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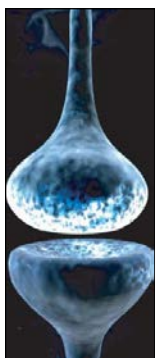
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Synapse

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Feature Article

A Personal Epistemological Analysis of Young Adults' Spiritual Beliefs



*Dr. Betty Rideout
completes her
Ph.D Dissertation*

**Newsletter of the Kwantlen
Psychology Department**

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UPCOMING EVENTS

CONNECTING MINDS 2011

JUNE 3rd and 4th, RICHMOND CAMPUS

APRIL PSYCHOLOGY COLLOQUIUM SERIES

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE TEACHING
OF PSYCHOLOGY 2011 (details inside)

Message from the Chair - Dr. Kevin Hamilton



Once again it is an honour to report on the activities and accomplishments of the Kwantlen Psychology Department. Now hosting three bachelor degrees (Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Applied Arts, and Bachelor of

Science), as well as a research intensive Honours Program, Psychology is an immensely vibrant student-centred undergraduate university department.

Our current program offerings include over 60 courses, covering a broad array of topics ranging from Ergonomics to Human Sexuality. Currently Psychology includes 26 full-time faculty, from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds, and several part-time instructors. Psychology also includes a full-time Departmental Assistant, Anne Lin, and a full-time Lab Coordinator, Ivy Ng. Kwantlen Psychology is one of the largest, most active and dynamic departments on campus.

Since the last issue of Synapse, there have been a number of notable developments within our department. Immediately apparent is the department's new location and new 'look' on the second floor of Surrey Main. The new Psychology wing provides offices for the majority of our faculty as well as for our Departmental Assistant, and includes photocopy facilities and a common area. The year also marked the return of Dr. Dianne Crisp as a faculty member in Psychology, and we wish Dr. Rajiv Jhangiani all the best in his position at Capilano University.

Other developments during the past year include the launch of years three and four of the Psychology BA program on the Richmond campus. Initial indications are that this endeavour will be very successful, with demand for courses proving to be very high. This past year also marks the opening of

Psychology's new lab in Surrey, designed specifically to support courses for our BSc. in Applied Psychology. Over the past year, Psychology continued to offer its popular Colloquium series, coordinated by Dr. Ashiq Shah.

In May of 2010, Kwantlen Psychology hosted the BC Psychology Articulation meeting. This annual meeting of post-secondary psychology departments from across British Columbia and the Yukon had not been held at Kwantlen for over ten years. It was an enormous success. As part of the educational initiatives arising from the 2010 Articulation, Kwantlen Psychology endorsed a Flexible Pre-Major Program that will help facilitate students entering Kwantlen Psychology after completing years one and two at other institutions.

2010 also marked the third Connecting Minds conference. This extremely successful North America wide undergraduate research conference featured guest speaker Dr. Albert Bandura and showcased student research in addition to information sessions and panel discussions. Connecting Minds 2011 will be held on June 3rd and 4th on the Richmond campus and features keynote speaker Dr. Michael Shermer.

In terms of student scholarships, several Psychology-specific awards were presented this past year to outstanding students. Our two Pearson Scholarships were awarded to Janice Gunn and Justin McGregor. Our Canadian Psychology Association Certificates of Excellence went to Louise Meilleur, Alex Wilson and Arissa Patterson for their outstanding Honours Theses. The recipient of Psychology's Honours Scholarship for the student with the highest GPA entering the Honours Program was awarded to Jamie Rich.

Moving forward, the department continues to engage in work around strategic planning, as well as to improve curriculum flexibility for students. In 2011, teaching excellence was once again a major theme at the department's winter retreat in

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February, and summer of 2011 will mark the third International Teaching of Psychology Conference, organized by Dr. Steve Charlton. Lastly, August 2011 will mark the end of my term as Department Chair, allowing me to return to teaching and research. In September of 2011, the Chair's position will move into the imminently capable hands of Dr. Wayne Podrouzek.

As Kwantlen Psychology continues to mature like a fine vintage, we witness faculty and students engaging in an ever widening and deepening range of scholarly pursuits, community service initiatives and life experiences. This issue of Synapse depicts an array of themes including faculty dissertation research, faculty research in Uganda, whale watching, and transexualism in Thailand.

I trust you will enjoy reading this 4th issue of Synapse and I wish to express my deepest appreciation to all who contributed to its publication. Especially, I'd like to thank Dr. Cory Pedersen and Dr. Jocelyn Lymburner for their tireless efforts in finding the time to compile and edit this collection of engaging articles and updates. Finally I'd like to thank everyone in and working with our department for helping to continue to make Kwantlen Psychology a profoundly unique undergraduate experience.



Welcome Backs and Fond Farewells.....



FAREWELL AND THANK-YOU to Dr. Kevin Hamilton on his retirement from chairdom!! Our warm and sincere appreciation for your tireless efforts on behalf of the Psychology Department in your position as Department Chair from 2009-2011.

FAREWELL AND BEST WISHES to Dr. Larry Anderson, who will be retiring from Kwantlen after 25 years of service. You will be dearly missed Larry.

Au revoir and best wishes to our respected colleague, Dr. Rajiv Jhangiani, who has left us to join Capilano University.

WELCOME BACK to Dr. Dianne Crisp, who has rejoined our department after a 3 year absence!

FEATURE ARTICLE

A Personal Epistemological Analysis of Young Adults' Spiritual Beliefs ~ by Dr. Betty Rideout



I have the privilege and responsibility of representing both individual and institutional influences in the lives of young adults. I teach historical and philosophical foundations of psychology to post-secondary adults. From teaching courses such as this, and others in the discipline of psychology, I have come to recognize the presence of a significant group of young adults who are eager to discuss spiritually-related questions in class; questions related to “meaning of life” issues, and who have had little opportunity to not only debate these questions, but to even *pose* them. In the social sciences, although there is certainly the desire to promote critical thinking skills, there is reluctance to apply those skills to questions related to ultimate meaning. Partly this is due to concerns about including religious topics in the classroom, a contentious issue with no easy answer.

Young adults who are unaffiliated with any specific religion nonetheless are confronted with important questions having to do with the “meaning of life” and the nature of “the good.” Parks (2000) described questions such as these as being essentially spiritual. The term spirituality is frequently used in both secular and religious contexts, and includes defining for oneself

a concept of goodness (Alexander, 2001). Such a concept is essential in defining one’s ethics, goals and commitments, and in meaningfully grounding what is important in one’s life. A concept of goodness further helps to establish criteria with which to identify and assess the values required to make important decisions that are especially relevant in young adulthood; decisions related to meaning, career, knowledge, beliefs, and identity. Parks (2000) speaks of faith and spirituality as “the activity of seeking and discovering meaning in the most comprehensive dimensions of our experience” (p. 7). Alexander has explained that spirituality, meaning of life and a search for the nature of the good are intertwined, and that “people are searching for spirituality today . . . because comprehensive visions of the good are conspicuously absent from modern culture” (p. x). Alexander has also stated that there are many who “are searching today for a spiritual dimension in their lives that connects them to their past, or their culture, or their community, or their God. They are looking for identity and a sense of self, for community and belonging, for awe and wonder, and meaning in life” (p. 3). I believe that questions related to meaning of life are important for individual development, identity, and global citizenship. Yet few opportunities are available for religiously-unaffiliated youth which encourage the asking of these questions. By not providing such opportunities we miss available occasions to help young adults to identify and critically examine their assumptions about what is of value. By encouraging spiritual development in young

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adulthood, according to Parks (2000), we promote opportunities:

....to discover in a critically aware, self-conscious manner the limits of inherited or otherwise socially received assumptions about how life works – what is ultimately true and rustworthy, and what counts – and to recompose meaning and faith on the other side of that discovery. The quality of this recomposition and its adequacy to ground a worthy adulthood depends in significant measure on the hospitality, commitment and courage of adult culture, as mediated through both individuals and institutions. (p. 8)

My research goals were twofold: first, to provide a description of young, non-religiously affiliated adults' spiritually-related beliefs from which shared themes could be accessed. Representing their beliefs thematically helped to show commonalities in participants' beliefs that may have been an outcome of social trends such as the dominance of a relativist epistemology, the increase in secularism and a marketplace view of spirituality. The second research goal was to interpret how participants' evaluated and justified their beliefs using a theory of knowledge from within the theoretical area known as personal epistemology. Personal epistemology is typically defined as an individual's informal assumptions about the nature of knowledge, particularly knowledge related to ill-structured problems (Kuhn & Weinstock, 2002). These assumptions about knowledge influence how people justify their beliefs. Research in personal epistemology literature suggests this justification process often follows a developmental progression. A number of models have organized these assumptions into stages that are ordered in terms of the complexity and effectiveness of justification for poorly-defined problems. Hofer and Pintrich (2002) pointed out that these models share the same sequence: "movement from a dualistic, objectivist view of knowledge to a more subjective, relativistic stance and ultimately to a contextual, constructivist perspective of knowing" (p. 7).

Both the spiritually-related beliefs, and the epistemic assumptions individuals have about these beliefs,

have wide-ranging influences, including how individuals derive meaning and their confidence in and integration of their beliefs. For example, Kuhn and Weinstock (2002) noted that age, life experience, and education alone do not seem sufficient cause for movement to the last stage commonly described as evaluativist. The evaluativist position is described as "the view that reasoned argument is worthwhile and is the most productive path to knowledge and informed understanding, as well as to the resolution of human conflict" (p. 138). Other than a small proportion of highly educated individuals, most people tend to operate from an epistemic position of relativism. Kuhn and Weinstock (2002) proposed that this is so because of the current competing set of values of social tolerance and acceptance, values which they suggest are reflected in adages such as "live and let live" (p. 139). These social values diminish movement beyond epistemic judgments based on extreme relativism. As an example, their research suggested that choosing a political candidate is often "treated as a matter of personal taste and opinion, rather than comparison on the basis of positions supported by reasoned argument" (p. 139). This perspective seems in keeping with Alexander's (2001) observation that fostering critical thinking skills in relation to spirituality is an important educational goal. Most research in personal epistemology literature has tended to focus on global theoretical models, but recently research has begun to explore more domain specific areas, such as the epistemic beliefs of jurors (Weinstock, 1999). Other research has examined discipline-specific epistemology, such as students' epistemological beliefs about math or science (Bell & Linn, 2002). A significant amount of research has described normative personal epistemologies and related them to levels of education (King & Kitchener, 2002).

My study examined two research questions: what are the spiritual beliefs of young adults without religious affiliation, and how do they assess these beliefs? Since the first goal of this research was to describe spiritual beliefs, and the second goal was to examine how participants think about and critically reflect upon their beliefs, this study opted for a qualitative research method, more specifically, interpretative phenomenology for the first research question and

elaborative coding drawing from the reflective judgment model for the second research question. From the first research question, which sought to describe participants' spiritual beliefs, three related themes emerged: 1) spirituality – what it is, 2) the narrative process of creating belief, and 3) the outcomes of those beliefs. The first theme, what is spirituality, included wide-ranging definitions that shared in common a hopeful and benevolent perspective on life, and which were largely founded on an opposition to institutional religion. In the second theme, participants described spirituality in a series of ongoing, highly individualized personal narratives. These narratives were related to identity development and the desire for authenticity was central. In order to be authentic in one's spiritual beliefs, participants' believed it was important to reject institutional religion. The third theme was the outcome of the beliefs, which contributed to identity, purpose and meaning.

But what is religion? The dictionaries tell us that the origin of the word is obscure. It may come from a Latin word that means associating oneself with something in the past, or wearing it as a yoke, or it may come from another word that means to go over things again, to think matters through, to remember, to correct. It is in this second sense that I would describe myself as a religious man. To give the utmost serious consideration to the elements of life which confront one seems to me to be following a path that is not content with simplicities, and which cannot reject the innumerable things in life which suggest purposes and powers of which we have the most fleeting perceptions (Robertson Davies, 1996, p. 279).

All three themes from the first research question informed the second research question, which asked how participants evaluated their beliefs. The findings suggest that participants' personal epistemology does contribute to the types of spiritual beliefs they have. Moving up the reflective judgment scale, spiritual beliefs at the lower levels were largely descriptive, reactions to religion were more dogmatic, and justifications for beliefs were rarely utilized. Justification was understood as unnecessary because, for these stage levels, a central epistemic assumption was that everyone is entitled to their opinion, regardless of what that opinion might be.

The reflective judgment model assesses two general dimensions of knowledge: nature of knowledge and

nature of justification. In the nature of knowledge dimension are three subsets of knowledge: view of knowledge, right versus wrong knowledge and legitimacy of differences in viewpoints. In the nature of justification dimension there are also three subsets, these include: concept of justification, use of evidence and role of authorities in making judgments.

Of 16 participants, nine scored in the pre-reflective Stages 1 to 3. One scored between Stages 2 - 3, four scored at Stage 3, and four scored between Stages 3 - 4. The four participants who scored between Stages 3 - 4 showed ways of thinking that represented both pre-reflective and quasi-reflective Stages 3 and 4. Six participants scored in the quasi-reflective Stages

4 and 5. Three scored at Stage 4, one scored between Stages 4 - 5, and two scored at Stage 5. One participant was scored at Stage level 6. Both Stages 6 and 7 are classified as reflective judgment.

Movement between stages is more fluid than hierarchical and builds on one's assumptions about the nature of knowledge. King and Kitchener (1994) noted that "there is a network of epistemological assumptions that seem to work together, which is not to say that people are precisely "in" one stage or another" (p. 45).

King and Kitchener (1994) cited mean scores of 3.2 in high school, college at 3.8, and individuals with a college degree scored at 4.3. In the present study more participants seemed to have scored slightly lower than the norm for their educational level. There are multiple possibilities for why this may be so, not the least of which is a small sample size on

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	Stage	Number of Participants
Pre-Reflective Stages	2 - 3	1
	3	4
	3 - 4	4
Quasi-Reflective Stages	4	3
	4 - 5	1
	5	2
Reflective Stages	6	1
Total		16

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which normative comparisons cannot be made.

Stage 3 thinking, and to a certain extent, Stage 4, presume that all opinions are equally valid. Because religion is based on established doctrine, religious institutions were construed by participants as being rigid and not open to a wide range of opinions and discussion. Participants opted for spirituality because it was perceived as being individually-created, flexible and better able to provide the marketplace approach to spiritual beliefs described by Roof (1999). As one participant explained, “there aren’t regulations or user-operations” for spirituality. For Stage 3, and to a lesser extent Stage 4 thinkers, spiritual knowledge was understood to be impossible to prove, therefore, they concluded, any belief related to spirituality was a viable belief and as such did not require any form of justification. All authority, particularly on any topic that was perceived as uncertain, and this included spirituality and religion, was dismissed as irrelevant or mistrusted in Stages 3 and 4. Without any authority to help link belief to evidence, participants had nothing to take the place of authority except their opinion and what “felt right.” The dogmatism that most participants believed was present in religious thinking was also common in their own assessment of religion.

Epistemology also was related to how participants enacted their beliefs. For example, it was presumed that in order to be open in one’s beliefs one must

refrain from judging others’ beliefs. Judgment, however, was imposed on institutional religion because religion was construed as totalitarian. As a result, creation of thoughtful, committed belief was made somewhat more challenging because participants identified anything with the term religion in it as “off-limits,” thereby restricting their opportunities to engage with faith-based communities (or any community for that matter) to discuss, critique, elaborate on and develop convicted belief. Related to this is a paradox observed by Pargament (1999), who noted that because the discourse on spirituality tends to polarize religion and spirituality, this polarizing effect acts as a disconnecting force on spirituality’s aim to seek out connectedness with humanity, the universe and one’s interpretation of the possibility of a divine presence. Higher scoring participants’ described more complex beliefs and included justifications which began to link evidence to beliefs. These participants were less dogmatic in their rejection of institutional religion and their beliefs were more tentative and complex. Interestingly, Fowler (1996) noted that Conjunctive Faith, which is the fifth of sixth stages in the faith development model, “exhibits a kind of epistemological humility” (p. 65). We noticed that for higher scoring participants justifications for their spiritual beliefs were intertwined with the beliefs themselves.

The findings from the present study share in common two results described by Mason, Webber, Singleton, and Hughes (2006) from their large study

on religion in Australian youth. They concluded that young people in their study had:

...taken strongly to two 'late modern' principles: that an individual's views and preferences, provided they harm no-one else, should not be questioned or constrained, and that spiritual/religious beliefs and practices are purely personal lifestyle choices – in no way necessary. (p. 35)

Mason et al.'s first result, that one's views and preferences should not be questioned provided those views do no harm, was described consistently by participants in the present study, and is a view that is enabled by Stage 3 and 4 reflective judgment. Their second finding, that spiritual/religious beliefs are personal, are related to lifestyle, and are not necessary, was also a finding in the present study. Spiritual beliefs served a number of purposes, and one purpose seemed to be an opportunity for personal expression. And, since beliefs were so open to change, deeply-held commitment to specific spiritual beliefs and practice was unfeasible in light of the dominant theme of openness.

I had characterized participants as "outsiders" because I believed they had had little opportunity to discuss their beliefs. Because they were not members of a religious group, and academic courses rarely include questions of this sort, I assumed that the remaining available forums for them would likely be drawn from popular culture, a forum which rarely emphasizes critical thinking. Participants did not describe themselves as outsiders however, in fact quite the opposite – the primary intention of being spiritual rather than religious was to be able to choose and possess beliefs that were their own, without, they presumed, outside influences. They were insiders – inside themselves and mainstream culture. The goal of their beliefs was to provide comfort, meaning and purpose. Their beliefs gave participants a reason for why they felt the way they did in Nature, or when they were frightened, felt alone, or missed deceased family members.

We were concerned that participants who scored at Stages 3 and 4 in this study had not critically evaluated their beliefs more effectively. There needs to be more of a challenge to young people to encourage critical assessment in all areas of their lives. King and Kitchener (2002) pointed out that while the reasoning of many third and fourth year university students operate at Stage 4 in the reflective judgment model, Stage 4 thinking still remains inconsistent and so students "may look to authorities for firm, unqualified answers. This suggests that there is not only room for improvement, but that there is an urgent need to address this situation" (p. 54). Research has also suggested that epistemic differences in specific topic areas show that epistemic assumptions might be linked more to a specific context and are less global and uniform than developmental models presume (Bell & Linn, 2002). If epistemic development is recursive and context specific then it is especially important to teach and encourage critical reflection upon large "meaning of life" questions (Love & Talbot, 1999; Parks, 2000).

Alexander (2001) commented that the "children of the Enlightenment are searching for a concept of the good life" (p. 41). Such a concept is deeply embedded in webs of beliefs which are tacit, unexamined and founded on social trends that are so entrenched they are difficult to see. The research process has given me a greater appreciation for the difficulty of trying to surface not just the beliefs but the web they are imbedded in. Beliefs are slippery and complex and trying to inquire into the phenomenon of belief in any kind of holistic, comprehensive way is very challenging. The present study set out to inquire into one type of belief, spirituality, in two ways: 1) by describing shared themes in participants' spiritual beliefs, and 2) by using a personal epistemological model to interpret how they evaluated those beliefs. But these are only two approaches to a very complex phenomenon, and seem a little like setting out to "capture," an ever-changing terrain that begins on the bottom of the ocean and rises up into a mountain range.

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What I have gained though is an even greater appreciation for what participants want. I think they are searching for a vision of goodness, although they probably would not define their search in that way. Participants see spirituality as something that can help with identity development. Their perception of individual development subsumes values such as goodness and meaning of life. This, I believe, illustrates the primacy of individuality in Western norms. There are other powerful trends at play here, such as the influence of consumerism, which contributes to their desire to shop around for the best in values. But, imagine what a difference a shift in hierarchy would create, for example, if primacy was accorded to a search for what is goodness. Such a shift would help them to really define their own spirituality, and provide them with a foundation on which they can build their values, goals, and other beliefs. By not encouraging critical analysis that operates at a level beyond the pre and quasi-reflective levels, and by not encouraging young people to pose these questions, young people will continue to be restricted in their opportunities to develop spiritual beliefs that they feel committed to.

CONGRATULATIONS....

to Dr. Betty Rideout on the successful completion of her doctoral dissertation from the Department of Psychology at the University of British Columbia.

WELL DONE Betty!



MEET OUR STUDENTS

Classroom in a Workplace

~by practicum student *Alysia Woelbern*

This past summer, the practicum for my BAA Psychology degree was at CHIMO Outreach & Advocacy. The journey from having no idea where to begin, to having a place to call my classroom for the summer, was one of an exciting opportunity, happenstance and exploration.

I have always enjoyed volunteering and working in my community and, while at Kwantlen, I have taken courses such as Community Psychology and Interpersonal Relations. When the coordinator of volunteer development at CHIMO paid a visit to one of my classes at Kwantlen to talk about volunteer opportunities at CHIMO, their Outreach & Advocacy Program seemed like a perfect fit, and I jumped at the opportunity. After an application, an interview, and some paperwork, it was final; CHIMO's Outreach & Advocacy Program would be my classroom for the summer of 2010.

Although Outreach & Advocacy (O & A) is a fairly new program at CHIMO, it is not a stranger to practicum students as it hosts practicum, co-op, and internship students during the summer and throughout the year. The O&A Program provides free information and support services to their clients in order to help them address their needs. This often includes needs surrounding housing, benefits, medical and family matters, to name a few.

On my first day at O&A, I did not know what to expect. However, through the help of the other volunteer advocates at the program and the program staff, I soon found my way around my new "classroom" and quickly became familiar with the vast number of services and programs that are available to clients in need. It is hard to describe a "typical" day at O&A, as there isn't one. Each day brings new clients, new challenges, and new learning. A prime example of this was one of my first days at CHIMO when I arrived at O&A's office. Remembering that my morning was open, I started preparing to catch up with some paperwork. Phones started to ring as usual. A few phone calls and a conversation later, I found myself on my way to court accompanying a client for moral support! Court?! The last time I had been to a court was a field trip in high school! Going to court, as well as accompanying clients elsewhere in the community, working with others in the community, and hearing clients' stories has definitely been an eye-opening experience.

I am very grateful for the opportunity I was given and would like to give special thanks to the CHIMO staff, the other CHIMO volunteers, and my practicum supervisor. I continue to volunteer at the O & A program, helping the people in my community in any way that I can.



Thai Transsexual Rights: Skin Deep?

~by Stephanie Drake

Sitting confidently on a bar stool in a sparkling blue evening dress, legs crossed and long black hair tossed over one shoulder, Mia swirls the ice in her scotch. “Ten years ago, I was spat on when I walked down the street in my neighbourhood,” she confides. “Today, many good changes have happened for kathoey like me.”

The Thai word *kathoey* (pronounced ga-toi) refers to any individual who does not fall under typical gender norms, whether this individual is a male homosexual, a male transvestite who dresses in women’s clothing for pleasure, or a transsexual woman who is identified as male at birth but undergoes varying degrees of chemical and surgical procedures in order to live as a woman. Biological women are rarely, if ever, described using this term. When used in front of westerners, however, the word *kathoey* is used interchangeably with the slang 'ladyboy' and refers to transsexual women almost exclusively. Research by Sam Winter indicate that the prevalence of these individuals is one for every 167 males, much higher than levels reported anywhere else in the world.

“Kathoey and transsexual women are not the same”, insists Nok, president of the Transsexual Women's Association of Thailand. “For transsexual women, the distress associated with their male genitalia is so great, they must do anything to get rid of it, even if the only option is self mutilation.” This represents a growing awareness for gender and sexual diversity, as well as an attempt by transsexual women to remove themselves from the sexual stigma associated with *kathoey*.

Thailand's concentration and reputation for *kathoey* is not only due to a traditional cultural awareness of

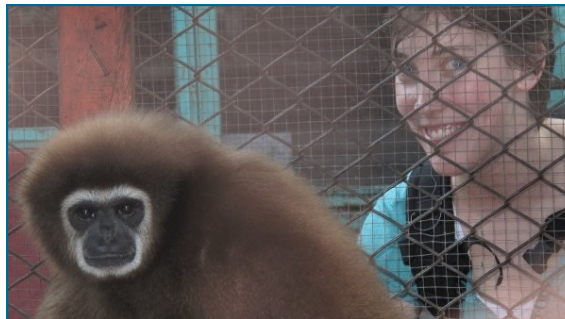
a third or hermaphroditic gender in ancient Theravada Buddhist texts, which elevated these individuals above typical gender and sexual pursuits, but also to a more recent growth of tourism for the purpose of prostitution from European and North American cities, due to the specialized fetish available here at a very low cost.

Kathoey work in predominantly female occupations, including service, retail, beauty salons as well as in factories. In more tourist focused areas, *kathoey* can find occupations in cabaret shows and beauty pageants. However, many *kathoey* are caught

in prostitution, unable to gain the money to afford the expensive yet readily available hormone therapy and corrective surgery needed to live life as a woman. With the average daily wage under five dollars, many *kathoey* cannot pass on the chance to make five times as much in prostitution. This

results in the mistaken belief by many westerners that they are undergoing the process of sex transition in order to make more money. However, the immediate loss of status and increased difficulty in finding employment for *kathoey* makes this belief illogical.

In 1997, Thai universities refused admission to any *kathoey* due to a highly publicized violent incident between a male cross-dressing student and his room-mate. This incident reinforced cultural perceptions of these individuals as 'mentally sick' and 'sexually perverse', discrimination also encouraged by the western biomedical influence in the region and its inclusion of gender identity disorder within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Only following the recent change of the Minister of Education was this ban



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quietly removed, allowing kathoey to potentially earn a higher education. However, as far as the Thai government is concerned, transsexual women are legally men. Transsexuals cannot change their gender on ID cards and passports, leading to problems with potential employers.

Aside from economic problems, prostitution can offer the finances needed to regain status within Thai society. Alternatively, prostitution may enable a kathoey to meet a western partner who will provide for her needs and potentially marry her and give her a better standard of living in another country. Depending on her partner's wishes, some researchers believe, a kathoey may choose to keep her male genitalia in order to gain a loving relationship.

There have been some positive changes for transsexuals in Thailand, including the removal of homosexuality from the list of mental disorders in 2002 by the Department of Mental Health. Transsexuals in the military are now recorded dismissed as a result of "an illness that cannot be cured in 30 days", thereby removing the damning 'mental illness' from a transsexual's service record. Additionally, during my visit in December of 2010, a new law was implemented prohibiting minors from genital corrective surgery and only approving all such surgeries upon the recommendation of a registered psychiatrist. Still many of these changes only reflect international pressures to bring Thailand to the same medical standards as the western world, rather than a reflection of reduced discrimination.

While many small steps have been made, many more must still occur. Many kathoey face prejudice from their families and communities as they become a source of shame. Violence is not reported on an international level, but is likely, due to the lack of constitutional protection as well as the dangers inherent in such positions as prostitution. Mia worries most about the number of transsexual women who have no social support and are not mentally prepared for genital surgery, which results in a loss of fertility and the status associated with manhood, as well as the uneducated youth who can obtain female hormones across the counter at local pharmacies and have been known to overdose in an attempt to become a woman

faster. The growing strength of the gay and transsexual community is constantly pressuring the government to include specific rights of these individuals in the Constitution. However, despite many protests, the changes are sluggish due to the internal prejudice of the locals to put the changes into practice.



Connecting Minds - The Undergraduate Psychology Research Conference ~by Dr. Cory Pedersen

The 2010 Connecting Minds conference was - at least from my perspective as CM Faculty Advisor for the past two consecutive years - the most successful one yet. Of course, that is if one defines success as a completely sold-out venue weeks before the conference even began. The reason for such success, you ask? Why, Dr. Albert Bandura, of course!

Last June 4th and 5th, **Dr. Albert Bandura**, the David Starr Jordan Professor of Social Sciences in Psychology at Stanford University, past president of both the APA and the WPA, winner of the APA's Distinguished Scientific Contributions Award and the William James Award of the APS, and one of the most influential psychologists of the 20th century, gave a keynote lecture entitled, "Going Global with Social Cognitive Theory" to approximately 250 conference attendees from universities as far away as Dalhousie (Nova Scotia) and Prince Edward Island.

The conference began with an evening reception on Friday involving student poster and oral presentations, a graduate panel workshop with volunteers from UBC and SFU, music provided by the Southridge Jazz Quartet, excellent catering provided by Chartwell's, and a post-conference social event held at our sponsoring hotel, The Hilton. The following day opened with a welcome addresses from our student executive committee representative, Mark Jaholkowski, and the Associate Dean of Social Sciences, Dr. Farhad Dastur.

Topics were diverse and original, including presentations on the following:

- the role of gesture in the linguistic acquisition of language-trained apes,
- the differing effect on body image satisfaction in males and females,
- the cultural impact on the presentation of obsessive-compulsive symptoms,
- the frequency of sexual behaviours in relation to religious view, religiosity and gender in emerging adulthood,
- personality development in Armenian genocide survivors,
- the influence of mental health stigma on help seeking,
- the relationship between Facebook and personality, and
- the downside of forgiveness

This year, Connecting Minds 2011 is pleased to present a keynote lecture by media-popular experimental psychologist **Dr. Michael Shermer**, founding publisher of *Skeptical Magazine* and Executive Director of the *Skeptic Society*. Dr. Shermer's keynote entitled, "The Believing Brain: From Ghosts and Gods to Politics and Conspiracies – How We Construct Beliefs and Reinforce the Truth" is sure to encourage scientific inquiry and critical thinking!! Be sure to check out Dr. Shermer on TED Talks, or visit his website at

www.michaelshermer.com

Please connect with us on June 3rd and 4th (Richmond campus conference center) and visit our website at www.connectingminds.ca for further information and registration.



Dr. Michael Shermer —
Keynote Speaker for CM 2011

STUDENT AWARDS

CONGRATULATIONS to Janice Gunn and Justin McGregor, successful recipients of our Pearson Psychology Scholarships.

CONGRATULATIONS to Louise Meilleur, Alex Wilson and Arissa Patterson, successful recipients of the CPA Certificates of Excellence for their honours research!

CONGRATULATIONS to Jamie Rich as the recipient of the Psychology Department scholarship for being the incoming honours student with the highest GPA for the 2010/2011 year.

See the Student Alumni Report (page 19) for more student success stories.

3rd Vancouver International Conference on the Teaching of Psychology July 29-31, 2011 Vancouver, Canada

Announcing an International Conference on the Teaching of Psychology at the Coast Plaza Hotel and Suites in downtown Vancouver, Canada. The conference will cover a wide range of issues related to the teaching of psychology. It is designed for teachers of psychology at universities, colleges and high schools who are interested in enhancing their teaching skills, exchanging perspectives and exploring new ideas. The conference will include topics such as classroom demonstrations, new teaching methods, recent advances in specialized areas of psychology, and issues of assessment. The conference will also feature several invited talks including bio-psychologist John Pinel. Individuals interested in presenting a paper, workshop or poster are asked to submit an abstract by April 21, 2011. More information is available at www.kwantlen.ca/ictp or you can contact Steve Charlton at 604-669-5065 or via email at sjccharlton@shaw.ca

A REPORT FROM THE LIBRARY

Internet Use, Article Searching, and Psychology Students ~ by Jan Penhorwood

“I found it on the Internet”. I hear these words often while working at the reference desk in the Kwantlen libraries. But what does this phrase actually mean? More often than not it means articles have been found using a search engine (like Google). Even if a student is using the *scholarly* version of Google (Google Scholar, still in beta testing) they are trolling for articles in an ocean of websites, theses, books, abstracts, court opinions, announcements from academic publishers and professional societies, online repositories, universities and yes, articles. But not always up to date articles. So why use Google? Well obviously because it is easy, fast and has an incredible penetration in the world population. Estimates of the number of Internet users in 2010 are up to a staggering 1,966,514,816 (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>) with a penetration approaching 30%.

Why not use one of the scholarly databases of articles that are easily searchable via the library’s web page? They too are fast and easy to use. Many contain *only* articles which is what most undergraduates are looking for. All are vetted by librarians and the results may be easily printed, emailed or downloaded. True, the databases are not free to everyone; a Kwantlen student must input their student number for a search from home, but isn’t that a good thing? Subscription databases like PsycINFO and PsycArticles are part of the ‘hidden internet’, the mass of information behind a password that Google’s robots cannot search. So while you may be using the Internet’s *technology* you are in fact using a scholarly article index/database- the same tool that has been around for decades! The tool you are using when you access PsycINFO is a web version of the same print index (once called *Psychological Abstracts*) that your instructors used as undergraduates and graduate students in psychology.

Naturally I want you to use the library’s versions of these valuable online databases. But I am not anti-Google. There are times when Google supplies invaluable information very quickly. But just because a journal article is found online doesn’t make it the best. And studies have shown that younger students who spend a great deal of time online excessively *feel themselves* lonelier than those using the internet less (Deniz, 2010). Kwantlen libraries still maintain print subscriptions too - titles like *Adolescence*, *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology*, *Canadian Psychology*, *Child Development*, *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* and *Memory and Cognition*- for those who like to browse paper.

Note: I’d welcome any and all library related questions you have. Feel free to contact me at:

Jan Penhorwood
Psychology Liaison Librarian
jan.penhorwood@kwantlen.ca
Phone: 604-599-3236

So how about a trip into the library soon? Ask for a tour, or some help using one of our subscription search tools. Have I convinced you to try using a journal that is bound in paper and not necessarily online? Let me know. I’d love to hear from you.

STUDENT ALUMNI REPORT

~ by Dr. John Marasigan

Topping our alumni update this year are our CPA Certificate of Excellence Honours thesis awardees: **Louise Meilleur** (2010), *The Effects of Fluency on Judgments of Risk*, **Alex Wilson** (2010), *Fickle Food Fancies: An Exploration of Evaluative Priming for Food Attitudes*, and **Arissa Patterson** (2010), *Teachers' Ability to Identify Symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Case Vignettes*. Congratulations to all three!

An enormous congratulations as well to the following Kwantlen graduates who have been accepted into graduate and professional programs around the world:

Louise Meilleur (2010) – Ohio State University
Alex Wilson (2010) – University of Windsor
Joshua Guyer (2010) – Queen's University
Sandra Lenore Gutierrez (2009) - Organizational Psychology at the City University of London
Nicole Pernat (2009) – Masters in Philosophy at Simon Fraser University

Our graduates are also exploring some interesting career changes...

Michelle Minhas, (2005) was just accepted into the Psychiatric Nursing Program at Stenberg College. Since her graduation, Michelle has been working with Checkwell where she became the senior reporting consultant on HR issues. Michelle wanted to explore a career change where she could still use her background in psychology so she will be pursuing education in psychiatric nursing, while still working at Checkwell. Our best wishes to Michelle.

Sara Tham (2007) gave up her profession as an operations manager in a box company in Richmond to pursue a career in counselling. Sara opted to complete a Developmental Practitioner program at Douglas College given the applied nature of the program. She particularly likes the possibility of

becoming certified to administer certain tests as well as facilitate workshops.

Laura Falcon (2004) - after completing her master's degree at SFU, she became the project coordinator at Fred Welsh Ltd., a mechanical contractor. She said, "I am enjoying my new career very much and have found that my company is a good fit for me. I was directly involved with the mechanical installation of the new Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion. Currently, I am involved with construction of the new roof at BC Place, which is very exciting." Indeed, truly exciting that our BAA graduates could find their niche in the applied field.

Emily Henry (2006) had the following to say about herself: "I am working at the Heart of Richmond AIDS Society as the Administration and Program Coordinator. I also work relief at an addiction recovery house, I am chairperson for a committee that runs an addiction help-line at another organization, plus I am part of The Free Life Project from the beginning." It certainly is heart-warming to realize that our alumni are actively involved in our community.

Fionna Glendinning (2006) writes, "I have obtained a position as the Curriculum Coordinator for Stenberg College and I'm thrilled to be joining their team." Way to go, Fionna!

As faculty members of the Psychology Department, we are extremely happy for all of our psychology alumni and proud of your achievements post-Kwantlen. We thank you for constantly reinforcing our goal of transforming you into leaders in our society.

An important P.S. to all our students – we would love to hear from you! Please please keep in touch post-graduation!

MEET OUR FACULTY

Children Growing Up in Post-Conflict Northern Uganda ~ by Dr. Kyle Matsuba

Those who have seen the “Last King of Scotland” will have some idea of the kinds of struggles Ugandan have faced in their recent past. Lasting for 8 years during the 1970s, Idi Amin’s rule cost an estimated 300,000 Ugandan lives. More recently, northern Uganda gained international attention with its 20 year conflict between the government army and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA, a rebel group led by Joseph Kony, is a “god-inspired” movement made up of people from the northern Acholi tribe whose purpose is to defeat the current military dictator Museveni, a member of the Banyankole tribe in the southwest. Hence, this ongoing conflict between the government army and the LRA is a more recent manifestation of the ongoing ethnic tension in East Africa (Finnstrom, 2008).

Unfortunately, many innocent, noncombatant Acholi victims have been caught in the middle of these warring factions. On one side is the government which suspected the Acholi of collaborating with the LRA in plotting its overthrow. In an attempt to prevent this from happening and to “protect” the people from LRA attacks, the government forced the Acholi people from their land and into displacement camps (Finnstrom, 2008). By the end of the conflict, there were an estimated 1.8 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (OXFAM International, 2008). Living in these camps had the disastrous effects of destroying the family, cultural traditions, and the agrarian-based economy since they were no longer able to work the land. To make matters worse, the government soldiers did little to protect the people from LRA attacks, often running to save their own lives rather than protecting the Acholi people.

On the other side were the LRA which suspected the Acholi people of collaborating with the government. Consequently, the LRA were brutal in their treatment of their own people. LRA members would often attack villages taking food and forcing people to carry the plunder to the rebel hideouts. They would also take children and force them to become child soldiers forcing them to kill family members and friends.

Many young females were kidnapped to become sex slaves. In fear of these attacks and their consequences, people would walk miles from their villages each night to gain protection from institutions like hospitals only to return to their villages in the morning. These people were known as the “night commuters.”

While there have been many attempts to form a truce between the LRA and the Ugandan Government, none have been formally signed to date. However, by August 2006, the rebel attacks ceased as the LRA moved their activities to neighboring African countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And while the LRA remains active today, they are rarely heard from in northern Uganda as this region



goes through a post-conflict transition process. Yet while the conflict has stopped, the repercussions of

past trauma are still being felt today.

My trip to northern Uganda took place a year ago when I visited my friend and research collaborator Theresa in the city of Gulu. Theresa's research work focused on studying children's development in the post-conflict region of northern Uganda. While there, I was able to visit her field sites and witness the forced closure of one displacement camp by the government in its attempt to move people back to their villages. My time was also spent working in a special needs ward of an orphanage. The children there have physical and/or developmental disabilities. In addition, some of these children have AIDS, were abandoned by their families and/or were products of rape. All were struggling to survive and thrive under difficult conditions.

As a person who studies children's psychological development, I was troubled by the lack of sufficient cognitive stimulation and nutrition provided to children. Most families, along with educational and health institutions, lack the resources to provide what we in the western world would consider adequate physical and psychological care. Not surprisingly, Uganda ranks 18th in under-5 mortality rates (vs. 158th for Canada) (UNICEF, 2008). Even among poor nations, Uganda has higher rates of malnutrition, infectious diseases, violence and mental health issues (Republic of Uganda, 2007).

There is no doubt that the war has had a traumatic effect on individuals. Within the past five years as northern Uganda has entered a time of peace, researchers and health care professionals have studied post-traumatic stress among former child soldiers (e.g., Bayer, Klasen & Adam, 2007). As well, there have been some creative programs designed to help heal the psychological scars from the trauma experienced (see [http://
amagezigemaanyi.blogspot.com/2010/12/agya-co-](http://amagezigemaanyi.blogspot.com/2010/12/agya-co-)



founders-visit-breakdance.html). For the most part, these studies and programs have focused on youth and young adults. Little attention has focused on younger children in terms of their psychological development, and yet they, too, are at-risk for negative physical and psychological outcomes.

My own research interest focuses on the prevalence of aggression and violence against children in northern Uganda. During my time in Uganda, I was very distressed by the rampant use of physical punishment by parents and teachers when disciplining children. I witnessed frequent use of caning by teachers and parents as a form of discipline. I heard anecdotal examples of abuse against children from NGO workers in the field. And themes of violence and aggression against children were emerging in my friend's research work. Certainly these anecdotal examples are consistent with research on children living in impoverished, distressed urban areas in the United States (see

Evans, 2004). However, how do we make sense of these anecdotal findings in a post-conflict, northern Ugandan context?

From my short time in Uganda, I came to realize that no one was unscathed by the war. Most people had lost a close relative in the war. All have suffered as the structure of society was in flux: Before the war, children had been raised in small villages where their time was spent looking after siblings and helping out in the village. They learned skills passed on from their elders, like building huts and farming. However, when they were forced into large displacement camps that accommodated tens of thousands of people in close quarters, children's time was spent in large peer groups roaming the camp unsupervised. Traditional skills were no longer taught due to the lack of need. In addition, many of the elders who taught such skills were no longer alive. Now, as families begin to move back to the

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village, parents, many who are now single, face the challenge of helping children transition from these displacement camp to village life.

There are many tales to be told about my visit to Uganda that can illustrate the struggles families are facing in this post-conflict era, particularly as they relate to aggression and violence against children. In an attempt to be more systematic, I, along with my collaborators (including students working in my lab), am beginning to qualitatively analyze textual material generated in interviews with parents, other

caregivers, and community leaders living in displacement camps. This material was collected by my friend Theresa as a part of her larger research project. It was my hope to present some preliminary results from our analysis before this article went to press. Alas, like all my research projects, this one is taking longer than anticipated. We hope to provide an update of our progress in the next “Synapse.”

ESL Students are Disadvantaged: A Myth?

~ by Dr. John Marasigan

“An English as a Second Language (ESL) student studying in an English-speaking institution is greatly disadvantaged academically compared to a Native English Speaking (NES) student.” I’ve heard this uttered even by seasoned professors in just about every post-secondary institution that I have had the opportunity to visit or attended since I moved to North America many moons ago. Make that decades ago. Although such a statement in my conversations with individuals in the academe may not have been directly shoved into my face, there were times when it picked my self-esteem. The slap may not be as strong as when one would say, “Oh, you speak with an accent,” which often offended me because one, I have always tried to speak whatever language I spoke just how the native speaker would, and two, I hear myself screaming in my mind, “don’t we all speak with an accent?” Yet, it still kind of irked me, this generalization – a stereotypical statement by the uninformed. And so, I promised myself to prove the statement about ESL academic discredit wrong, perhaps not totally, but still as being inaccurate when we consider individual cases. Teaching behavioural science, where no reality is ever proven absolutely by one theory, nudged me that through my investigation I can now proudly say that the statement or theory if you will, “ESL students are disadvantaged” is a *myth*.

I may have actually sown the seeds of my quest to prove that there is more to academic performance than a language barrier long before setting foot in kindergarten. (I never went to kindergarten; I was accelerated immediately into Grade 1 when I was 5 years old. Sorry, I lied. The private primary school that my parents put me in had no kindergarten.) Before entering Grade 1, I was already speaking a national language, a couple of other dialects (that I believed later in my life as being languages by themselves), and beginning to dabble in Spanish because my grandparents and their children spoke Spanish. The medium of instruction at my school was English, and I didn’t speak it at all, except to count in it. Yet, it didn’t occur to me that English would be a barrier because it simply came

naturally. Ah, the advantage of learning a new language when one is young. Nonetheless, I was an ESL student. It is with this sentiment that I truly feel for our own ESL students here in Kwantlen, and why I conducted my research on *Predictors of Academic Success: A Comparative Study*

I first conducted this research as a cross-sectional study in 2003. Influenced by the *myth* but not wanting to be labelled as being biased by focusing on the ESL students, I hypothesized that the Native English Speaking students at Kwantlen have a significantly higher academic performance in terms of cumulative GPA than ESL students along eight predictors of academic success. I chose not to follow the traditionally used cognitive ability or personality factors such as self-efficacy or motivation as predictors. I used variables from the pragmatic, real experiences of the 749 students who comprised my sample. The ESL portion of the sample indicated one of 38 different languages as their first language. The predictors included: 1. Number of courses taken during academic year 2002-2003, 2. Highest degree that the student hoped to attain, 3. Reason for attending post-secondary education, 4. Number of out-of-class independent study hours per week, 5. Financial source of funding for tuition, 6. Number of employment work hours per week, 7. Marital status, and 8. Presence of dependent child or children.

The purpose of the study was to compare the academic performance between the 427 ESL students and the 322 NES students on the basis of the eight predictors that had 29 levels. I administered a 19-item questionnaire to the random sample of ESL and regular classes of first year students during academic year 2002-2003. The final question asked the student if he/she was interested in continuing to be a participant in a follow-up study - everyone agreed. My intention was not to limit my research to the time that they were only in their first year. I conceptually planned to follow them through their studies at Kwantlen until they had graduated from their program. For the cross-sectional study, the final marks obtained by the participants throughout the academic year 2002-2003 were used to compare their performance. For the longitudinal study, the final marks of the participants who remained in Kwantlen during each of the subsequent 10 semesters until the end of academic year 2007-2008 were used.



Statistical analyses included the usual descriptives through multiple regression, including discriminant analysis. I was particularly interested in how the ESL fared in comparison with the NES students. Summative results of the longitudinal study include the following cumulative GPA's: ESL had higher GPA's than NES in Predictor 1 (5 or more courses), Predictor 2 (those indicating Bachelor's degree as their goal), Predictor 3 (those who indicated teachers, parents, and friends – in this order – as the reason for attending post-secondary), Predictor 4 (those who have 5 up to 30 independent study hours), Predictor 6 (those working 15+ hours), and Predictor 8 (those with children). The NES had higher GPA's in Predictor 5 (those with scholarship). Both married ESL and NES had higher GPA's than the unmarried. I was

feeling jubilant over these results that appeared to support my contention that language was not a barrier to academic success until my two-by-two ANOVA showed significant F ratios between ESL and NES in only 6 of the predictors, not in Predictors 3 (reason) and 5 (funding). Oh well, must we win them all? How about the multiple correlations? Aha! Significant multiple correlation coefficients were yielded only on goal, source of funding, marital status, and dependent children for both ESL and NES, but only during their first

year. Only goal stayed significant up to the sixth year. Of particular interest was the number of independent study hours that showed a very high significance for ESL in their sixth year of studies. Regression analysis showed all 8 predictors significantly predicted GPA of ESL students, while 3 did not significantly predict GPA of NES students, the reason being possibly participant attrition. Discriminant analysis correctly classified 33.4% of the participants into eleven program clusters. Finally, I wanted to see the completion rates. Based on degree goal indicated, the completion rates were 70% for ESL students and only 49% for NES students. Based on the number of participants, the completion rates were 40% for ESL and 28% for NES students.

So, what do these results tell us about the *myth*? They do seem to show that ESL students are not disadvantaged academically. Should we now cheer for the ESL students? Wait, hold the cheer. My predictors may not be the rebuttal to the *myth*. Please recall that I did not

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include among my predictors measurements of academic self-concept, motivational attitudes such as self-efficacy beliefs and motive to succeed, cognitive style, or social/cultural values. Considering such limitations among others like insufficient stratified sample sizes of the various programs of studies offered at Kwantlen and the number of study hours per specific course instead of cumulative hours, then a replication of the study seems warranted. Yet, that means redesigning the study and conducting it for another 6 years or so. Will I still have the stamina to do this? Well, that's the challenge of scientific research. Meanwhile, I pat myself on the back for proving that language as an ESL student was not a hindrance for me to study in various parts of the world and be where I am now. I double pat my back again for having successfully shared both parts of this research, the cross-sectional one to a standing-room only audience at the International Congress of Psychology in Beijing in 2004 and the longitudinal one to another standing-room only audience (I lucked out because I was the second presenter on day 1) at the International Congress of Applied Psychology in Melbourne, Australia in 2010. Regardless of being ESL or NES, I strongly believe that academic success comes when a student has the resolve to perform. Now, three cheers for scientific research!

Whale Tales

~by Dr. Kevin Hamilton

Working in offices and behind computers, it's far too easy to forget the incredible expanse of nature surrounding us in the Lower Mainland. I was acutely reminded of this on Sunday August 29th 2010, while fishing in Howe Sound, just days before the fall semester would start.

It was approximately 7:00 am when I walked through the gate at the Gibsons Marina, laden with life jacket, extra clothes, fishing gear, VHF radio, hat, sunglasses, water bottle, and of course my BlackBerry. The air was warm and still and the sky was particularly overcast. I readied my small aluminum skiff with its powerful little outboard and listened to the marine weather report. Leaving the dock, I rounded the breakwater, departed the marina and headed across the harbour towards Keats Island, about 2 kilometers away. Within minutes of the marina I could see, to the west, that the channel leading out of Gibsons Harbour and into the Straits of Georgia was dead calm. This was a rare occurrence in my experience and with the overcast skies, a state of affairs that might hold for several hours.

Atop the almost perfectly flat sea, the aluminum skiff skimmed along at full throttle, hugging the coastline of Keats Island en route to the open waters of Georgia Strait. The ride was exhilarating – like being on a motorcycle on an open road early in the morning. Approaching the western tip of Keats, it became apparent that the entire Strait was in one of its rare calms. I steered south on a course that put me in line with the rugged, windswept Paisley Islands and the outermost Islands, namely Popham and Little Popham. To port lay Howe Sound with its many islands and magnificent towering mountain peaks looming in the distance. To starboard was an enormous expanse of dead calm and open water. Vancouver Island shimmered in the background. I throttled back to enjoy the moment a little and eventually came to a stop. I put the engine into neutral and cast my fishing lure astern. What an incredible morning – one I hoped I would remember in a few weeks, when I'd be sitting in my Surrey office caught up in the momentum of a new academic year. Little did I realize how memorable a morning it was going to be.

My lure fluttered into the deep and out of sight. I let the line pay out freely and slowly placed the engine shift into the forward position, keeping the motor at an idle. With the lanyard secured to my wrist, I

trolled south and tried my best to imagine time standing still - for at least another few more months anyway – surely that was possible. About 15 minutes passed before I realized that this breathtaking vista, of which I was now a part, had to be experienced without the background drone of the 2-cycle outboard. I turned around, throttled the engine down and pressed the kill switch. Instantly there was a ubiquitous invisible blanket of silence. From the far off rocky western shores of Keats Island I could hear the faint squeals of gulls fishing off the cliffs. Wow - paradise!

Slowly I reeled in my lure, considering how strange it would be to actually catch something this morning. I'd been out fishing about a dozen times during July and August and had yet to even experience a decent bite.

As the lure approached the surface, the ill fate of this fishing expedition started to feel all too familiar. I brought the line in, attached the lure to the heel of my rod and secured the rod and fishing gear in the boat. As I did, an unusual sound emanated from behind - over my right shoulder. A faint whoosh - but a wet whoosh - It resembled a pressure release valve, purging. I looked in the direction of the calm open



water and for what seemed a very long moment - I had absolutely no idea what I was looking at. I had no frame of reference to relate the image suddenly confronting me. I stood, teetering between exhilaration and sheer terror watching what looked like a huge submerged deadhead break the water's surface only meters away. I had heard of logs and sometimes even whole trees being submerged for long periods, then suddenly resurfacing. What looked like a crooked tree branch, perhaps two meters long, was now protruding vertically out of the water - and it was way too close for my comfort zone.

My mind continued to struggle as I watched the emerging object move even closer. Could it be the grey whale I'd heard people at the marina talking about only a few weeks ago? That must be it, I thought! Holy \$%&\$##, it's right here – right in front of me.....

Within seconds the hypothesis about the grey whale totally dissolved as several more tree branches broke the water's surface, all only a few yards away. The pressure release sound repeated and intensified, and I began to get quite wet with spray from multiple vapour plumes drifting over the skiff. Suddenly I realized that I was amidst a surfacing pod of killer whales. Big ones. In fact each bigger than my little boat. Yikes!

Within moments, the whales began to dive under the boat, resurfacing immediately off the port bow. I sat down to watch as they swam away and began to traverse the western outer edge of Howe Sound. They swam in perfect single file in a southerly direction away from the boat. Above the whales I could see plumes of vapour being expelled in the morning light. There were no less than 5 creatures. I fumbled for my BlackBerry and with trembling hands snapped a picture. They are headed for Seal Rock I thought, off the northern edge of Popham.

Watching the receding pod of killer whales, I consider the past few moments and began looking at my BlackBerry. There appeared to be a picture depicting the morning's unprecedented intersection of space, time and the Kwantlen Psychology Chair out fishing. But the image was faint and the objects looked far away. I decided to look at the picture later, when suddenly I was re-alerted by another macabre acoustic

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aberration – this time it sounded like a log thumping against the hull of the boat. I saw a perturbation of the water's surface under the starboard bow and felt an impending state of immobility. When I peered over the transom, there, less than a meter away, literally staring me in the face, was the cutest little baby seal. The expression on its face was utter desperation.

My morning brain still resonated with sympathetic activation and failed to immediately connect the two events – the baby seal and the now distant pod of whales - in hindsight a textbook case of 'cognitive tunneling'.

And without knowing why, some primal part of my psyche seemed to be telling me that this was not a good situation. I started talking with the little fellow asking where he had come from and what he was doing out here all alone.

Suddenly the word 'breakfast' came to mind. This baby was on the whales' breakfast menu but had stared down destiny when it found the tiny aluminum boat drifting in the middle of the open ocean. It had used the unlikely object as a hiding place, orchestrating a most ingenious and improbable escape. 'Scoot, out of here!' I yelled - thinking that if the whales got wind of this pup they'd be back in a flash. I had no trouble imagining them overturning the skiff if they thought I was harbouring a tasty piece of dim sum like this one. The seal began to drift away and as I looked southward, the distant whales and their vapour trails continued to recede towards Popham and Seal Rock.

In awe of the morning's events, I decided to capitalize on the calm that was slowly dissipating – a breeze was picking up from the northwest. I started the engine, put the motor in gear and raced to Seal Rock to find only a few specimens perched on the protruding outcrops, where normally there was an ongoing AGM. There was no sign of the whales and the long way home around the east end of Keats seemed like an appropriate course back given the breeze building from the northwest.

Within 45 minutes of leaving the Paisley group, I rounded the most easterly point of Keats Island and was soon in sight of the Gibsons Marina breakwater. After tying up I sat in the skiff decompressing back to reality. During the trip back, the word 'omen' kept coming to mind. How easy it would be, I thought, for our tribal ancestors to become superstitious about such events. I proceeded slowly up the catwalk in the direction of the marina store and after dropping my gear in the back of the truck, returned to the marina office. I was delighted to see the familiar face of my friend Mary Lou behind the counter.

I conveyed my tale to Mary Lou in some detail. She told me that in all the years she had worked at the marina she never heard of such a 'close encounter'. 'Occasionally, owners of sailboats would report seeing nomadic pods of killer whales in the distance' she indicated 'but never anything like I'd described'. 'By the way' she said, 'around 8 am today, while you were out, the grey whale entered the harbour'. Interesting, I thought - possibly the grey was trying to get away from the killer whales I'd just seen. I drove home in a distinctly surrealistic mind space. I was still thinking about the concept of 'omen', about a new academic year and about how thankful I am to be living on the West Coast.



REPORT FROM THE PSYCHOLOGY LAB

~ by Ivy Ng - Psychology Lab Supervisor



Why visit the Psychology Lab? Our wonderful lab assistants will tell you...

Jessi: I am doing the BA Psych degree, and am in my final year. I discovered the Psych Lab when I had to do SPSS assignments for my stats class. I started working in the lab in April of 2010 and so far, the best part of the job is **getting to meet new people**. I think the lab is not only a great academic resource, but also provides opportunities for students to network with each other.

Ragav: The one thing every psyc student needs to understand is that the Psych Lab is the heart of Kwantlen's Psychology Department. This is where all the upper level **students hang out**, dispensing information on courses, professors and grad school in exchange for cookies. One unique advantage working in the lab has given me is that **my grades have improved** through no effort on my part, solely because of the discussions on specific course matter that keep popping up. It's hard to sit next to five people explaining stats to each other and not pick up a few things! If you ever feel the need to bribe me - be it for information or because you want to ask me for a favor - all it takes is a couple of hot and fresh samosas. Prabu Sweets is a good spot to pick some up.

Amy: My name is Amy Baykey and I am majoring in Psychology and minoring in Criminology. I first learned about the Surrey Psych Lab when my Psyc 1100 professor told me I could **earn extra credit** by being a participant in research studies. I started working in the Surrey Psych Lab in January of 2009. I love my job in the Psyc lab, I like that I am able to help students and hopefully make their time at Kwantlen enjoyable.

Teryn: Hello! My name is Teryn and I have been working at the Richmond Psychology lab for the past 4 years. During this time, I've met many students who seem reluctant to come in to the lab save for doing whatever their instructor is blackmailing them to do. But I will tell you a secret... **You don't need a good reason to come into the lab**. You need a place to study? We're here! You need directions to the washroom? We'll tell you! You just need a place to pass the time? Let's hang! As our name tag says, we're student lab assistants, and **we're happy to help you** to the best of our abilities (no bribes necessary). Although, if anyone manages to find me some me blue jello, I will reward you handsomely!

Huma: I am a third year student at Kwantlen and currently majoring in psychology. I started working at the Psychology Lab in the fall of 2009. The Psychology Lab is a helpful resource place for students by providing them with a **quiet study area** including reference material, **office supplies, lab computers and best of all a FREE printer**. As a student assistant my job is to greet and assist the students with

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any help or questions they may have. Working in the lab had been an educational and practical work experience for me, as I have learned new skills and gained more knowledge. My future goal is to become a child psychologist.

Emily: My name is Emily and I am currently in my last year in KPU. I am majoring in Psychology and minoring in History. Before I started working in the lab, I knew about the lab through my professors because they would encourage us to visit the lab to do various research studies for bonus marks. I have been working in the lab since Oct 2009 and have enjoyed working there ever since. The most interesting thing would be able to meet all the students from the Psych Department and getting to know them a bit more. I think that working in the lab gave me an opportunity to interact more closely with the students as well as professors; it is also a **chance for students to learn** from what I know and for me to learn from what they know. My experience in the lab can give me more experience not only to better my communication with other people, but also give me firsthand experience on how to perform many Psychology related things (i.e., know how a research study is done).

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Assoon, M., **Bhatt, G., Tweed, R., Reichl, A.,** Dooley, S. (June, 2010). *Actor-Observer bias in perception of violence.*

Poster presentation at the annual meeting of the Canadian Psychological Association, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Atance, C., **Bernstein, D.M.,** & Meltzoff, A.N. (2010). Thinking about false belief: It's not just what children say, but how long it takes them to say it. *Cognition*, 116, 297–301. doi: 10.1016/j.cognition.2010.05.008.

Bernstein, D.M., Pernat, N., & Loftus, E.F. (2010). The false memory diet: False memories alter food preference.

V.R. Preedy (Ed.). *Handbook of behavior, food, and nutrition.* New York: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-0-387-92271-3_107.

Bhatt, G. (2010, June). *Reducing youth gang violence: Using the Popular Media, Forums, and other Means of Reaching out to the Community at Large.* Pathways to Resilience II Conference. Halifax, Canada.

Bhatt, G., Tweed, R., Dooley, S. (2010). *Strength-based approaches to youth gang prevention in BC.* Community Consultation Paper - External Report; Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, BC. Also available on-line <http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/crimeprevention/publications/docs/gang-prevention-youth-strength-based.pdf>.

Bhatt, G., Tweed, R., Dooley, S. (March, 2010). *Exploring strength-based approaches to address youth gang involvement.* Victim Services and Crime Prevention: Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

- Charlton, S., & Lyburner, J.A.** (in press). Psychological literacy: A Canadian perspective. In J. Cranney and D. Dunn (Eds.), *Educating the Psychologically Literate Citizen: Global Perspectives*. Oxford University Press.
- Charlton, S.** (2010, April). *Passport identification of children and infants*. Paper presented at the Australian Experimental Psychology Conference, Melbourne, Australia.
- Dahl, D., **Austin, K.**, & Wagner, B. (2010). Negative career thoughts through adulthood. *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal*, 25(4).
- Deo, M. S., & **Lyburner, J.A.** (in press). Personality Traits and Psychological Health Concerns: The Search for Psychology Student Syndrome. *Teaching of Psychology*.
- Drake, S., **Bhatt, G.**, & **Podrouzek, W.** (November, 2010). *Trans-sexualism: A cross-comparison study of mental distress*. Poster presented at the Innovations in Gender, Sex, and Health Research Conference, Ottawa, Canada.
- Leveque, H. R., & **Pedersen, C. L.** (May, 2010). *Emerging adulthood: An age of experimentation or sexual-self focus?* Poster presented at the annual Association for Psychological Science, Boston, MA.
- Lyburner, J. A.** (November, 2010). *Mental Illness and Emergency Dispatch*. Workshop presented at the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials Conference, Vancouver, BC.
- Lyburner, J. A.**, Liang, W. & Leveque, H. R. (May, 2010). *Fear or fair: Factors impacting faculty reactions to student entitlement*. Poster presented at the annual Association for Psychological Science, Boston, MA.
- Nourkova, V.V., & **Bernstein, D.M.** (2010). Why historical becomes personal: Spontaneous historical content of individual autobiographical memory. In Y.P. Zinchenko and V.F. Petrenko (Eds.), *Psychology in Russia: State of the art. Scientific yearbook* (pp. 257-277). Moscow: Lomonosov Moscow State University; Russian Psychological Society.
- Othman, A., & **Shah, A.A.** (2009). Parental overprotection and psychological problems among chronically ill children. In R. Ismail, M.E.J. Macapagal, N.M. Noor, J. Takai, & T. Hur (Eds.), *Global Issues and challenges in a changing world: Psychological, cultural and group relationships* (pp. 343-363). Kota Kinabalu: Centre for Research and Innovation, Universiti Malaysia Sabah.
- Shah, A.A.**, & Othman, A. (2010). *Psychological problems in Malaysian children with chronic illnesses-disease-related factors*. Proceeding of 2010 International Conference on Behavioral, Cognitive and Psychological Sciences, Singapore.
- Strange, D., Garry, M., & **Bernstein, D.M.**, & Lindsay, D.S. (2010). Photographs cause false memories for the news, *Acta Psychologica*. doi:10.1016/j.actpsy.2010.10.006.

Tweed, R. G., Bhatt, G., Dooley, S., Spindler, A., Douglas, K. S., & Viljoen, J. (in press). Youth violence and positive psychology: Research potential through integration. *Canadian Psychology*.

Tweed, R. G., & Tweed, C. J. (in press). Positive emotion following spousal bereavement: Desirable or pathological? *Journal of Positive Psychology*.

Tweed, R. G. (2010, January). *[How] should psychological scientists select beliefs?* Colloquium presented at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey, Canada.

Tweed, R. G., Saffari, N., & Pernat, N. (January, 2010). *Social support deficits moderated by emotional instability and intrusive thoughts.* Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Las Vegas, NV.

Tweed, R. G. (June, 2010). *Reducing youth gang violence: Learning about strengths that protect kids.* Facilitated discussion presented at the Pathways to Resilience II Conference, Halifax, Canada.

Tweed, R. G., Bhatt, G., Dooley, S., Spindler, A., Douglas, K., Viljoen, J. (August, 2010). *Youth violence and positive psychology: Research and applied potential through integration.* Paper presented at the Meaning Conference of the International Network on Personal Meaning, Richmond, Canada.

Tweed, R. G., Bhatt, G., Dooley, S., & Spindler, A. (November, 2010). *Reasons to not commit crimes.* Poster presented at the 2010 American Society of Criminology Meeting, San Francisco, CA.

Yon, Y., **Anderson, L., Lyburner, J., Marasigan, J.,** Savage, R., Campo, M., McCloskey, R., & Mandville-Anstey, S. A. (in press). Is ageism in university students associated with elder abuse? *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*.

FACULTY AWARDS

CONGRATULATIONS



to Dr. Gira Bhatt, recipient of an award for "Excellence in Research Innovation" at a dinner gala hosted by RBC/Mehfil Magazine;

October 2, 2010.



Psychology Faculty ~ March 2011

(Screen image from left to right) - Susana Phillips, Susan Thompson, Evan Lopes, John Marasigan
 (Standing from left to right) - Steve Charlton, Arleigh Reichl, Kevin Hamilton, Bob McDonald, Larry Anderson,
 Cory Pedersen, Richard Le Grand, Roger Tweed
 (Sitting from left to right) - Danny Bernstein, Betsy Spaulding, Jocelyn Lymburner, Ivy Ng (Psychology Lab), Ash-
 iq Shah, David Froc, Kyle Matsuba, Karen Parhar, Wayne Podrouzek

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