplicitous, but "you catch more flies with honey than vinegar", and allies can emerge from surprising corners.

What I have learned over the years is not just theoretical stuff but the value of working together, because if you have good relationships with the people you are working with, it gives you energy to do that job. Choose your battles, especially as you get older – you can't die on your sword more than once. Perhaps most of all I have learned the value of turning up.

Colleen

Working on this paper is my way of showing that journal articles need not be dry and can be fun. For me too it's a demonstration of that important qualitative measure, "practice wisdom". I've worked alongside marginalised/oppressed communities throughout my career to develop and implement solutions to "wicked" systemic issues. These include the consequences of all the "isms", particularly sexism, racism, ableism, and ageism. I've been privileged to work alongside many individuals and groups who are decidedly "not me", not "my people", and delighted in finding connections as well as chasms. As a woman, a feminist, a mother and a self-proclaimed activist I strongly believe that we are hardly ever able to be absolutely objective, nor should we be.

I haven't always thought or believed that I had access to either power or privilege, but a quick look backwards shows I've been privileged to be a free and independent woman all my life; I had access to good and free education and later secure employment that has had considerable personal meaning for me, and I hope has been useful to the world. I trust that my power and privilege can act as a ladder or a foundation for other women especially women from the diverse communities I've worked for and with.

In my working life I've tried to use my own and my colleagues' strengths to make the work enjoyable, educative and effective. I'm not big on efficiency. In wrangling my work efforts I try to understand how they fit into the overall picture of my workplace. I've always found it important to understand the flow of funding as well as my own role in ensuring sustainability for the projects and programs I work with.

I am not brave enough to provide advice to future generations. I would rather ask questions about their own reflections of the past and hopes and desires for the future. What I think we three have offered is our stories as a gift in the hope they are useful and thought provoking.

Pulling It All Together

Hilary, Heather and Colleen have worked and lived through a period of intense world-wide change, in politics, technology, climate change, women's rights, and human rights more generally. This paper has focused on feminism and community psychology as experienced by

the three of us in Australia and New Zealand from the 1960s to the 2020s. Our personal feminisms have developed in the context of our shared professional involvement in community psychology. Psychology itself has been strongly feminised in the 60 years our paper covers. It is no longer a male-dominated profession. Mental health is now clearly understood as an issue for everyone. The relationship between driving factors like equity, justice, safety and community connectedness, and our physical and mental health and wellbeing are well known.

Developing this joint work gave us a chance to reflect on our relationships with psychology, on the development of our social values, and on how we have made use of our psychological knowledge in social activism. We also spent time reflecting on how our understandings of ourselves and our careers – especially in relation to power and privilege – have developed over time.

Taken together, our stories echo the second-wave feminist maxim, “the personal is political”. Our late colleague and friend Jeanette Shopland insisted on using the terms counsellor, therapist and psychotherapist interchangeably “in a deliberate attempt to subvert the claims to status or relative effectiveness that may accompany these labels”. (Shopland, 2000, p.7), and in an era of increasing privatisation and medicalisation of psychological practice (not to mention the neoliberal academy), her words remind us to stay alert to the power of language and its shifts over time. Sisterhood still matters, and so too do allies. And finally, in all our work together, Colleen has made sure that we keep to the spirit of the well-known challenge attributed to Emma Goldman: “If I can’t dance, I don’t want to be part of your revolution”.

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Heather Gridley OAM FAPS coordinated the postgraduate Community Psychology program at Victoria University before joining the Australian Psychological Society as Manager of Public Interest. Her feminist and community psychology frameworks stemmed from working in community health, where she became aware of the limitations of individually-focussed interventions. She has held national positions in both the APS College of Community Psychologists and Women and Psychology Interest Group, and served two terms on the APS Board. She continues to provide professional supervision to early career psychologists.

Colleen Turner FAPS: Colleen's career journey spans more than four decades in applied research and community-based practice in aged and disability services, immigrant women's health, the Victorian AIDS Council, and earlier, within the trade union sector. Most recently she has worked with disadvantaged multicultural communities to ensure real accessibility to universal early childhood services and developed innovative programs for refugee youth. Colleen is a doting parent of Jessie who provides a reality check vis-à-vis the life experiences of Australian families.