



# *enPSYCHlopedia*

*A Standard Deviation Above the Mean*

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Editor: Mary W. Godwin, M.A.

## **The Psychology of Lawyering**

**Susan Scott VanDyke, B.S. in Psychology, May 1995**

I don't know much about being a lawyer. I've only been licensed to practice for approximately four months. Very little that I experienced in law school actually prepared me for "practicing law." However, I am a very experienced and well-seasoned law student. I can prepare for class discussion and write an essay exam with the best of them and I truly believe that I have Belmont's Psychology program to thank for that. I know for a fact that my undergraduate training in psychology helped me be a successful law student, and I am fairly certain that it will help me be an even more successful lawyer.

Most people think being a lawyer is all about what they see on television and in movies. They think that every day is spent in court, questioning witnesses, and revealing shocking "who done its." Keep in mind that the outcome of all of your hard work hinges on the decision of twelve angry (or hopefully not so angry when you're a defense attorney) jurors. While this is the case on some days, most of my days are spent talking on the telephone, interviewing witnesses and determining how they will present to the jury, and negotiating settlements. Understanding how people "work" and reading their poker faces is a key to success in this business (or at least that is what I've been told).

On a more practical note, the research and writing skills I began to develop as an undergraduate psychology student were the key to my survival and ultimate success in law school. The ability to communicate is important in any career, but being able to present an effective argument, support that argument with logic and reason, and convince a

judge (who is probably much smarter or at least more experienced than you) that you are right is what I spent three years in law school learning to do. My undergraduate training in psychology definitely put me a step ahead of everybody else. I already knew how to conduct effective research, how to integrate that research to make sense to my specific set of facts, and how to draw logical conclusions based on past research and current facts. Further, and even more important, I knew how to communicate those conclusions to others. And don't ever discount the character building experience of taking essay exams. That is all there is in law school. If you are not an effective writer, and do not have the test-taking skills to endure a three to four hour essay exam, you will not graduate from law school. And then there is the Bar Exam, which has an entire day (six hours) spent essay writing.

Although the very large majority of legal proceedings is conducted "on paper" through briefs and motions, some clients still get their day in court, and this is another area of my legal education and legal practice for which my degree in psychology prepared me. Every psychology student dreads the day when BURS/PURS rolls around each semester and they are required to stand before their peers and professors and present the results of the even more dreaded semester of Research Methods II. I was a nervous wreck in any public speaking context, but muddled my way through with dignity in order to obtain my degree. In law school, not only were you required to take classes such as Trial Advocacy and Moot Court where the students "played" court, but also any given day in class could easily turn into a

public speaking engagement. Law professors swear by the Socratic Method, and my first year of law school was like having to present at BURS/PURS everyday.

For those of you interested in the actual subject area of psychology in the legal world, there are many areas where the two topics converge. For example, there are people who make careers (and a nice income) by studying potential jurors and helping attorneys make selections who will be sympathetic to their case. There are people who study the dependability and accuracy of eyewitness testimony. And, everyone is familiar with the expert witness who typically makes an appearance in criminal cases when the defendant has pleaded insanity as a defense.

In conclusion, I guess the point of this article is not to convince you to abandon your dreams of a career in psychology and run to apply to law school. Although I am a little prejudiced since I think being a lawyer is a great career, I think more importantly that you should realize what a strong background your chosen major is giving you and how it can prepare you to be successful in *any* career you choose to pursue. Being able to take someone else's work and apply that to your own ideas, and on top of that being able to effectively communicate your ideas to others in a persuasive manner is the key to be successful in any career. I just happen to know from experience that it prepared me for mine and I would not trade it for anything else in the world.

### **Dr. Jesse Purdy is Guest Speaker**

In December of 2003, Dr. Jesse E. Purdy joined us as the keynote speaker for PURS. His visit was sponsored by the Department of Psychology, School of Sciences and the College of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Purdy is the Brown Distinguished Research Professor in the Department of Psychology at Southwestern University where he has been on the faculty since 1978. His active research program at Southwestern involves undergraduate students extensively. Much of his research is carried out at the Aquatic Animal Research Laboratory that houses facilities for both fresh water and salt water organisms. Recently he spent two and one half months in a remote ice camp in McMurdo, Sound, Antarctica studying Weddell seals. The focus of his work is on basic animal learning processes in aquatic animals. His work has been highlighted on the Discovery Channel's World of Wonder. Dr. Purdy is a Past-President of Psi Chi National.

### ***STUDENT RESEARCH***

This past fall the following students participated in the Psychology Undergraduate Research Symposium (PURS)

- **"Drawing Self-Efficacy and Anxiety During a Drawing Task"**, Radha Dunham, Faculty Advisor: Lonnie R. Yandell
- **"The Effects of Family Cohesion on Self Concept"**, April Ring, Faculty Advisor: Michael P. Sullivan
- **"A Psychometric Evaluation of a Measure of Sensation Seeking"**, Rob Bearden, Jennifer Bzdek, Radha Dunham, Isaac Harper, Mary Margaret Phillips,

- Alex Renes, and April Ring, Faculty Advisor: Peter J. Giordano



Alex Renes, Rob Bearden, Mary Margaret Phillips, Isaac Harper, Radha Dunham, Jennifer Bzdek, & April Ring

- **"Feature Present/ Feature Absent Phenomenon in Three-Dimensional Stimuli"**, Radha Dunham, April Hicks,

Mary Margaret Phillips, Faculty Advisor:  
Lonnie R. Yandell

- **“Superstitious Behavior and Personal Control in Athletes and Non-Athletes”**, Nathan Kosiba, Faculty Advisor: Lonnie R. Yandell
- **“Blind Dating: Physical Attractiveness versus Attitude Similarity”**, April Hicks, Faculty Advisor: Michael P. Sullivan
- **“Emotional Imagery and Attentional Blink”**, Isaac Harper, Elise Tyler, Kristine Vaughn, Faculty Advisor: Lonnie R. Yandell

The following students will present their research at the Midwestern Psychological Association (MPA) meeting in Chicago in April: Rob Bearden, Jennifer Bzdek, Radha Dunham, Isaac Harper, Nathan Kosiba, Marilyn McAllister, Sarah Osborne, Alex Renes, April Ring, Emily Sheffer.

Radha Dunham will also present research at NCUR this spring.

Nathan Kosiba will present his research at APA in Hawaii in July.

### **A message for alumni –**

If you are considering making a contribution to the annual Belmont development campaign, consider designating a portion of your gift to the Psychology Research Fund. This fund helps support student research in a number of

significant ways, including travel to and accommodations at conferences and software or equipment for student research projects. If you benefited from travel to a conference while you were a student, a gift to this fund is a great way to "give back" so that you can help current students! Thanks for considering it.

**Middle Tennessee Psychological Association (M.T.P.A.)** spring meeting will once again be hosted by Belmont this spring. The event has been moved to a Saturday afternoon because of the Music City Marathon. The date is Saturday, April 24, 2004. Our keynote for this year is Dr. David H. Barlow of Boston University. His address entitled “Psychological Treatment and the Future of Psychotherapy” will be at 1:30 in the Board Room. Registration will begin at 12:00 Noon on the fourth floor of Massey Business Center. The Poster Session is from 12:30-1:30. The Paper sessions will be from 2:45-4:00. Visit our web site at <http://www.belmont.edu/psychology/mtpa> for more information.

**A note to current undergraduate students:** The Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) maintains a Registry of Undergraduate Researchers and Graduate Schools. This Registry is designed to link undergraduate students who have research experience with graduate schools interested in recruiting such students. (See <http://22www.cur.org/UGRegistryselect.html> for general information about the registry. The registry is free of charge to the student. Interested graduate schools contact CUR and pay to gain access to the student’s records. These schools can then contact students whose records they are interested in. 100% of the proceeds go directly into the CUR Summer Fellowships program, supporting CUR members and their students for a summer of CUR-sponsored research. In order to continue the success of the program, students are encouraged to register themselves at <http://www.cur.org/ugreg/register.asp>. Once they register, they will receive an e-mail that provides them with a password and instructions on how to complete their records. It is important that they follow through and complete their record after they register.

## December 2003 Graduates:

Kate Kelsey

Amy VanHooydonk

Sarah Hickson

## Psi Chi Induction

**The Fall** induction for Psi Chi was held on October 21. Inductees were:

Ellen Norvell

Marie Stacey

Elise Tyler

**The Spring** induction will be held on March 25 in the Beaman Student Life Center. Inductees will be:

Melinda Baker

Rebekah Harrison

Brad Walker

## Psychology Club Officers for Spring, 2004:

President: Isaac Harper

Treasurer: Natalie Simpson

Reporter: Elise Tyler

Vice-President: Radha Dunham

Historians: Jessie Angel

SGA Rep: Sarah Osborne

Secretary: Rob Bearden

Emily Sheffer

## Psychology Club Events in Spring 2004

- January 10 – Introduction to the Psychology Club and Psi Chi
- January 31 – Manned a table telling about the Psychology Department for Academic Options Day
- February 6 – Care Giving for Alzheimer's patients – Emily Sheffer, Rob Bearden, and Radha Dunham presented a skit presenting the issues related to care giving for Alzheimer patients (PG Convo)
- March 5 – The field of art therapy in psychology – Radha Dunham and Jessie Angel discuss art therapy and its applications, such as working with children, people with disabilities, and individuals with emotional and behavioral disorders. Career path will be discussed for any students interested in pursuing a career in this area (PG Convo)
- March 19 – Nature vs. Nurture – In an effort to bring together two departments in one event, Dr. Bailey from Psychology and Dr. Murphree from Biology will discuss what factors of behavior are determined by the environment and which factors are determined genetically. (AL Convo)
- March 20 – Community Garage Sale – 8AM-1PM in the Belmont Heights Parking Lot. Donations can be dropped off in the Psychology Department office (460-6806) through March 19th or call Elise at 554-1984 to arrange a pick-up on Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup>. If you wish to rent a table to sell your own things you can rent for \$7 for one table or

\$10 for two and keep the money you make. Proceeds go to the Psychology Club. A table will be set up to benefit the Center for Living and Learning where arts and crafts created by the residents will be sold.

- March 26 – Family and Marriage Counseling with Tony Rankin (PG Convo)
- April 20 & 22 – BURP Nights. Food served. Must order your food for April 20 in advance.
- April 23 – Psychology an Student Affairs: A Natural Fit – Dr. Aaron Hughey, Prof. and Chair, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University, speaker. What can you do with a graduate degree in Educational Counseling or Student Affairs? How can an undergraduate background in psychology help you prepare for a career in these fields? (PG Convo)
- April 27 – BURS
- TBA – Service Project at Dismas House

## Our Alumni –

**Christy Spears Brown ('96)** received her Ph.D. in developmental psychology in 2003 from the University of Texas at Austin. She has accepted a tenure track position as Assistant Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology at UCLA. Her research is investigating how children understand gender and racial discrimination, and she teaches courses in social and personality development. Christy's other important news is that she and her husband Alex ('95, Journalism) are expecting their first child in April.

**Mary Beth Griffin Podzemny ('02)** was married on June 27, 2003. She is scheduled to receive her Masters of Criminal Justice in August, 2004.

**Tony Rankin ('84)** has recently published two books, *The Five Languages of Teenagers Parent Workbook* and *A Student's Guide to the Five Love Languages*.

**Shawn-Michelle Surber ('97)** is employed by The Tennessean here in Nashville. She was recently promoted to the New Business Development team and is an Advertising Account Executive in Sales. She has also started her own company pertaining to greeting cards, small canvas artwork, painting/crafting.

*Please return the form in this newsletter if you have any alumni news to share*

## Psychology Club/Psi Chi Tutoring Services

This semester the Psychology Club/Psi Chi has begun a new service project. Members are making themselves available to tutor Belmont students at no charge.

### Procedure:

- 1) Contact the club at: [Dunhamr@pop.belmont.edu](mailto:Dunhamr@pop.belmont.edu) for a list of e-mail addresses of available tutors. Hold on to this list so that you may skip this step in the future.
- 2) E-mail the student whose help you desire, specifying the type of help needed and for which class and/or instructor.
- 3) Within 48 hours, you will be contacted by the tutor, who will suggest a meeting time and materials with which **you must come prepared**. The tutor may also refer you to another tutor if his/her schedule does not permit a meeting or if another tutor is more qualified to meet your particular needs (e.g. you want help with a paper and a psychology tutor also happens to be an English minor).
- 4) Tutors will be available for 30 minute periods of time in the Beaman Student Life Center and the Library, unless another location is discussed.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not wait until the last minute to schedule your tutoring services, as tutors may not always be available when you most need them.

### Expectations:

- 1) We expect you to be adequately prepared (i.e. with notes or a rough draft) and eager to work. We are here to help, but your learning is your responsibility.
- 2) We expect to be treated with respect and may discontinue tutoring services if we feel that they are being used inappropriately.

**IMPORTANT:** Tutoring services and the procedure are subject to changes. We hope to keep the services available, but that will depend heavily on how well they work for both the tutors and the tutored.

**National Cotton Candy Day** – This Fall the Psychology Club/Psi Chi gave away cotton candy to celebrate National Cotton Candy Day. The event was well received by the campus, and the group had some interesting experiences and met lots of new people. Here are some pictures of the group hard at work.



Dr. Giordano mastering the machine



Radha Dunham, Psychology Club VP



The group hard at work (Emily Sheffer, Radha Dunham, & Rob Bearden)

## Let Us Hear From You!

If you are an alum reader, please take a moment to fill out the form below and drop us a line. Just mail to the address on the back of the newsletter, or contact us by e-mail at [godwinm@mail.belmont.edu](mailto:godwinm@mail.belmont.edu). We would love to hear from you and to include your update in the next edition of *enPSYCHlopedia*. If you are ever in the Nashville area, please stop by our office to meet the new faculty and see the exciting things going on here in the Psychology Department. Check out our web pages at <http://www.belmont.edu/psychology>.

<b><i>Alumni Update</i></b>	Date _____
Name _____	Graduation Year _____
Address _____	
City _____	State _____ ZIP _____ Phone _____
Spouse's name _____	Belmont grad? _____ Year _____
Employment _____	Title _____
Recent promotion, honor, award, etc.? _____	
What else is going on with you (that you'd like to share): _____	
_____	
_____	

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