



# Out of Our Minds...

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## *Out of my mind ...*

*E. Brimacombe, Department Chair*

I have a fridge magnet that reads, 'Remember what is important to you'. If I put on my 'Chair hat' and consider that directive, my mind, seeking something short and snappy, brings various slogans to mind. From Greyhound Bus Lines: Your driver: Safe, Reliable, Courteous. From the side of the NYPD squad car: Courtesy, Professionalism, Respect. Hmm, what 3 words would I choose to frame the name plate on my office door ... I've got it! Your Chair: Light-hearted, Open, Positive.

**Light-hearted.** My funny bone is my backbone. As Dr. Seuss said, "Today was good. Today was fun. Tomorrow is another one." My sense of humour allows me to live that sentiment.

**Open.** I choose that word because to me it says a lot: optimistic, flexible, curious, adventurous, creative. I think of an open window on a sunny day. The window is at ground-level. It is easy to step through and experience what's on the other side.

**Positive.** This is the realm of joie de vivre, glass half-full, expect good things and you're apt to get 'em piece of my motto. To me, an important facet of this sentiment is caring to notice positive things and being mindful of not holding those thoughts to myself. In particular, I am concerned about expressing praise and gratitude to others.

I recently read an article cautioning parents about the danger of heaping too much praise on children lest they develop an inflated sense of esteem and constantly look outward for others to provide them with a sense of pride in their accomplishments. The article said parents are saying "good job" too often. I think that when we flip the context to our adult work environment, there is benefit to encouraging "good job" statements to one another. My sense is that "good job" acknowledgements come to us too infrequently – at the end of a long and winding road of 'revise and resubmit' before an article finally makes it to press, at the end of the chug to the finish line of Master's or PhD degree requirements, at retirement, at graduation.

I suspect there is room for "good job" sentiments to spice our lives/our psyches without risk of creating an ego-inflated culture of self-congratulatory craziness. I propose we test this hunch of mine ...

## A Hearty Cheer for Dr. Jim Tanaka!

Jim is this year's **winner** of the Faculty of Social Science's **Research Excellence Award!** Jim's praises will be sung at a reception Friday March 30<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 – 5 pm.

Kudos to you Jim on this well-deserved honour!



The creative force behind PSOVIPS.  
Learn more on p. 5





Dr. Key Sun will speak at the Social Seminar Series April 10 Cornett A228, 3 pm. The title of his talk is “*Taoist Psychology: A New Social-Cognitive Model for Understanding and Overcoming Interpersonal and Mental Conflicts*”. Everyone Welcome!

## Visiting Scholar, Key Sun

By J. Stepaniuk

Dr. Key Sun, a professor at Central Washington University, is spending a sabbatical year in Victoria. It is Psychology's good fortune to have him engaged with our Department. Dr. Sun is writing a book concerning one of his areas of research: *Correctional Counseling and Offender Treatment*. Dr. Sun says he has enjoyed his time in Victoria immensely. “I love the academic community and the cultural atmosphere of the city. In particular I loved being at the top of Mount Douglas. It is the most beautiful place I have been to in Victoria.”

Dr. Sun was born in Beijing where he obtained his Bachelor of Law. He has since lived in the United States for 22 years. Dr. Sun earned a Masters/PhD in Psychology and a MA in Criminal Justice from Rutgers University, and a Masters of Social work from the University of Illinois. He now teaches in the Law and Justice Department at Central Washington University.

Dr. Sun's research interests include *Causes of Prejudice; Hate Crimes, and the treatment of Depression and Anxiety*. Dr. Sun sees the varied facets of his research program as united within Taoist psychology.

As Dr. Sun's time at UVic draws to close, we wish him well in his future endeavours and thank him for his contributions to the many psychology events he has supported during his time in Victoria.

Please plan to attend Dr. Sun's talk, April 10<sup>th</sup> @ 3 pm, Cornett A228.

## Psi Chi News

### -Kyle Mathewson, Psi Chi President reports ...

While the semester draws to a turbulent close, with assignments upon exams and readings galore, UVic Psi Chi continues to push forward. Since our last update, we have held a very successful bake sale that raised over \$100 in part for the UVic family center. Thank you to all who assisted with sales and baking, and to those who enjoyed the delicious treats. We recently also welcomed PhD student Sharon Livingstone for a graduate school information session, and held a skating social night at Oak Bay Recreation center.

Our young chapter of Psi Chi continues to foster international recognition for our achievements. Janet Stepaniuk, our past president, was successful in her bid for an undergraduate research conference grant.

Our chapter has received \$1000 dollars to put towards the first annual Psychology Students of Vancouver Island Poster Session (PSOVIPS) being held on April 5th from 3:00 to 5:00 in the Arbutus/Queenswood room of Cadboro Commons Conference Centre. This showcase will feature research posters from this years psychology honors class, from undergraduate students doing personal research projects, and from students from all over Vancouver Island. This showcase will be followed by a Keynote address from Dr. Alan Kingstone of UBC.

We have also recently been granted the Psi Chi Chapter Webpage Award for our beautiful and informative website, along with a prize of \$200. Three Psi Chi chapters are chosen each year whose sites best embody the mission of Psi Chi. Upcoming chapter events, job opportunities, and links can all be found at

<http://web.uvic.ca/~psichi/>.

Finally we are currently in the process of electing a new Executive board for the upcoming 2007-08 academic year. This new group of leaders will undoubtedly continue to lead our chapter towards excellence and achievement, providing valuable and useful support for our members and the department. As this year draws to a close, I would like to thank everyone involved for their assistance and support with Psi Chi. I envision, in the coming years, Psi Chi playing an ever increasing role at UVic, and it is all of your unwavering dedication and support that will continue to make this a reality.

## Why am I a Teaching Assistant for University 102? *By Janet Stepaniuk*

You may recall from the last newsletter, an article written by project coordinator Becky Cory detailing “University 102” which offers a first year level university class that introduces students to topics in the Social Sciences, such as analytic thinking, sociology, anthropology and psychology. The class is free to adults whom otherwise would not be able to attend and where the value is placed on their real life experience. I am a TA for this course and I want to take a moment to tell you what the experience has meant to me.

When I first saw the advertisement for volunteer TA’s, I had some background knowledge to what the program was about, and what it stood for, and I believed strongly in the premise for the program, so I sent out my application. I have always believed firmly in volunteering in the capacity you are capable of and I believed that as a TA I had a lot to offer. Anyone that knows me knows how much I love being a TA and my interactions with the students. However, being a TA in a regular university course generally refers to what you can give to the students. During this program it has become readily evident of not what I can give to the program but what the program has given to me.

I still remember the first night when the students introduced themselves and as I listened intently it became readily evident the importance of this course. Perhaps the most striking example was of a student who went on to explain that he had dropped out of school in grade 9. He was now in his thirties and after completing University 101 (the prior program that focused on the humanities) he had achieved the confidence in himself to continue his high school education and he was now almost finished grade 10. Now to most of us that may seem miniscule but for me his words spoke volumes to what he had accomplished. Amidst his struggles with life, and there were and still are many, he had begun to believe that a better education was something that he strived for. Most importantly, he believed he could do it.

This is only the story of one. Every person’s story is unique, every voice speaks to me and I am in awe of each and every student; where they have come from and more importantly where they want to go. In working with someone with Traumatic Brain Injury, a person who is legally blind, or with an individual climbing out of challenging circumstance, I have learned to adapt and teach to a diversity of learning styles. Each week I look in the eyes of the students intently staring into the faces of the visiting professors, absorbing the knowledge that many of us take for granted. For many we have come from a background where university is expected or certainly it is an option. For those who apply to this program, the path has not been so easy.

As we laugh over our evening meal, exchange stories on life, or we ponder the discussion questions; with these students I am grateful and humbled for the opportunity to be among them. They have taught me that life, and education, is never to be taken for granted. These students appreciate, value, and need what University 101/102 has to offer. More importantly they have reminded me of why I chose to study psychology, the discipline of the individual, and why I hope to continue my involvement with the program.

*“I taught one piece of the Psychology content module in University 102 this spring. Like Janet, I feel humble and grateful for my opportunity to get to know the students. The strong current of enthusiasm for learning among the group was palpable and invigorating to me. At 9 pm, the official end time for class, the lively buzz of discussion was still going strong. I’ve attended workshops on how to light discussion fires in the classroom, but Uni 102 posed to me the challenge of how to draw the curiosity-fuelled discussion to a close.” -Liz Brimacombe*



### Psychology’s Rising Stars

January 30, 2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year scholarship winners were honoured at the Faculty of Social Sciences’ Rising Stars Event.

Pictured here are some of the bright stars in Psychology’s galaxy!

## If you're happy and you know it ...

*Dr. Julie Rodgers shares news of a creative class activity*

In Dr. Julie Rodgers' Psyc 413B (Social Cognition) class, small groups of students design and lead the entire class through a workshop on topics related to social cognition (in this case, structural racism, social inequality, and social comparison processes). The workshops focus on creativity and experiential learning. For example, in the workshop depicted below, the students were randomly assigned to "privileged" and "underprivileged" groups, and they worked on creating a mobile. (The students were not told about their status in advance, of course). The privileged groups were provided with superior resources (e.g., colored paper, stars, feathers, etc.) and the underprivileged groups were given very little in the way of material resources. The students then created the mobiles and rated their overall quality. Notably, most of the privileged students *failed to notice* that they were materially advantaged in this fictitious society. The underprivileged students reported that they lacked motivation to complete the task and they were envious of the privileged groups. The workshop then served as a basis for discussion on structural racism in Canadian society and upward/downward social comparison processes. Students practiced their presentation and public speaking skills, and of course, had a lot of fun! The project materials are also being provided to a local high school teacher so that she may use them in her class.



"Underprivileged Group"



"Privileged Group"

*Some of the mobiles created by students are displayed in the glass case in our Department*

## Coming April 5<sup>th</sup>: Psychology Students of Vancouver Island Poster Session

At the first annual Psychology Students of Vancouver Island Poster Session, or PSOVIPS, a select group of advanced undergraduate Psychology majors will present their research to faculty, classmates and the wider Vancouver Island community. The 25 presenters will include students in UVic's Honours Psychology program and students who have completed independent studies courses at UVic or at Malaspina University-College.

This year's PSOVIPS event will take place at UVic in the Arbutus/Queenswood room of Cadboro Commons Conference Centre on **Thursday, April 5** from 3:00 to 5:00. The poster session will be followed by a Keynote Address by Professor Alan Kingstone of UBC, a renowned cognitive neuroscientist (and a very entertaining speaker). Prof. Kingstone's address will be in the lecture hall of the Harry Hickman Building. See [www.uvic.ca/maps](http://www.uvic.ca/maps).

A major aim of PSOVIPS is to promote public awareness of the cutting-edge scientific psychological research being conducted by Vancouver Island undergraduate students. Students' projects explore such areas as human memory, children's cognitive development, interpersonal social interactions, and electrophysiological analyses of brain processes.

PSOVIPS, a student-oriented and student-run event, is sponsored by UVic's Learning and Teaching Centre and is funded in part by Psi Chi, the honours society for psychology students. There are a thousand chapters of Psi Chi in the U.S., and the first Psi Chi chapter outside the U.S. was established at UVic in 2003. Janet Stepaniuk, President of UVic's Psi Chi Chapter from 2005-2006, received a grant from Psi Chi to support PSOVIPS 2007.

**Get curious about PSOVIPS!**

**3 members of the 06-07 Honours class share news of their research ventures ...**

**From Honours Student  
Alison Read:**



“The Honors program was an excellent opportunity to become involved in research and learn from my supervisor. For my thesis, I was curious about the relationship between protective and risk parenting practices and youth experiences of victimization and bullying. I found the results very interesting, with parental psychological control emerging as a strong risk factor in youth bully-victim behaviors. As well, protective parenting practices predicted lower levels of youth bullying and victimization. These results suggest that bullying intervention programs should consider including parental involvement to increase their success.”

**From Honours Student Aiden Arnold:  
The Self in Time**

“Humans possess a unique ability to mentally time travel in to the past and the future. Subjectively, the arrow of time is not always straight; we can loop back to re-experience past events and jump forward to imagine events that might happen. For my thesis, I chose to look at the role self perception plays in how we experience past and future events. I was interested in seeing if changes in a person's self concept influenced the subjective experiences of remembered and imagined events. That is, does the ability to mentally represent oneself in the past and future impinge in some way on the self concept that we project?”

**From Honours Student Lara Pierce:**

“For my research I investigated the relationship between error detection and reinforcement learning, so basically looking at what happens in the brain when we make mistakes, and how this relates to the way we learn. To do this we measured the electrical activity of the brain while people learned. We found that before they learned they had to rely on the feedback we gave them to know when they had made a mistake, but once they had learned an internal mechanism let them know when they made a mistake. This could actually be seen in their brains as specific patterns of electrical activity!”

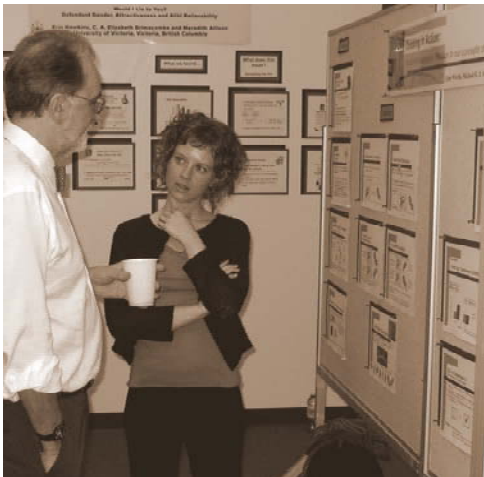
**Mark your calendar!**  
PSOVIPS runs April 5<sup>th</sup>  
3 – 5 pm  
Cadboro Commons.



**Everyone Welcome!**

**The way we were ....**

**Honours Program Graduates, Lisa Worth and Katie Paterson share their reflections.**



Lisa’s reflections next page ...



Katie shares: "The Honours program; the research, the posters, the presentations, the paper, the people, was the best academic experience I ever had".

## The Psychology Honours Experience: Lisa Worth reminisces

I remember a particular type of camaraderie consolidating among our group as we all began to prepare our posters for big end-of-the-year honours poster session. The same earnestness that was put into learning the criteria for Bonferroni's corrections and editing our NSERC applications was now applied to finding the best deal on glue sticks and colour printing. There were last minute crises getting multi-page banner headings to match up and finding double-sided tape that actually fulfilled its promise.

We had cleared most of the hurdles set in place for us that year. Lit' reviews, methods and results sections were nestled safely in our adviser's inboxes. All of our final oral presentations had been made and we had already traveled as a group to one conference.

All we had left was this one little poster session.

It reminded a lot us of a grade six science fair. Except now, pressed and pleated, we stood not in front of Styrofoam solar systems and baking soda volcanoes but F-ratios and titles like "Napping Sleep Onset Latency: The Impact of Napping Habits and Nap Furniture". Unlike the crayoned charts of pea plant growth cycles, these posters represented a whole year of work. We didn't make these at our parent's dining room table and they likely weren't finished before bedtime.

Like the fairs in grade six, this poster session seemed more about the process than the actual results. That we were there and interested and willing to commit to the process was enough to change the way formerly distant faculty members interacted with us. We were spoken to like colleagues and an expertise and knowledge set was assumed of us and respectfully sought out. Some of us had results that were publishable; some of us had a lot of "suggestions for future research". At this stage of the game, we did not need to have been the one to discover the rings of Saturn or the laws of heritability to be warmly welcomed into the scientific community.

There were carrot sticks and Doritos, high heels and track pants; discussions of research and invitations for beer. People asked us questions about our stats, our general interest in psychology, our plans for grad' school and beyond. Liz brought cookies and made a presentation that summed up the year in pictures. We were reminded of the intimately familiar after-hours entrance to the computer lab, our early summary presentations and the mysterious "lampshade incident" behind the fire alarm at the UBC dorms.

The day was a summing up, a welcoming in and an ushering onward.

We were proud of our accomplishments, relieved that the end was in sight, confident that the discussion section revision that we had to write that night would be the last... Rather than another hurdle to jump or task to accomplish – participating in the poster session was a marker that we had already made it.

Like the gym on the day of the grade six science fair, the poster session is a day of changing landscapes. Seeing a familiar space and set of people transformed to something else – outside of the usual routines of running laps, basketball drills, multiple choice tests and APA formatting. Psychology as a discipline had changed from assimilating what is known to stretching the borders of what could be. Our posters indicated that for us, the scientific method was no longer just a tidy set of steps to recite on an exam – it is far more messy, surprising and mysterious. We had moved from a focus on the tedium to a re-construction of the big picture of just what we had been doing all year. When professors visited our posters it was not with the usual eye of evaluation but with genuine gratitude that we understood the difficulties of empirical research and yet still stood as ambassadors for it.

## What are your plans for the summer?

Members of PSYC 565 share their thoughts .....



**Dr. David Hultsch** – Relax on Pender, Play Golf, Work



**Megan Caines** – Joining the circus (probably in Europe)



**Mike Miller** – I'll be attending various weddings with a variety of facial hair combinations (and then there is Europe)



**James Allen** – Going to Europe, researching, getting lost on trails through the forest



**Robin Yates** – Going to Europe (Amsterdam) and defending my thesis



**Janet Stepaniuk** – Walking the boardwalk (yes, in Victoria... while everyone else goes to Europe)

### Get the details ...

**About University 102:** Contact Becky Cory, University 101 Project Coordinator at 361-7014 or [uni101@uvic.ca](mailto:uni101@uvic.ca). You can also check out the website at [www.uvic.ca/uni101](http://www.uvic.ca/uni101) or look in the current Continuing Studies Calendar.

**About PSOVIPS:** Visit the Psi Chi website: <http://web.uvic.ca/~psichi/>

About the **Brain and Cognition Seminar:** <http://web.uvic.ca/psyc/cognitive/seminar.html>

About the **Social Psychology Seminar:** <http://web.uvic.ca/psyc/social-seminars.html>

About **PSYCHOS** (Undergraduate Psychology Student Society): <http://web.uvic.ca/~psychos/>

About **Psi Chi** (National Honour Society in Psychology): <http://web.uvic.ca/~psichi/>

### Got news?

The next edition of this Newsletter awaits your contribution!  
Please send ideas and information to me @ [psychair@uvic.ca](mailto:psychair@uvic.ca)



See you at  
**PSOVIPS!**  
☺ Liz