

Linda Blatt, 4th Year Honours Graduate 2006

The saying “No man (or woman) is an island” is the first thing that springs to mind for me when I think of this honours year. I have been most grateful not only for the support of my fantastic supervisor, Dr Mary Ainley and the support of all of the academic and administrative staff in the department, but also very importantly for the guidance and the help of my peers - all of you! If there is one major thing that I have learnt, particularly from social and developmental psychology over the years, it is that we are social beings. It is for this reason, that the social contact of this year has been so important to me as I’m sure it has been to all of you. I really feel that we have all aided each other both intellectually and emotionally throughout this entire year and that in itself, is a wonderful achievement.

I remember Jeanette saying at the beginning of this year in our first ethics class that we could make it either be a cooperative or a competitive year. We could help each other out, or try to out do each other, and that she hoped we would turn out to be the former. Well, I am so happy to say that I have often reflected on this comment throughout the year, and feel we were certainly there to help each other the whole way through, with pieces of advice or simply a listening ear.

When thinking about the good memories of my honours year -- at first I chuckled to myself, because obviously this last month has been particularly challenging with the thesis and essays (as I’m sure all of you will agree!). However, I was quickly able to summon to mind many fond memories. It may sound funny, but I really believe that congregating in the common room on the 10th floor computer lab throughout the year (especially around the time of that oh so “enjoyable” statistics assignment and the nail biting last week of the thesis) enabled us to bond with so many people and learn from each other as well. It may sound corny, but I really felt during those times that we were not alone, and I hope you’ll all agree that there was a sense that we were ‘all in it together’ throughout those challenging periods. I can recall many times when a few of us would often get side tracked from our work and excitedly and nervously talk about our future career paths in that computer room, and I believe that was a critical part of the honours year as well, being able to share our hope and ambitions for the future with like-minded people, many of whom are on similar career paths.

Of course there was always the multiple coffee breaks at the Potter and Castros Kiosk. I don’t know about you, but that is surely part of what kept me grounded this year!

Another fond memory is of developmental lectures. I really felt like I was back in high school with end of term parties, due to all the lollies and junk food that we were told to bring to class every week. It really helped us feel as though we were in a more casual and enjoyable learning environment. I must admit however, that one day in particular, it was quite difficult for me to concentrate in that class, as it was the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur and I was required to fast and watch everyone else eat all the goodies! However, to my surprise one special person did bring to class the very next day, one of the cookies that she had baked and saved for me from the previous day. Again, I know it might sound

a bit cheesy, but for me, that gesture really symbolized the willingness of students to reach out to other people that I have noticed in various forms throughout this entire year.

4th year is academically, a good memory. I'm sure you'll agree. It was the sense of achievement and satisfaction that I felt after writing each section of my thesis, and the final sense of well, relief after handing the final copy in!

Most importantly perhaps, this has been the year that I have really valued being in a situation where I finally felt like part of the discipline and profession of psychology and where the academics and department in general have treated us as such. I really feel like I'm finally on the road towards my career as a psychologist, and a part of a group of people with shared interests and future aspirations. This year has given us the tools to proceed with our future careers and that is an invaluable commodity. It can sometimes be hard to feel a part of a cohort when you are in your undergraduate years, because of the sheer number of people. You are almost at times, just a face in the crowd. However, with the honors year, (and I'm sure beyond into postgraduate years as well), I no longer feel that way, and that has been a wonderful feeling.

I can't tell you how thrilled I am to have undertaken this year with all of you. This year I did not feel like part of our ivory tower society, but rather a part of supportive academic group. I feel privileged to have completed my honors year at Melbourne University. Thank you so much to all of the members of the department and to all of my fellow students. I hope that we remain in touch wherever our future career paths may lead us and that one day I will actually be able to consult with many of you as colleagues and ask for your advice on professional psychological matters. Perhaps we will even be able to offer therapeutic services to each other! All the best of luck to you all in your future endeavors!