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Psi Chi’s Big 5: A Plan for Action

I joined Psi Chi years ago for the same reasons most members join today: to have a credential for my resumé and apply for an award or grant. I have since learned that we belong to one of the largest and most dynamic honor societies that offers so much more than I had expected. One of the most significant benefits is simply getting to know others who share interests in psychology. In the months ahead, I will represent Psi Chi at a half dozen conventions where I will meet some bright, motivated, and interesting people. Funny how the best part of membership has little to do with a line on my resumé or that research award I received a few years back.

Regrettably, I just had to decline an invitation to a student-run conference last month because of a scheduling conflict. However, the organizers were kind enough to ask me to share a brief message highlighting how Psi Chi serves its members and the discipline of psychology. I managed to generate a list of 19 items before realizing that the message was by no means “brief.” Coincidentally, my class had just discussed how personality psychologists have summarized the vast array of personality characteristics to five main traits that describe the unique personalities of each individual: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These are known as the Big 5, and they spell out the acronym OCEAN—a very effective mnemonic. Using some of the same reasoning, I determined that Psi Chi has its own Big 5 explaining the array of benefits and services. There is even a mnemonic acronym: PLAN A.

Publications and programming. Psi Chi has two main publications. You already know that Eye on Psi Chi shares news from other chapters and provides advice about education and career development. But how much do you know about our Journal? Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research accepts manuscripts with Psi Chi members as first author, whether that author is an undergraduate, graduate student, or faculty member. It is indexed in PsycINFO and EBSCO, and will be open access (completely free to readers and authors) as of July of this year. In addition to these publications, Psi Chi sponsors programming at conventions about career development, leadership, diversity, and other topics that parallel our publications.

Lifetime membership. One of the biggest misconceptions I encounter is that Psi Chi is for undergraduates only. It is true that Psi Chi emphasizes students, but that is because there are so few other organizations serving that role. However, there are a number of awards and grants for graduate students and faculty, and everyone is encouraged to get involved by publishing in the Journal and serving as advisors or coadvisors. Our partnerships are lifetime benefits as well. As an example, TherapySites provides discounted web services for practicing clinicians, a benefit solely applicable to our advanced members.

Awards, grants, and scholarships. Psi Chi provides members with access to over $400,000 annually in awards and grants. These fund research and convention travel; recognize successful research; and promote leadership, diversity, and chapter engagement. Last year, we were excited to roll out our first scholarships for undergraduate study.

Networking. Psi Chi has a presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter to keep everyone up to date. The LinkedIn account is especially good for career advice and contacts. To support long-term involvement and engagement, our innovative IT staff members are working on a career board that will include announcements for employment and internships. This will allow businesses, universities, and agencies—especially where Psi Chi alumni are in supervisory positions—to recruit the best and brightest psychology majors. We expect this to be a premier destination for student members and graduates who are looking for employment, internships in business or government, or perhaps a summer research experience at another university.

Action. This last item might be the most important of all. The A for Action is a reminder that it is up to you to take advantage of these opportunities and benefits. There has yet to be a member who received a research grant or a scholarship without applying, or published an article without first submitting it for review. The truth is that, for every member I meet at a convention, there is another who has settled for the line on a resumé. It is unfortunate to see those opportunities missed, but I am happy that you are looking through the pages of the Eye today. That means that you are beginning to take action. I hope you will consider which of the benefits you plan to take advantage of in the upcoming months. The good news is that Psi Chi is a strong, growing organization that you can rely on. Once you have PLAN A, you won’t even need a PLAN B.
Career Engagement Through Networking

Networking and Why Is It Important?
Networking is the sharing of knowledge and resources for mutual benefit. People network to learn about professions, find jobs and internships, grow businesses, and enrich careers. Networking is an important skill for psychology undergraduates to develop.

1. It is estimated that more than 70% of jobs are filled through networking, many of which are not posted online (Morgan, 2014). Through networking, you can learn about psychology-related employment opportunities.

2. If you are not among the 20 to 25% of the psychology baccalaureates who will pursue graduate study in psychology (Hettich & Landrum, 2014), building a network of trustworthy contacts will help you learn about employment opportunities before graduation.

3. A psychology degree can be utilized in many occupations and professions. By exploring career paths through networking, you can learn how experienced professionals have utilized their degree in applied settings, enhance your self-awareness, and create “ah-ha” moments that lead to a career path.

In this article, you will learn the basics of building a network online and through informational networking interviews (INI). You will also become familiar with seven proactive behaviors that lead to networking and career success, and learn about a hypothetical networking model that focuses on psychological drive fulfillment.

The Basics of Building a Network
Networking on the Internet opens doors to new organizations, fields, and contacts at the click of a mouse. The emergence of LinkedIn® and hundreds of other sites and apps have enabled people who previously were limited by geographic or time constraints to network. On a LinkedIn profile, you can list career experiences, education, associations (e.g., Psi Chi) and your passions. You can also build a brand (your specialty) by commenting on articles and blogs. Locating individuals who may be able to help create career opportunities is no longer the primary challenge for beginner networkers. Instead, your challenge is to make networking a priority, learn networking skills, and invest time to develop meaningful relationships. The Internet is an excellent source to find new contacts and build relationships that can grow through face-to-face dialogue.

INIs are a productive way to learn about career paths and uncover job opportunities. During an INI, seek information by asking questions, based on your prior research, about another’s career path, expertise, and passions. INIs can also be utilized to learn about organizations, psychology careers, and potential network contacts. Students can ask experienced practitioners how networking has impacted their career growth or even how to solve a problem. INIs can also lead to referrals to other professionals who can also support your growth and goal achievement.

Seven Proactive Networking Behaviors

1. Develop Networking Goals
Just as finding internships and employment are common goals set by upcoming and recent graduates, so also is establishing a networking action plan. Networking goals can be attached to existing or potential contacts, target organizations, events, social media usage, or other networking resources. Goals have a higher likelihood of being achieved if they are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART; Kaye, 1997). A best practice after setting networking goals is to share them with someone else who will periodically check with you on your progress. Consider the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Networking Goal</th>
<th>Supporting Resources</th>
<th>Projected Completion Date</th>
<th>Actual Completion Date</th>
</tr>
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2. Develop a Brand
Personal branding is a proactive career behavior that influences your ability to be sought after for career opportunities. A good first step is to create and share your career interests and specific work-related accomplishments on sites such as LinkedIn and Research-Gate. Sharing articles; research ideas; internship, volunteer, or club experiences; and career interests with classmates and new connections is another step to begin building your brand through networking. As you gain work experience, your brand will evolve, and these tips will help you to get started.

3. Develop and Manage Relationships
Developing meaningful networking relationships is the most important and enjoyable proactive networking behavior. Such relationships can be characterized by mutual trust and respect, knowledge of each other’s career interests and goals, and a genuine interest in helping the other individual.

4. Establish Trust
Establishing trust is a prerequisite to successful networking because people like to help people they can trust. Begin building trust after making a new networking contact by promising to follow up by e-mail. Networking offers individuals the opportunity to surround themselves with contacts who are trustworthy, which may increase overall career satisfaction and engagement. Following through on small commitments and building a network of trustworthy contacts will lead to successful networking.

5. Provide and Receive Referrals
Referral networking is commonly used in job search and career development. In job search, after rapport and trust is established, you can ask someone currently employed at a company you are interested in to “refer” you to the hiring manager for a position(s) of interest. Applicants referred by internal employees have a higher likelihood of being interviewed. Equally important is providing...
Wisdom From the Workplace
John Jameson

Networking and Psychological Drive Fulfillment

Many employees who are early in their careers face a dual challenge from their work; they find their work to be inherently unfulfilling and have limited prospects for career advancement. The Career Engagement Networking Model (CENM; see Figure 1) may offer these workers a road map through this dual challenge. Networking, when understood as a process that leads to jobs while fulfilling psychological drives, may enable individuals to take ownership and drive fulfillment.

John Jameson is an executive recruiter with Creative Financial Staffing in Chicago. Jameson has 10 years of recruiting and career development experience. He received a bachelor’s in industrial/organizational psychology from DePaul University (IL) in 2004, and will receive a master’s in industrial/organizational psychology from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology in July 2016.

Figure 1
Career Engagement Networking Model

6. Reciprocate
Reciprocity is a belief that when we receive help from someone, we should find ways to return the favor. Reciprocating is an important networking behavior because it shows gratitude for the initial favor received, demonstrates that the relationship works both ways, and deepens the exchange of resources in a network. Experienced networkers do not “keep score” of favor exchanges, although returning a favor can be gratifying. Begin by asking yourself, “Who has helped me accomplish a goal or solve a problem that I can now reciprocate?”

7. Pay It Forward
Paying it forward is a proactive networking behavior whereby one person helps another before receiving help from that individual. Helping others is a cornerstone of networking because one person must take the first step to help another. Psychology majors have a networking edge over other majors because we have learned the basics of human motivation and needs through coursework. Real networking is about understanding the goals and drives of others, and finding ways to make others successful, not just yourself. Paying it forward can be a rewarding networking activity because many of us declared psychology as a major because we value helping others. Networking is give and take, which means that, in order to receive help, you must also find ways to help others be successful.

Networking and Psychological Drive Fulfillment

Many employees who are early in their careers face a dual challenge from their work; they find their work to be inherently unfulfilling and have limited prospects for career advancement. The Career Engagement Networking Model (CENM; see Figure 1) may offer these workers a road map through this dual challenge. Networking, when understood as a process that leads to jobs while fulfilling psychological drives, may enable individuals to take ownership and drive fulfillment.

In sum, networking is an excellent way to uncover job opportunities and explore career paths. Start now by building a network of trustworthy contacts who can accelerate your career growth and trajectory. Which of the seven proactive networking behaviors will be your first step toward accomplishing career goals and drive fulfillment?

References

Paul Hettich, PhD, Professor Emeritus at DePaul University (IL), was an Army personnel psychologist, program evaluator in an education R&D lab, and a corporate applied scientist—positions that created a “real world” foundation for his career in college teaching and administration. He was inspired to write about college-to-workplace readiness issues by graduates and employers who revealed a major disconnect between university and workplace expectations, cultures, and practices. You can contact Paul at phettich@depaul.edu
**A National Mental Health Epidemic in South Korea: What Needs to Change and Why It Matters**

“Teacher, I need to diet! I am so fat!” “Teacher, I don’t like my nose; my mom says I should get surgery when I am older, so I can marry a rich husband.” These are just some of the many grievances I heard from my elementary school students during my 3-year stint as an English teacher in South Korea. Hearing young students engage in such painful self-deprecation may signal a sense of alarm to the average American, but hearing these types of statements were par for the course living in Korea, a country where physical appearance is a proxy for success and self-worth in the eyes of others, where external aspects of the self are considered superior to the internal, and where image and reputation play a heavy role in defining status in a competitive society.

As a Korean-American born to immigrant parents in Orange County, California, my time in South Korea was intended to serve as a time of reconnection with my roots and coming to a better understanding of the intergenerational struggles I had endured with my parents growing up as an Asian American teenager in a European American society. While in Korea, I developed a deep sense of cultural understanding of the Korean people and came to respect and admire many of their positive cultural qualities such as their strong work ethic and sense of steadfast loyalty to close others. However, I was also struck by the more despondent sides of Korea that painted a very different picture of the country than the one I had envisioned.

Korea is often considered to be the glamorous, flashy, entertainment capital of Asia with the growing influence of Korean pop stars (“k-pop stars”) and popular actors and actresses spreading throughout the rest of the continent in a movement now known as *Hallyu*, or Korean wave. This neologism refers to the increasing popularity of South Korean culture since the late 1990s, and is instrumental in defining Korea’s role as a major exporter of popular culture. This growth is also reflected in Korean’s incredible increasing popularity of South Korea since the late 1990s, and is instrumental in defining Korea’s role as a major exporter of popular culture. This growth is also reflected in Korean’s incredible economic development and global integration in the last several decades; the country’s GDP per capita was among that of the poorest countries of Africa and Asia in the 1960s, yet the country now boasts the world’s 12th largest economy with a GDP in the billions (Forbes, 2014). Despite the vast economic revitalization that South Korea has witnessed, there appears to be a wide gap between the glitz and glamor of this financial success and the poor mental health of its citizens that has accompanied this surge in growth.

South Korea has the highest suicide rate in the world among developed nations, at 28.9 per 100,000, and is second in the world exceeded only by Guyana (World Health Organization, 2012). Among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, Korea also ranks among the highest for divorce, alcohol consumption, and household debt (Cain, 2014). Often, Korean businessmen can be seen passed out on sidewalks or on subways after a night of binge drinking, behavior that is often fueled by a culture where obligatory drinking with higher-ups in the workplace constitutes a mandatory part of working life. The average Korean of drinking age takes 13.7 shots a week—more than any other country in the world, and followed far behind by Russia at 6.3 shots per week (Ferdman & King, 2014).

Additionally, students are part of a cutthroat educational system practically out of the womb where mothers enroll their children in English lessons before they even learn how to walk. This competitive educational culture essentially consumes the lives of Korean youth as students attend after-school academies until midnight as part of their daily routine and are forced to one-up each other for entry into the highly limited amount of prestigious universities in the country. Entry into one of these universities is contingent upon a 9-hour examination, the *sunghye*, which can be seen as a higher stakes, stress-inducing version of the American SAT that will essentially determine one’s fate in life. An unsatisfactory score on the exam has ramifications for life, indicating a failure to attend a top university, a failure to find a suitable job and partner for marriage, and a failure to live up to the expectations of one’s family.

The excessive emphasis placed on body image and appearance by the young Korean population also cannot be understated—Korea is the most diet-conscious of the 13 Asian countries in the OECD, and studies have shown that Korean women place greater importance on appearance and are more critical of their bodies than their U.S. counterparts (Jung & Forbes, 2006; Jung & Lee, 2006). This body image dissatisfaction epidemic manifests in the thousands of plastic surgery clinics scattered throughout the upscale districts of Seoul, where “two-for-one” eye and nose job procedures are akin to getting braces or contact lenses in the United States. Both men and women alike have been known to walk into plastic surgery clinics requesting the facial features of their favorite Korean celebrity as if choosing items off of a restaurant menu. TV shows featuring the before and after experiences of plastic surgery recipients are also extremely popular.

With the slew of personal, cultural, academic, and economic pressures that are endemic to Korean life and have put the country on the top of many “negative” lists, it bears questioning why a country that appears to be on the brink of a national nervous breakdown is so opposed to seeking help. This is even more questionable considering the fact that Koreans are typically quick
to adopt Western cultural practices such as smartphones, the use of Facebook, and cosmetic surgery procedures. Despite this, Koreans appear heavily reluctant to adopt Western psychotherapy practices, and publicly acknowledging personal difficulties and reaching out for assistance is considered extremely taboo. Korean families experience strong feelings of family shame and social stigma associated with mental illness (Shin & Lukens, 2002) that are deeply rooted in their adherence to Confucian values such as stoicism, modesty, and preserving dignity for the family in the face of difficult circumstances. Such cultural values serve to further drive South Koreans into isolation and an inner world of turmoil where maladaptive forms of coping (e.g., alcoholism) may develop in the absence of other socially acceptable responses (Chou et al., 2012; Kim, Wiechelt, & Kim, 2010).

These issues are not outside our realm of knowledge or exposure in the United States—a simple Internet search of any of the aforementioned phenomena brings up dozens of popular newspaper and magazine articles on the state of mental health in South Korea. Popular headlines from The New York Times and The Global Post read, “Stressed and Depressed, Koreans Avoid Therapy” and “Why South Koreans Are Killing Themselves in Droves” (Cain, 2014; McDonald, 2011). Additionally, a growing Korean-American population in the United States faces many of the same issues and barriers to seeking help, serving to bring these issues closer to home. Similar to Koreans living abroad, this population espouses the suppression of individual emotions for the sake of the collective group with disclosure of mental anguish or pain coming at a high cost. Turning to mental health professionals only comes as a last resort with most Korean Americans preferring to turn to more informal social networks such as family, friends, and the church community for help.

So what does this mean for the psychology community in the United States? As a country where psychology as a discipline is arguably one of the most well-developed worldwide, we hold a professional responsibility to educate ourselves about the mental health concerns that occupy other parts of the world, and to then actively engage with these issues in a relevant way. We must foster international connections and academic exchange with researchers abroad, engaging in multicultural research endeavors and outreach that seek to cultivate awareness among the populace and develop means of increasing access to mental health care in culturally informed ways. International connections abroad can then be further harnessed to facilitate public policy change and stigma-reducing efforts within Korean governing bodies, thus beginning to alter the structure of how Korean mental health issues are conceptualized by the people on a broader level. However, it is only when we are armed with a careful, thorough cultural knowledge that we will be able to use our profession in culturally competent, practically meaningful ways.

Although South Korea has endured years of hardship in the realm of mental health that is vastly at odds with its burgeoning economic success, I am hopeful that we will be able to have an active role in affecting change within education, research, and practice in a country that is, quite fortuitously, open to Western ideals and collaboration. Researchers in the United States might take steps to address the growing mental health concerns in Korea by engaging in research around social stigma and mental illness, as well as developing psychoeducation interventions that might be adapted for use with Korean populations to lessen the stigma associated with help-seeking. Mental health professionals who work in metropolitan areas with high numbers of Korean clients might seek additional multicultural competence training to learn ways that mental health issues can be reframed in culturally acceptable ways that reduce barriers to help-seeking (e.g., highlighting biological aspects of mental illness that may constitute a more acceptable reason to seek help). These steps taken by mental health professionals might serve to foster more positive associations with help-seeking, separating it from personal or familial shame. It is no longer congruent with the helping nature of our profession to stand on the sidelines and watch an entire country suffer before our eyes—our profession demands a responsibility that we care, that we initiate, and that we persist in our efforts to stimulate change.

References

Stacy Ko, MSW, is a second-year, Korean-American doctoral student in the counseling psychology program at Iowa State University. Born and raised in Southern California, Ko received her BA in psychology and communication studies, and her master of social work from the University of California, Los Angeles. In between her undergraduate and master’s education, she spent time living and working in South Korea as an English teacher where she gained an interest in mental health issues specific to the Korean population. Her current research interests in perfectionism and body image concerns affecting the South Korean college student population will take her to Korea this spring, where she will conduct a study as part of an international research endeavor in Seoul. Ko hopes to combine research, clinical, and teaching work upon graduating from her PhD program. In her free time, she enjoys yoga, cooking, watching documentaries, and engaging in other forms of self-care.
If an undergraduate psychology major or minor asked you as a current Psi Chi member why they should join Psi Chi, could you detail the benefits of membership? Take a minute to answer. If you find yourself struggling to articulate any benefits beyond “It’s a résumé builder,” please do not be too hard on yourself. I was once in your position. If you find yourself rattling off numerous benefits, skip ahead to the Professional Development section for strategies that the University of Findlay Psi Chi Chapter has found most effective in engaging and retaining members.

I do not fault those who could not come up with many benefits of Psi Chi participation simply because the benefits are not always initially apparent. This coincides with our discipline, psychology, which tends to prepare undergraduate majors and minors with soft skills that are not easily quantifiable. Although not quantitative, there are significant qualitative membership advantages, which I classify into two categories: professional development and opportunities. I also provide strategies for members to capitalize on all that Psi Chi has to offer.

**Professional Development**

Professional development sounds fantastic, but it is often just a better way of saying “It’s a résumé builder!” This may make you cringe, and believe me, I feel your pain. But whether we like to admit it or not, this may be the leading motivating factor for undergraduates to join Psi Chi. As members, let’s stop swimming upstream, list it as the benefit it is, and market all of the other advantageous benefits. Our chapter has embraced this reality with gusto and candor.

Every academic year, the chapter president e-mails all current members and essentially states: “If you only joined Psi Chi as a résumé builder, we understand. We will not hold it against you. Just let us know so we don’t expect your participation.” Then, the president challenges individuals who want to be active members to respond with their interests, thus requiring them to actively engage for the year. We then create our active members list with the expectation of regular attendance at our events and meetings, and involvement in our decision making.

**Membership Opportunities**

The other category of benefits of Psi Chi membership includes the plethora of opportunities that Psi Chi offers. These include increasing knowledge, developing skills, and networking. Simply by paying $55, Psi Chi members are provided with a wealth of information of possible opportunities for true professional development—not merely a participation ribbon. The Psi Chi publications discuss a variety of topics such as applying to grad school and innovative research findings. Grants, scholarships,
and awards for both individuals and chapters also provide great opportunities to fund your area of research and assist in covering school expenses.

Knowledge. Knowledge is power! Humans don’t know what they don’t know, and that was certainly the case with our chapter. We have educated ourselves and since taken advantage of many Psi Chi opportunities. I use published articles in my Conquering the Grad School App course, and our members have applied for undergraduate summer grants, the Model Chapter Award, and the Regional Faculty Advisor Award. Of these, our chapter has earned two Regional Research Awards, the Model Chapter Award for the last two years, and a Regional Faculty Advisor Award. I attribute the Regional Research Awards to the wonderful Psi Chi organization because all an undergraduate member has to do is submit an abstract for a regional convention, and Psi Chi takes care of the rest. Let me tell you, $300 to an undergraduate for simply submitting something they already planned to do is a win-win! What about our Model Chapter Award? I attribute those to another opportunity afforded through membership: skills development.

Skills development. I cannot stress enough the numerous benefits available to Psi Chi chapter officers in developing leadership and interpersonal skills. These are proficiencies that graduate schools and employers desire. They want individuals who can lead by example, manage their time, and work well with others. Officers practice these skills as undergraduates within a safe environment and under the tutelage of a faculty advisor. A motivated officer team is necessary for a conducive learning environment and establishing a community. I have had four different officer groups in my 2.5 years, and motivation is a significant factor! A strategy we utilize is encouraging our strongest members to run for office. Additionally, one of our officers applied for a summer research grant, although he did not receive it. He and his fellow officers then nominated me for the Regional Faculty Advisor Award. Had I not built a strong relationship with our members, the officer positions to that of a “compliance officer” whose main role is to make sure that the chapter is following all organization guidelines, especially for the Model Chapter Award. Our chapter did just that at our first summer officer retreat, and our earning the Model Chapter Award in the last two years has been the outcome of this small reorganization. Additionally, one of our officers applied for a summer research grant, although he did not receive it. He and his fellow officers then nominated me for the Regional Faculty Advisor Award. Had I not built a strong relationship with our members, neither of these awards would have been available to us.

In the words of the great Wayne Gretzky, “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.” I think this holds true for membership in Psi Chi. You have no idea the opportunities that membership could afford unless you join and participate. It could lead to your admittance to a graduate program, your next job, or a wider network of colleagues. The opportunities are vast, and the benefits incalculable.
Can you describe what you do at your job?
I am a matrimonial and child custody lawyer. My tasks run the gamut from mediation, collaborative law, litigation, negotiation, and child advocacy work as a court-appointed guardian ad litem or child attorney. I also represent parents and spouses.

How do you use your psychology training in that context?
Child developmental training is critical to effective child advocacy and client education. Having the ability to identify and diagnose psychological impairments is critical in obtaining services for clients, parents, and children, as well as creating resolutions people can adopt with confidence.

What did you want to be when you were a child?
A veterinarian.

What sort of student were you?
A dedicated honor student.

When did you first become interested in psychology?
In my freshman year of undergrad. When I started reading the textbook, it all seemed familiar to me. More often than not, I knew what was coming on the next page.

Did you have a mentor who helped you find your career path?
Yes. Drs. Stephen Neuwirth and Mary Nelson. They both expected me to perform beyond the course requirements. I felt as if I was more of a graduate student than an undergraduate. They both set a very high bar.

What sort of jobs did you have before you started your current employment?
I worked for two different multinational architectural and engineering firms in their project management.
What sort of personalities do you think are conducive with your career?
“A” type personalities and those who can be the center of attention with confidence. A court room is much like a theatrical stage.

Can you comment on flexibility and job satisfaction?
I am a partner in my own law firm, so I suppose you would think it is “flexible,” but much of my schedule is dictated by court scheduling. Working with children means catering to their schedules, so weekend and after-school hours are normal working hours for me.

How does your career benefit or improve society?
Helping families heal from a divorce or separation allows former partners to better understand how to effectively co-parent children, which in turn helps those children to approach adulthood in a meaningful and confident way. We want dysfunctional families to heal and become productive members of our society.

What is your favorite memory of being part of your Psi Chi chapter?
There was no Psi Chi chapter at WCSU when I attended in the late 1980s. I found that outrageous! So with the help of Dr. Mary Nelson, a Psi Chi chapter was created, and I was inducted as its first president.

Is there something that you know now that you wish you knew when you were in school?
I wish I had known that having a degree in psychology applies to far more career choices than that of being a psychologist or academic. There was no meaningful “career” training within the discipline during my course of study.

Personality Profile

Favorite psychology-related book: Elizabeth Kubler Ross’s book, On Death and Dying. The stages outlined apply directly to divorcing couples and separating parents. Understanding what stage a person is experiencing when I meet them professionally helps me to guide them to the next level.

Favorite band: This is an unfair question—I love so many. Right now, it’s probably The Foo Fighters. But The Beatles, Sting, and AC/DC are forever.

Favorite quote: Plan your work—then, work your plan.

Hobbies: I’m a Jamberry Independent Consultant, so I spend down time with that hobby, as well as herb gardening.

Early bird or night owl: Night owl, definitely.

Title of future memoir: Not in a million years.

D. Susanne Snearly was born and raised in Texas. Married to her law partner, Robert Cartoceti, she currently resides in Connecticut. Cartoceti and Snearly is a full-service law firm, however Susanne focuses exclusively on family law. She has been named one of the Top 10 Family Lawyers in Connecticut by the National Association of Family Law Attorneys for 2014 and 2015. She is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, a Connecticut and New England Super Lawyer from 2009 to 2015, and has published in the American Journal of Family Law.

A Milestone in Psi Chi History

Meet Romin Geiger, the 700,000th member in Psi Chi’s membership database. Romin is a junior psychology major at Tennessee State University who plans to pursue a PhD and become a child psychologist to help children with mental disorders.

He says, “I joined Psi Chi to gain a network of young aspiring students like me who aim to change the mental health of people all around the world. I am very excited to become a member of this prestigious organization.”
How to Properly Request Letters of Recommendation From Your Professors:

ASK, Don’t TELL

John Gomez, PhD
Our Lady of the Lake University (TX)
Requesting a letter of recommendation is a professional favor that you, as a junior colleague, should ask a senior colleague for with the respect and sensitivity characteristic of all professional interactions. One asks for a favor, one does not tell a professor what to do by simply dropping off a recommendation form. It is a common mistake to assume that professors will write a strong letter if you simply drop off a recommendation form in their mailbox or e-mail them a web link. If you have not confirmed a professor’s willingness to write your letter, the person may not follow through, or even worse, the person may write a negative letter—disastrous situations you might have avoided if you had talked with the professor first. A strong and effective letter of recommendation is the end product of a student-faculty partnership that you initiate. This article discusses how to properly request letters of recommendation—and how not to request them—with specific instructions and suggestions from some experienced professors.

Strong letters of recommendation are one of the most important parts of every student’s chances of success when applying to graduate school in psychology (APA, 2007). Good grades and test scores are an important start to earning admission to the graduate school of your dreams, but they are not enough by themselves. A perusal of Graduate Study in Psychology (APA, 2015) shows that most graduate programs in our field rate letters of recommendation as “high” in importance. Graduate admission committees are particularly impressed by letters of recommendation from faculty mentors with whom a student has worked closely (Buskist & Burke, 2007; Keith-Spiegel & Wiederman, 2000).

A letter of recommendation is a professional assessment of your potential to complete graduate work or perform successfully on the job. Letters should go beyond describing your classroom work (she’s an “A” student) because such basic information can be easily inferred from your academic transcript. The best kind of letters describe your devotion to research, to practice, or to a particular area of psychology; your ability to grasp difficult concepts and ideas; your “teachability” (i.e., whether you welcome corrective feedback); and your initiative and ambitions. They describe your strengths inside and outside of the classroom (e.g., your involvement in local Psi Chi chapter activities or in undergraduate research opportunities available at your university). Letters describing you only in the classroom suggest to admissions committees that you are not really committed enough to psychology to go beyond the minimum required classroom work. Strong letters of recommendation make your application more competitive, and weak or uninformative letters hurt your chances of being accepted into graduate school or successfully landing a job.

How to Properly Request Letters
Your professor must explicitly agree to write a strong letter of recommendation, and this results from your seeking a student-faculty partnership. Discuss it with the faculty member face-to-face. Do not just drop off forms to be filled out or send a web address for submitting the letter. You are negotiating with your letter writers when you meet in person to ask for a strong, enthusiastic letter of support. This respects professors’ right to say no, that they cannot write an enthusiastic letter for you. If that is the case, don’t hear this as a rejection but simply move on because an unenthusiastic letter may well have done more harm than good.

Send an e-mail to a prospective letter writer requesting to schedule a meeting to discuss your need for letters of recommendation. In that subsequent meeting, you will explain your career path, why you are applying to graduate school, and only then ask if the professor feels comfortable writing you a strong (use that word) letter of recommendation. Writing these letters takes a considerable amount of time, so always approach potential letter writers at least three weeks prior to the first deadline.

How Not to Request Letters
Here are three e-mail messages received from students (adapted from Keith-Spiegel & Wiederman, 2000) illustrating how not to request letters of recommendation:

1. “Hi. I was in your introductory psychology course back in 2009. Long time no see! You gave me a B. I graduated in 2012 and have decided to go back to graduate school. Can you believe it? OMG! Attached is the form that you need to fill out. Thank you. —Angela Airhead”

2. “I am a student in this department. I am applying to graduate programs, and I want to get into a good one. I have never taken a class from you, and we have never met. But a letter of recommendation from you would be very helpful. I have enclosed my personal statement. Thank you for your help. —Carl Clueless”

3. “Hi. Attached are recommendation forms for the seven graduate programs I am applying to. Notice that the first one is due next week, so you will have to get to it right away. —Samantha Sorrong”

The simple rule is ask, don’t tell. Do not assume that, if you earned a good grade in a course and the professor seemed to like you, you can just leave off the recommendation forms in a mailbox. Applications often request that you list the names of the people who will write letters of support on your behalf. Never list a name unless that person has explicitly agreed to write a letter for you. Unless you receive expressed permission, the professor may not follow through, leaving the admissions committee to ponder your poor judgment if someone you declared would recommend you never bothered to do so.

Who Should Write Your Letters of Recommendation?
Most graduate programs require two to three letters from different people. When choosing letter writers, remember that every person does not need to discuss every aspect of your career potential, your skills, and your character. Seek a set of letters that speak to the range of your academic, research, service and leadership, and applied work experiences. Ask individuals who know you well inside and outside of the classroom, and who know you in different capacities. These individuals may include, but are not limited to, faculty members, supervisors, internship coordinators, and employers who are qualified to assess your work habits, intelligence, judgment, integrity, and other characteristics related to your potential to succeed in graduate school.

Your strongest letters of recommendation are most likely written by professors in your major or in your minor field of study. Preferably, you should have taken at least one or two courses with the faculty member where you performed at a high level, earning “A” grades or a combination of “A” and “B” grades. It is also preferable that you have had other academic interactions.
outside of class. Not all of your letter writers need to be psychologists. For example, a work supervisor, preferably in a psychology-related field, would be satisfactory. Professors in your minor field of study are acceptable if they can speak to your range of capacities as they fit your targeted graduate field of study.

Give Each Letter Writer a Portfolio of Information About Yourself
Admissions committees want letters of recommendation to distinguish the applicant in some noteworthy way (Norcross & Sayette, 2014). If your professors are to write a strong letter for you, they need to be able to discuss at length specific examples and demonstrations of your abilities, potential, and personal qualities. They need to describe concrete evidence that hopefully sets you apart from your peers and helps establish that you do indeed have the characteristics that make you an optimal candidate for the job or graduate program.

Provide your letter writers with all of the information they will need to prepare your letters of recommendation by creating an electronic portfolio. Affirm, document, and help them remember all the great things you have done during your college years both inside and outside of your courses together. Even professors who know you well may not know about everything that is relevant to your graduate school or job applications.

1. Write a cover letter briefly describing why you are choosing to go to graduate school and why you are interested in certain programs. List the contents of your portfolio. End the cover letter with a thank you message and your contact information.

2. List essential information about each graduate program you are applying to including the school’s name, location, and the exact title of the graduate program. Add a succinct description of what exactly attracts you to this program, with at least three or four specific characteristics. Rank each listed school as a “dream” graduate school (love to get into, but hard to), as a “great” school (solid reputation), or as a “safety” school (confident you can get in, you seem to exceed the standards).

3. Provide a separate list or spreadsheet of the due dates for each letter, listed soonest to latest. Indicate the means of delivery by including web link information or mailing addresses.

4. If applicable, provide the recommender forms from those graduate schools requesting a paper letter along with a typed, addressed, and stamped #10 business-sized envelope for each; do not put your name as the return address. Make sure you fill in your name on the recommender forms and sign the waiver statement, checking “yes” that you waive the right to view the submitted letter; admissions committees prefer for students to waive this right.

5. Write and include your curriculum vitae, listing honors and awards, research experience, other relevant work experience (e.g., tutoring, student assistant), internships, volunteer activities, and special skills (e.g., languages spoken). Provide a copy of your current academic transcript, and highlight the courses you took from the particular professors to whom you are delivering this portfolio to help them remember your past courses together.

6. Provide a draft of your personal statement, or letter of intent, that you have written as part of your application for your graduate programs. This summary of significant experiences or events that shaped you as a person and influenced your present goals and ambitions will help your letter writer accurately discuss your abilities and potential for graduate studies.

How to Influence What Letter Writers Say About You
You influence the future content of your letters of recommendation by your actions and words today in the presence of your letter writers. Professors write strong letters for students we remember, the ones who stood out in class because they showed enthusiasm and inquisitiveness (Keith-Spiegel & Wiederman, 2000). Showcase positive features of your academic prowess, your personality, and your social skills that you want future letter writers to remember about you. If you sit passively and quietly in your classes, do not get involved in the major, and do not interact with faculty in memorable ways, it will be very difficult for us to write strong letters of recommendation for you when you need us. This will be the case even if you truly are a very intelligent person with good grades, strong test scores, and great potential (Wilson, 2000). Here’s what you can do today to ensure strong letters of recommendation in your future.

Get Noticed In and Out of the Classroom
Be an active participant. Ask thoughtful questions and contribute constructively to class discussions so professors remember your energy and enthusiasm. Do not let yourself be an invisible member on a classroom roster. Get noticed and make your professors remember the lasting image of how you spoke intelligently and sat in the same seat every day every week in that particular classroom.

Be more than a name online. If you think you may someday want a letter of recommendation from a particular professor, take at least one of their courses in a face-to-face format rather than in an online format. Face-to-face interactions are more memorable. Know that it is harder for you to make a lasting impression on a professor through an online class. We cannot as easily sense your attention to a course or the energy and enthusiasm you bring to the learning experience in online classes because we only get to know your personality through discussion posts, written assignments, and the occasional e-mail. When taking online courses, be sure to come to our office hours to help make a lasting, positive impression.

Be seen around the department. Come to office hours to seek feedback on how to improve your performance or to discuss your personal career planning. Impress upon your professors that you are interested in and curious about issues and
7. Optional but recommended additions to this portfolio include your Graduate Record Examination score report if you have it and a high-quality writing sample, preferably from a course taken with the professor to whom you are delivering this portfolio.

Provide the portfolio to letter writers at least 3 weeks in advance of the first deadline date. Be watchful to avoid school breaks, weekends, and holidays when they may not receive the materials or may not write your letter because they are vacation-bound. Paper documents collected in a ring binder may be preferred by some professors, so ask about their preferences. However, converting all documents to electronic form makes for easier transfer and access on any device. Provide a neat, organized appearance for this portfolio to make a positive impression.

Follow Up With Your Letter Writers
Two weeks before each deadline, e-mail a reminder to your letter writers; don’t be shy, it really does help us remember to get your letter submitted on time. Also follow up with each graduate program by contacting their office to ensure that the letters of recommendation arrived as expected and that your application package is complete. Keep in touch with your letter writers. Whether or not you were accepted, they are interested in what you are doing. After all letters have been submitted, send a hand-written note of thanks to each of your letter writers. Do not thank them via e-mail because your heartfelt gratitude for this student-faculty partnership is better expressed through old-fashioned manners like a personal hand-written note or thank you card.

To be a part of a student’s success is a very special, intangible reward for your professors. Help them know what an excellent student you are because they want to write the very best letter of recommendation for you that they can. They want to support your advancement and success.

We have discussed how to properly request letters of recommendation—and how not to request them—with specific instructions and suggestions from some experienced professors. Following this advice should greatly increase your probability of getting the job or getting accepted to the graduate school of your dreams.

References

John Gomez, PhD, teaches, mentors, and conducts research with undergraduate students in psychology at Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU) in San Antonio, Texas. His research program and teaching focus upon helping undergraduate students to think strategically about their future professional selves and their professional career. He has taught Preparing for Graduate School at OLLU since 2012, an online psychology elective course about academic self-preparation for undergraduates, graduate school decision-making, and career planning in psychology. He has also taught a university-based GRE preparation course since 2008 to students representing more than 20 majors on campus. His courses are two components of the OLLU Psychology Department’s graduate-school-preparatory curriculum, which also includes research- and pre-practice-based concentrations within the major and coursework designed to enhance the necessary knowledge base and skill set for self-preparation for graduate studies. OLLU students and faculty maintain an active Psi Chi chapter, which has hosted two regional Psi Chi research conferences. For more information about OLLU’s curriculum model, please visit www.ollusa.edu or contact Dr. John Gomez at jgomez@ollusa.edu.

questions in the field. Actively participate in Psi Chi local chapter activities. Look for opportunities to work with faculty on their projects, research or otherwise.

Exhibit Desirable Interpersonal Behaviors
Be dependable. Show up for class, appointments, and events on time. Meet deadlines and complete tasks as they were assigned.

Be self-confident but modest. Accept and respond constructively to suggestions, criticism, evaluative feedback, and supervision. Always show a desire for self-improvement and personal growth. Show an overall positive attitude about school, classes, psychology, and learning in general.

Be polished and mature. In the presence of a potential letter writer, remember that every interaction is a professional interaction. Professors as letter writers also assess your interpersonal skills, verbal ability, and professional maturity. Avoid undesirable interpersonal behavior such as silliness, humor in bad taste, arrogance, and hostility. Always demonstrate professionalism, respect, and show perfect manners. Professors will not say it but we are watching you and keeping mental notes at all times. We know that one day you may ask us for a letter of recommendation.

Seek a Mentor(s)
The single largest contributor to preparedness for graduate school is your interactions with faculty members at your undergraduate institution (Norcross & Sayette, 2014). The best way to get to know your professors better—and to position yourself to ask them to write letters of recommendation—is to work with them in some context outside of the classroom such as in a research context or by your active membership in Psi Chi. By working closely with you outside of the classroom, faculty gain an accurate picture of the kind of graduate student you may become. Having a mentor to advise you in your growth as a student and a future psychologist is invaluable. There is no better way to learn about the vast world of psychology than in a one-on-one mentoring relationship.

Plan ahead
You will need letters of recommendation in the near future, so help your professors right now to remember what a great student you are.
Beyond the semantics of the words and language you speak, the sound of your voice serves as a stronger medium for the transmission of information than you may realize or expect. For instance, take speaking on the phone to a person that you have never met. That person instantly can detect from a simple “hello” whether you are male or female, a child or an adult, inflicted with a head cold, crying, and/or upset. In some cases, the person may even be able to decipher your general mood.

In addition to these basic assessments, the sound of your voice can reveal much more to a listener, and this can occur with minimal exposure to your vocalizations. For instance, evidence has suggested
that voice samples can provide accurate information about a speaker's sex (Lass, Hughes, Bowyer, Waters, & Bourne, 1976; Lass, Tecca, Mancuso, & Black, 1979), age (Hughes & Rhodes, 2010; Krauss, Freyberg, & Morsella, 2002), race (Lass et al., 1979; Walton & Orlikoff, 1994), height and weight (Krauss et al., 2002), body configuration (Hughes, Harrison, & Gallup, 2009), personality traits (Addington, 1968), and fertility (Bryant & Haselton, 2009). Additionally, subjects have been able to accurately match voice samples to a target’s facial photograph over 75% of the time (Krauss et al., 2002). Voice has also been used in clinical assessment for identifying certain neurological disorders (Gamboa, Jimenez-Jimenez, Mate, & Cobeta, 2001) and monitoring psychoactive drug effects (Scherer & Zei, 1988).

Expanding upon this list, your voice plays a particularly relevant role in your attractiveness and providing information to potential mates. Evolutionary psychologists have sought to identify what information the tonal qualities of a voice can convey to listeners and how voice can be used as a tool to attract and evaluate potential mates. The present article provides an overview of some of our findings.

**Voice Attractiveness**

When people think of attractiveness, what often comes to mind is a person's physical appearance. Given that our visual sense is dominant, it would stand to reason why physical attributes that can be visibly seen are predominantly used to evaluate others’ levels of attractiveness. However, our primary mode of communication in social interactions does not exploit our visual sense, but rather our auditory system. The sounds, tones, utterances, intonations, and inflections used in communication also provide a host of cues that can allow us to decipher one's attractiveness. Thus, in addition to physical attractiveness, voice attractiveness plays a crucial role in mate assessment.

People who have attractive voices tend to show more bilateral body symmetry, a trait thought to be a marker of developmental fitness and genetic quality (Hughes, Harrison, & Gallup,
Women with attractive voices tend to have lower waist-to-hip ratios (i.e., body figures resembling more of an hourglass shape), and men with attractive voices tend to have broader shoulders relative to their hips, or a more V-shape body (Hughes, Dispenza, & Gallup, 2004). These ideal sex-specific body configurations are revealing of the influence of sex hormones that shape features that signal our reproductive maturity and potential.

Voices also relay important information directly related to mating success and sexual behavior; those with voices rated to be more attractive have had first sexual intercourse at an earlier age, a greater number of sexual partners, a greater number of affair partners, and a higher number of partners that they had intercourse with that were involved in another relationship (i.e., were themselves chosen as an affair partner; Hughes et al., 2004). Men with lower pitched, attractive voices have higher reproductive success, having fathered more children (Apicella, Feinberg, & Marlowe, 2007). The variety of features that correlate with how attractive a voice sounds lends itself to the importance that voice plays in revealing a person’s mate value, defined by evolutionary psychologists as “the total sum of the characteristics an individual possesses at a given moment and within a particular context that impacts their ability to successfully find, attract, and retain a mate” (Fisher, Cox, Bennett, & Gavric, 2008, p.157).

**Manipulating How We Sound**

People often change the sound of their voices to convey certain emotions, motives, and directives. But are we any good at it? My colleagues and I tested to see if people were able to deliberately and effectively change the sound of their voices to convey certain traits, and determine whether it was possible for others to detect those changes (Hughes, Mogilski, & Harrison, 2014). With little instruction on how to do so, both men and women could modulate their voices to sound more dominant and more intelligent to others. However, when asked to portray a “sexier” voice, men were unable to make their voices sound more attractive from their normal speaking voices, whereas women were able to do so. Alternatively, women were unable to portray more confident voices when asked, but men were. These findings can be interpreted using an evolutionary perspective; men tend to place more emphasis on attractiveness when finding mates (Buss, 1989), so it would be beneficial for a woman to effectively manipulate the sound of her voice to enhance her overall appeal to men. On the other hand, women tend to place an emphasis on a prospective mate’s earning potential and financial resources (Sprecher, 1989), and confidence appears to be related to a man’s earning potential, power in society, and other personality characteristics related to success (Buss, 1989). Therefore, it would be advantageous for men to have the ability to project a voice of confidence, and for women to be adept at detecting this trait in a potential mate.

Whether or not you deliberately try to change the sound of your voice, vocal manipulation especially tends to occur in contexts when attraction is involved. In an experimental setting, my colleagues and I asked men and women to speak on the phone to an opposite-sex person whose picture was shown to them and was previously rated to be highly attractive or unattractive (Hughes, Farley, & Rhodes, 2010). We recorded their voices and had independent raters assess the scripted voice messages they left for the person that they thought they were calling. Both men and women lowered the pitch of their voices when communicating with the attractive person of the opposite-sex as opposed to an unattractive target, and listeners who were blind as to the context of the voice samples thought the samples directed toward the attractive persons sounded more pleasant. The lowering of the voices and vocal modification was likely an attempt to sound more seductive or appealing for the person to whom there was an attraction (whether they were consciously aware of this or not), and voice was likely serving as a signal of romantic interest. It is interesting how easily discernable it was for others to perceive changes in one’s voices when speaking to attractive individuals. This perceptual ability to detect romantic interest of others via voice may be adaptive for identifying interested potential mates, detecting partner interest in others, and possible detection of partner infidelity.

Even in more natural settings, vocal changes tend to occur in the exchanges between mates. We recorded phone conversations between participants and their newly in-love romantic partners and same-sex friends, and obscured the content of the conversation to present only the paralanguage vocalizations to raters (Farley, Hughes, & LaFayette, 2013). We found that vocal samples directed toward romantic partners were rated as sounding more pleasant, sexier, and reflecting greater romantic interest than those directed toward same-sex friends. People were also able to directly discriminate between brief voice samples spoken to a romantic partner or friend. Likewise, other studies have also shown that romantic partners tend to use prosodic exaggeration, or “loverese,” when speaking to one another (Chang & Garcia, 2011). These findings point to the effectiveness of vocal change as a mechanism for communicating relationship status.

It may be assumed that you can simply change your voice to deceive others as to your level of attractiveness. However, I would equate transient vocal modulation as being equivalent to a woman wearing make-up. Making such changes certainly could enhance a person’s attractive appearance, but it will not drastically turn someone into a new person. We are all constrained by our genes and biology to an extent, and sustaining a deceptive appearance interminably (i.e., keeping the make-up on or constantly modifying one’s voice) is not very feasible. We are also a byproduct of our environments and our cultures (i.e., accents, local dialects, education, etc.), which pose additional influences on how we speak. Nonetheless, vocal coaching and training to modify one’s speech patterns in order to speak in a desired manner (especially for actors, politicians, and other public figures) has long been documented (Karpf, 2006).

**What We Expect From Others’ Voices and Our Own Voices**

There is a propensity to believe that people who have attractive voices will also have attractive faces (Hughes & Miller, 2015), and people seem to become vexed when voice attractiveness and physical attractiveness do not match one another on the same level (Zuckerman & Sinicropi, 2011). There is mixed evidence as to
whether face and voice attractiveness correlate in reality (for review, see Hughes & Miller, 2015). Nonetheless, the stereotypical perception that voice and face attractiveness should be associated exists. This perception can be considered an extension of the what-is-beautiful-is-good stereotype, whereby people tend to ascribe more favorable characteristics to those who are attractive (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972). In this case, apparently what sounds beautiful looks beautiful, as well (Hughes & Miller, 2015).

What do you think of your own voice? People will often express some disdain when hearing a recording of their own voices and tend to react negatively when made aware that they are hearing a recording of their own voices but not when hearing recordings of others’ voices (Holzman & Roussey 1966). This reaction may be due to the fact that you seemingly do not hear your voice as others do; the perception of your live speaking voice is distorted because you hear it through both bone and air conduction, while others hear it through air conduction alone (Reinfeldt, Östli, Håkansson, & Stenfelt, 2010). Therefore, you may anticipate that your own voice recording should sound more like it does in your head. This, in turn, may not enable you to accurately self-evaluate your own voice attractiveness or interpret your own vocal profile as others perceive it. Despite the anticipation that your own voice should sound differently than you expect, when tested experimentally, we found a preference for the sound of a person’s own voice recordings. When subjects were given an array of voice recordings of different individuals and were not told that their own recorded voices were included in the presentation, they rated their own voices as sounding more attractive than others rated their voices (Hughes & Harrison, 2013). Participants also rated their own voices as sounding more attractive than they rated the voices of others. These findings suggest that people may engage in vocal implicit egotism, a nonconscious form of self-enhancement that reflects the tendency to unconsciously react more favorably to anything marginally related to oneself (Pelham, Mirenberg, & Jones, 2002). The preference for one’s own voice may also be explained by a mere exposure effect; even if your recording does not sound exactly like you anticipated, you have consistent exposure to your voice and hear every single word you say, so some level of that similarity or familiarity must be present.

**Conclusion**

The sound of your voice reveals far more information to others than you may realize. People are able to distinguish between subtle cues within a voice and, in turn, respond differently. By manipulating the sound of your voice, you can further project intent and motives that are easily discernable to others. Although your physical appearance may be at the forefront of others’ evaluations and interactions with you, you cannot overlook the impact that your voice also has upon others, particularly within the realm of mate attraction and assessment.

**References**


**EYE ON PSI CHI**

**Susan M. Hughes, PhD, is an associate professor at Albright College (PA) and is the director of the Evolutionary Studies program at the college. She received her PhD in biopsychology at the University at Albany, SUNY, and taught at Vassar College (NY) for 2 years prior to joining Albright. Most of her research is in the field of evolutionary psychology, with an emphasis on the study of the human voice. Her research explores the idea that voice has evolved to be more than a natural mechanism for communicating semantic information through speech and the sound of an individual’s voice, irrespective of content, can convey a host of social, behavioral, and biological information about a speaker. In addition to her work on voice, she has published several studies related to mate assessment, attraction, attitudes, and behaviors from an evolutionary perspective. Her work in the field has received a considerable amount of both national and international media attention and has been featured in many popular media sources over the years. Dr. Hughes has served as a faculty advisor to her Psi Chi chapter for currently 8 years, has published numerous papers with undergraduate students, and feels it is a privilege to have the opportunity to foster undergraduate research and learning.**

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Six years ago, Pete Docter (the director of Pixar’s Monsters, Inc and Up) made a phone call to explain his ideas for a film about how emotions shape people’s interior lives and relationships with others. On the other end of the call was Dacher Keltner, PhD, an emotion psychologist at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Keltner agreed that these would be great topics for a movie and became a major consultant throughout the development of Pixar’s Inside Out. Today, he discusses his interactions with Pixar, as well as some of the scientific thought that went into this highly successful and well-liked 2015 film.

In his own words, Dr. Keltner says, “What I mainly did at Pixar was to serve as a scientific sounding board for their core interests such as how people remember emotions and how our current emotions shape our recollection
ideas about how to handle the many challenges ahead.

As Dr. Keltner has said many times about the movie, “I think they really nailed it” (Hamilton & Ulaby, 2015, para. 4). Today, he elaborates by recounting how astounded he was at Docter’s “curiosity and careful treatment of the science.” Describing just one of many e-mail exchanges, he says, “After the film came out, Pete told me that he was about to speak with a Russian neuroscientist about the film. He had all of these questions for me about dopamine, the opioids, oxytocin, and the neural chemistry of emotion. I sent him a bunch of stuff, and then he asked some really deep follow-up questions. That typified my experiences with him. He was really focused on wonderful conversations about emotion science.”

According to Dr. Keltner, “The influence of the science of emotion is used in a lot of places in the film.” A few examples include the way that emotions can change memories over time, that emotions guide human perceptions of the world, and that all emotions—both positive and negative—are important to create healthy individuals (Judd, 2015; Keltner & Ekman, 2015). For another example of science used in the film, Dr. Keltner says he studies something called vocal bursts, which are little universal sounds that people make to express emotions. Pieces of these vocal bursts are used of the movie, in particular when Riley reunites with her mom and dad near the conclusion.

Of course, not everything in the film is scientifically accurate. For instance, to create a more viewer-friendly film, the number of emotion characters was reduced to only five. Also, Riley’s brain is missing any sort of conscious control mechanism to regulate her emotions. However, Docter and his team spoke with Dr. Keltner about making changes of this sort often. They explained that they appreciated the information he gave them, but they also reminded him that they were artists paid to create a film. Thus, they would sometimes have to deviate from the science.

About this, Dr. Keltner is quick to express his acceptance of their decisions, and he reminds readers that “these were all simply tensions that the filmmakers had to deal with.” Rather than letting small inaccuracies distract him, he instead appreciates the awareness that the film has brought to emotion science. He also embraces the many discussions about emotions that have stemmed from the film and its artistic choices.

The Purpose of Sadness

Perhaps the part of the film that Dr. Keltner had the most tangible influence on was in the character, Sadness. About this, he says, “I distinctly remember Pete reaching out to me about two and a half years into the film’s development to ask me about sadness.” He asked questions such as:

- “What is sadness?”
- “Why do we have it?”
- “Does it do us any good?” and
- “What is its evolutionary function?”

In response, Dr. Keltner told him about sadness being “a necessary part of development, a catalyst of change, and a way of uniting people.” It is likely that the prominence of Sadness in the film, which he thinks is one of the really exciting parts to it, came out of the conversation in part.

He says, “There was kind of a key moment, as is often the case with Pixar films because they tend to go through five years of development, take a lot of creative talent, and often hit roadblocks or points of critical decision. Very interestingly, when Joy gets lost, they were originally going to have Anxiety or Fear accompany her, but Pete really wanted it to be Sadness so that he could delve into the themes of joy and sadness, and the purpose of sadness in a young girl’s mind. The executive staff was skeptical and worried that the movie would be to melancholy. Pete had to really fight for that, and I think it was a triumph and the critical artistic decision in the film.”

Six “What If” Questions to Consider

1. What if Riley had been a boy?

“We talked a lot about this,” Dr. Keltner exclaims. “When girls reach the preteen years, their positive emotions plummet, and when they become teenagers, a gender difference in sadness and depression really hits. This is shown in the work of the late Susan Nolen Hoeksema, which is really compelling work about how girl teenagers are twice as vulnerable to depression as boys. I think that is one reason why the sadness was so poignant in the film.”

“What you would have to do if Riley

of the past.” In additional to many e-mails and phone calls, he estimates that he visited Pixar Studios at least five or six times to speak with small groups of three to seven. These groups included people such as Docter, Doctor’s right-hand man, Ronnie del Carmen; and some of the film’s animators. “Sometimes,” he explains, “I would talk about the science of emotional expression or neurophysiology of emotion. Then, most of the time, I would really just answer questions and have conversations.”

How Scientifically Accurate Is Inside Out?

In the film, an 11-year-old girl named Riley struggles to adapt when she and her parents move from Minnesota to San Francisco. To help her through this difficult transition, Riley is guided by five emotions living in her head—Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, and Disgust, each of whom have very different
was a boy,” he continues, “is make the story a little more about anger and a little more about getting into a different kind of trouble. For example, instead of retreating into himself, the boy might be bumping into other kids or doing something that breaks the law such as stealing. In that case, I think anger would have played a more prominent role.”

2. What if Riley had lived in another culture?
One of Dr. Keltner’s many interests is in how emotions vary in different cultures. To provide an example of an alternate view than the Western view presented in the film, he says, “Let’s say that you were to tell this story in Japan. What we know from the work of people like Shinobu Kitayama and Yukiko Uchida is that joy would not have been so hyperactive and so agentic. The positive state in Riley’s mind would have been oriented toward social harmony rather than self-assertion, and that would make for a very different movie. If it took place in Japan, I really would have made a strong case that embarrassment would need to be a character because Japan has a more respectful- and modesty-oriented culture. As another example, there are cultures like some Alaskan indigenous people who just don’t feel anger. It isn’t so prominent in how they react to a situation, so that might have involved a Riley without Anger.”

3. What if you could change the characters to make them more scientifically accurate?
“Pete e-mailed and called me a lot to say things like, ‘Hey, tell me the latest about dopamine and the vagus nerve,’ or ‘What happens to a girl’s emotions when she is 11?’ and I would pass on things we have learned from the science. After the first screening of the film, he asked me, ‘How would you change the emotions?’ One of the things that I felt was that disgust is very intense like the social disgust people feel toward others who they disapprove of. I felt that the Disgust character was really great, but I suggested that they could intensify that if they wanted to be really true to the science. Otherwise, I felt like the characters were interesting and close to what I would have portrayed them as in the Pixar vein.”

4. What if the emotion characters were different sexes?
Dr. Keltner laughs. “If you were to be entirely truthful to the science, emotions obviously wouldn’t have human forms. They would have chemical structural forms, so they wouldn’t be gendered or have mustaches. They would be multigender entities. Men do tend to get a little angrier than women, so it is maybe a little justified to make Anger a man in Riley’s head. Studies also show that women tend to cry a little more, so it is maybe okay to make Sadness a woman. But if you wanted to be totally scientifically accurate, you would do it differently with respect to gender.”

5. What if Riley’s parents’ emotions had been different sexes?
Dr. Keltner says that he never spoke to anyone at Pixar about that, but he guesses that they probably made all of Riley’s mother’s emotions women and her father’s emotions men because they recognized that there would be six-year-old kids watching the film. As Dr. Keltner explains, “Certain kinds of complexities, like the idea that you are inside a person’s head, are tough for a six-year-old to handle, so they probably wanted to keep it really simple artistically.”
I think that they probably made the gender decision for that reason."

"Also, I can’t remember if I talked about it with them, but I find that I personally felt very multigender when I was a young 20-year-old, as did my girlfriend. However, when people have kids, they kind of bear down into a more homogenized arrangement. Most moms and dads are overworked raising their kids and feel a little more gendered and a little bit more like moms and dads, so I think that might also have been a part of their thinking."

6. What if there had been a character named Awe?!?

A large part of Dr. Keltner’s career has been built upon his research of the emotion, Awe. He says, “During my first meeting with Docter, I pitched Awe and all of these other emotions.” Ultimately, Awe, Embarrassment, Compassion, Surprise, and many others emotion characters were not used in the film. However, the thought of what any of those characters might have been like is certainly intriguing.

“As for, Awe,” Dr. Keltner says, “the preteen years would be an okay time to portray this character, but not as good as it would be to show Awe in a sequel where Riley is 18. That would be the best age because of, for example, the abundance of rock and roll music, great ideas in college, nature, backpacking, and so forth. If Awe had been a part of Riley’s experience, I think it would have been tremendous because there could have been a moment where she listens to music or visits the Grand Canyon when her identity suddenly opens up and changes. I think that would have been aesthetically spectacular, but of course, they didn’t do it.”

Public Impact

Dr. Keltner has been truly blown away by how powerful the response has been to the film. Since it was released in June, he gets about two e-mails a day on average from people who saw that he was involved because of his name in the credits, on the film’s Wikipedia page, or because they heard so in an interview.

According to Dr. Keltner, they usually contact him to say something like, “I teach Inside Out in a high school literature class and talk about how it conveys emotion.” Other times, they may say, “My daughter experienced early trauma, and she has seen the film six times. It gave her this insight into sadness that really changed her life.”

Dr. Keltner pauses to let this sink in before continuing. “To have a sense that there is any kind of cultural experience that can change a child’s life is powerful. I have also had middle-aged dads tell me that, after seeing the film, they now understand their daughters and know how to relate to their daughters. I have had wives tell me that, when their husband saw it, the husband suddenly became more accessible. I had a mom e-mail me to say that she has a son who has Asperger’s who could never communicate about his emotions until he saw the film.”

Looking Outside of Inside Out

To anyone interested in learning more about emotions, Dr. Keltner says that you can expect to see a rich statement in the future about how emotion science is improving social media such as Facebook and Twitter. He also has high hopes that there might one day be another Inside Out movie in 10 or so years where Riley is 18 years old.

In the meantime, many other articles about the science of the film are available online. Be sure to check these out, and then don’t stop there. Look outside of the film too, by continuing to reflect on and talk about the variety of emotions you encounter in your everyday life.

References


Dacher Keltner, PhD, is a full professor at the University of California, Berkeley and director of the Berkeley Social Interaction Lab (http://sociates.berkeley.edu/~keltner/) and faculty director of the Greater Good Science Center (http://greatergood.berkeley.edu). Dr. Keltner’s research focuses on the biological and evolutionary origins of compassion, awe, love, and beauty, emotional expression, power, social class, and inequality. He is the coauthor of two textbooks, as well as the best-selling Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life, and The Compassionate Instinct. His next book, The Power Paradox: How We Gain and Lose Influence, will be released in May with Penguin Press. Dr. Keltner has published more than 190 scientific articles. He has written for the New York Times Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, The London Times, and Utne Reader, and has received numerous national prizes and grants for his research. He served as a consultant for Pixar’s Inside Out and has worked at Facebook and Google on emotion-related projects. WIRED magazine recently rated Dr. Keltner’s podcasts from his course Emotion as one of the five best educational downloads, and the Utne Reader selected him for one of its fifty 2008 visionaries.

Learn more about Dr. Keltner’s research on the emotion awe in Cannon, B. (2014, Eyeing the Sciences). Understanding the sensation of awe (without spoiling it) with Dacher Keltner, PhD, Eye on Cool. X(3). Retrieved from https://www.psych.org/1183/Ep9aprSum714464d

Images from Rivera, J. (Producer), & Docter, P. (Director). Inside Out [Film]. Copyright 2016 by Pixar Animation Studios. Printed with permission.
A Secret About Dieting

With Traci Mann, PhD

by Bradley Cannon
Picture a rotating billboard. One side says, “All You Can Eat—Only $5!” A split second later, the other side encourages you to purchase the latest dieting program. Do either of these commonly seen advertisements portray the most beneficial or effective eating strategies for you? In the present interview, Dr. Traci Mann presents smart regulation strategies, an alternative that you might have overlooked.

Dr. Mann first became interested in eating practices after reading a few articles about eating and dieting that said the exact opposite of what she had heard her whole life. For example, she notes being “absolutely blown away” by research showing that obese people don’t eat more than nonobese people. She says, “That just seemed impossible to me at the time. Findings like that made me want to read more and eventually start conducting research of my own.”

After receiving her PhD at Stanford University (CA) in 1995, Dr. Mann taught at the University of California, Los Angeles, for 9 years before joining the University of Minnesota where she founded her Health and Eating Lab. Since then, she has conducted numerous eating experiments such as those at the Minnesota State Fair to look at people’s compensation strategies and how people handle a situation such as a fair when constant food temptation is everywhere.

Today, Dr. Mann speaks with us just before lunchtime via telephone on a comfy couch in her 14-year-old son’s bedroom. To readers, she jokingly adds, “I don’t want him to know I’m in here, so don’t tell him. I like to leave it exactly like it was when I found it, which means very messy!”

So Why Don’t Diets Work in the Long Term?

According to Dr. Mann, “The main reason is because you restrict your calories when you diet. Then, when your body notices this, it launches biological changes, which have the unfortunate effect of making it much harder to keep dieting over time. It really seems quite cruel, but on the other hand, your body makes these changes to keep you alive in the face of deprivation.”

Despite the many challenges of losing weight and not regaining it over time, Dr. Mann explains that dieting has remained popular, in part, because of the immense pressure on people to be thin. She says, “People internalize that pressure. They want to be thin, and they’ll try almost anything. However, when they don’t lose weight, they usually don’t take that to mean that diets don’t work. Instead, they take it to mean that their particular diet didn’t work, and so they will try any new thing that comes along. It is partially wishful thinking. They desperately want diets to work, so I would say that they are looking for any possible way not to have to admit that they don’t.”

“As for the medical community,” she says, “I think the reason that they don’t like to come right out and admit that diets don’t work in the long term is because they are worried that people will do almost the exact opposite by not making any efforts to eat in a healthy way. What I am trying to do is...
provide a sensible middle ground between extreme dieting and just ‘going bonkers!’”

When people who have struggled with diets receive Dr. Mann’s explanation for why diets don’t work, she exclaims, “They love hearing that! Specifically, they find that it resonates with their experience perfectly. When I talk about how dieting leads to preoccupation with thoughts of food, for example, they are sitting in the audience thinking, ‘That is exactly what happens to me.’ They have exactly experienced these changes that make it harder to keep dieting. They have noticed that, after a while, eating the same number of calories that they ate when they lost weight isn’t leading to weight loss any more. It is a metabolic change, and they have experienced this and appreciate hearing it put together in one place.”

As for people who have successfully lost weight and maintained it, Dr. Mann believes that sometimes her message seems a little threatening to them because it makes them think that they might regain the weight that they lost. She says, “Only about 5% of people take off a lot of weight and keep it off for 3 to 5 years. Yet, this 5% still has a large number of people in it, so you are bound to know someone who has done it. People tend to use this as a reason why they believe that diets work.”

If your friend Jenny lost lots of weight and kept it off, then Dr. Mann says that this is wonderful news. However, she also urges you not to disregard the science by giving this anecdotal evidence more weight than, for example, a meta-analysis of 30 separate diet studies.

**About Smart Regulation Strategies**

Instead of diets, which Dr. Mann defines as “anything severely restricting your calorie intake for the purpose of losing weight,” she encourages you to pursue smart regulation strategies. In general, this simply involves “making healthy changes to your eating habits that will help you eat more healthy food to help you reach your leanest livable weight, which is basically the lowest weight you can maintain without your body detecting deprivation and launching all of those biological changes.”

But what if you don’t lose as much weight as you would like? To this, Dr. Mann says in her recent book, “I understand that we all have an image in our minds about what we want to weigh. The problem is that, for many of us, this image is outside of our biologically set weight ranges” (Mann, 2015, p. xi).

Today, she adds, “Healthy foods make you healthy. Healthy foods are good for you. There is this misconception with healthy foods and with exercise that the reason these things are good for you is because they help you lose weight, but that is not why they are good for you. They are good for you, even if you don’t lose weight, because those are healthy things to do. It is good to get your heart rate up during exercise. It is good to get vitamins in your body by eating vegetables. We all need to do these healthy things and just kind of come to terms with the fact that we might not end up as thin as we dream about being. That doesn’t mean that we won’t be healthy.”

**Children and Astronauts**

To encourage healthy eating habits, Dr. Mann has worked with an incredible variety of participants and faced numerous challenges. She says, “For example, with kids, we are just trying to get them to eat their vegetables. They don’t like them. They don’t want to eat them. They don’t see their friends eating them. There is basically nothing going in our favor in terms of getting kids to eat their vegetables. Everything is working against us.”

On the other hand, she has also been tasked to help get astronauts to eat more on long missions. “One of the challenges,” she says, “is that the food just isn’t as good. We can’t get around that, and they can’t smell it as much, so that makes it taste even worse. It doesn’t look as appetizing. There is not
as much variety. These are all things that NASA is trying to deal with.”

Dr. Mann worked with yet another reason that astronauts don’t eat enough in space: because they are too busy and stressed. She explains, “They don’t admit this or anything, but we wanted to see if we could kill two birds with one stone by having them eat their comfort food so that they will be less stressed and eating at the same time.”

To Dr. Mann, this seemed like the perfect thing to have them do. “However, when we tested this on the ground with real people—she chuckles—that is, with nonastronauts, we found that comfort food didn’t have any special properties at all. It didn’t do anything in particular that other food didn’t do. Comfort food improves your mood, but no more than eating any other food improves your mood.”

Because of these numerous hurdles and surprises that come with researching eating habits, Dr. Mann has become legendarily known for her sneaky, crafty experiments. Here’s an example.

**A Sneaky, Crafty Experiment**

Dr. Mann recently wanted to look at how people’s eating is influenced by their friends, which she says would usually be done by passively observing people as they eat in restaurants with groups of friends. However, this isn’t always useful because it is impossible to tell whose eating is influencing whose. In addition, lab studies of this type usually involve participants eating with strangers or confederates instead of their actual friends. Neither of these two studies really shows what happens when people eat with their actual friends or whose behavior causes whose.

To solve this problem, Dr. Mann’s team brought many separate groups of friends into the lab and said that they were interested in how friends solve problems together, but of course that is not what they really interested in. Next, they separated the three friends within each group into different rooms to fill out questionnaires, which they were also not interested in. However, while the friends were separated, the researchers told two of them, “When we put you guys back together, we are going to bring in some delicious food. Don’t eat it, and don’t say why you’re not eating it.”

To bring in some delicious food. Don’t eat it, put you guys back together, we are going to the researchers told two of them, “When we each third friend generally followed the lead of the other two. Later, we put each third friend alone, and they usually continued to do what the others had done, even though their friends were not there anymore and would never know. That study is now published. It is called, ‘Friends don’t let friends eat cookies’” (Howland, Hunger, & Mann, 2012).

The results of this study resulted in one of Dr. Mann’s many smart regulation strategies, which is to eat with friends who you know to be healthy eaters because you will be more likely to go along with and continue to implement those healthy eating habits later when you are no longer with them. She says, “I feel like people know that they have certain friends that they eat crazy stuff with, and other friends that they eat more sensibly with. Thus, this strategy is really just saying that we encourage you to eat with those people that you eat healthily with. As for your other friends . . . they’re awesome, they’re great friends, but maybe they’re not the people to eat meals with.”

**Three Future Projects**

There is no “food shortage” for exciting, upcoming projects in Dr. Mann’s Health and Eating Lab. First, she currently has a student finishing a dissertation following up on the comfort food research to look at the effects of comfort food on physical and social pain.

The lab is also about to conduct a study to see if they can get people to reduce the amount of sugar they put in their coffee with a mindfulness exercise where a coffee expert trains people on how to appreciate the flavor in coffee. “We’re doing that because sugar is unhealthy, and I don’t just mean for its calories. Sugar is simply not good for you, and some people consume a huge amount of sugar each day just in their coffee.”

Third, she is also eager to continue conducting eating studies at the Minnesota State Fair. She says, “We’ve been going every year, and it is always very fun!”

**Advice for Students**

For students wanting to go to graduate school to study psychology, Dr. Mann says that the most important thing she looks for in an applicant is research experience. Ideally, she also prefers the research experience to be with humans, not test tubes, so that she can tell that the applicants have been in a lab and conducted studies with subjects.

She adds, “I don’t need them to know certain techniques; I just want them to know what they are in for. Another thing that impresses me is if applicants have accomplished independent research where they designed and conducted their own study. I highly recommend this."

Before going downstairs to find something for lunch, Dr. Mann gives one last piece of advice. She says, “I got a lot out of talking to and working with my classmates, and that’s what really stuck with me since graduate school. Those are all the people I e-mail when I have a stats question or if I want to run a research design by someone. I am always encouraging students to support and collaborate with their classmates to give them the best chance to succeed. I think this really is an amazing profession for people who want to combine work and family. It gives the flexibility to do both of those things.”

**References**


**Traci Mann, PhD**, is a professor of psychology at the University of Minnesota. She received her PhD in 1995 from Stanford University (CA), spent 10 years on the faculty at the University of California, Los Angeles, then moved to Minnesota and started the Health and Eating Lab. She is interested in basic science questions about cognitive mechanisms of self-control, and in applying social psychology research to promoting healthy behavior—particularly eating—in individuals’ daily lives. Her research has been funded by NIH, NASA, and USDA. She is the president of the Social, Personality, and Health Network, and is a fellow of the American Psychological Association, Association for Psychological Science, and the Society for Experimental Social Psychology. Her book, Secrets From the Eating Lab: The Science of Weight Loss, the Myth of Willpower, and Why You Should Never Diet Again, was published in 2015 by HarperCollins.
The Science of Clothing

With Regan A.R. Gurung, PhD

by Bradley Cannon
What Do Your Clothes Say About You?
Did you know that your perceived personality, status, and even intelligence can all be affected by the way you dress? Dr. Regan A. R. Gurung, now in his 17th year at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, is an expert in the science of clothing. Fascinated by uncovering the effects of clothing on perception and learning, he strives to educate others about the importance of appearance and what you can do to always look your best.

Cutting straight to some concrete advice, Dr. Gurung says, “In terms of inferring positive characteristics, one of the most important traits is conscientiousness and how organized you are. For example, when faculty members dress well, they are perceived as more organized, which in turn has been linked to better learning and more attention. If you care about self-presentation or how you are seen, the key to inferring positive characteristics at a very basic level is to appear well-put-together.”

Dr. Gurung applies his research to his everyday life, as should you. For example, he has a very different dress code for the days when he is teaching and the days when he is not. He says, “Today, I am not teaching, so I am in my most comfortable clothes: jeans and sneakers. On teaching days, I take great pains to dress up. I always wear a tie, and for the first few days of class, I dress business casual. I actually perform. He adds, “Some really fascinating new research has also suggested that what you wear influences your own performance too. For example, three years ago, folks did some work on what they called enclothed cognition, where they showed that participants in a lab actually worked a little harder on math questions when they were asked to put on a lab coat than when they were wearing something casual.”

Two Reasons to Dress Your Best
So how much thought should you put into what you wear? Dr. Gurung says that this all depends on what your goals are and the context or situation. To make an accurate decision, he encourages you to always keep these two main things in mind: how you are perceived and your own performance.

1. How you are perceived.
If Dr. Gurung was sitting across from you and saw you dressed in a slobbish fashion, he says, “Nonconsciously, I would likely think that you are not taking the situation seriously. Nonconsciously, maybe even consciously, I also might not take what you are doing as seriously even though you may be working pretty well.” One study that Dr. Gurung conducted with his Psi Chi students and likes to highlight is called “Dressed to Present.” In this article, Dr. Gurung says that he and his students showed that “what students wear in presentations can influence how they are graded on that presentation and how credible they are seen” (Gurung, Kempen, Klemm, Senn, & Wysocki, 2014).

As another example, consider the effects of wearing revealing clothing. Dr. Gurung says, “Let’s assume it is not overly revealing without getting into the specifics of what that would be because that varies. On the one hand, people in revealing clothing are perceived as more attractive. However, those kinds of perceptions are also accompanied by a slew of negative perceptions. For example, when you are wearing revealing clothing, a person who has never met you and never even heard you speak will tend to think of you as more promiscuous, more likely to have multiple sexual partners, and sadly to have lower self-esteem and lower intelligence. Perception can even vary based on the number of buttons a woman has undone on her blouse.”

2. Your own performance.
From a psychological standpoint, Dr. Gurung knows that how someone perceives you can influence how you actually perform. He adds, “Some psychologists have even suggested that what you wear influences your own performance too. For example, three years ago, folks did some work on what they called enclothed cognition, where they showed that participants in a lab actually worked a little harder on math questions when they were asked to put on a lab coat than when they were wearing something casual.”

For any readers of this article who may be thinking, “But I prefer to be comfortable,” Dr. Gurung agrees that this is sometimes okay too. However, always keep how you are perceived and your own performance in mind when determining your appearance. Depending on the situation, he says, “There are times when you can improve your game by dressing well.”

A Brief History
Dr. Gurung describes the science of clothing in two primary domains. For the first domain, he prefices his discussion by explaining that he has a PhD in social personality psychology. “As many readers know, social psychology is very much about the situation, personality psychology is about the individual, and most social personality programs now really focus on the interaction between the two. Clothing and what you wear is vintage social psychology, so when you look at the history of the science of clothing, you definitely see a lot of work in social psychology. More recent work is in personality psychology that looks at whether clothing reveals certain personality traits. From the social psychology side, there is a lot of work on first impressions, which relates back to why you should really dress up well on the first day of class because first impressions are extremely important. We have known for years now that people form an automatic quick impression of someone else based on what they see within about five seconds. A person doesn’t even have to be talking, but we look at them, and—bam!—we form the impression.”

In addition to social psychology research on clothing, Dr. Gurung has found a whole separate category of work on the science of clothing within the fashion industry. He says, “When I looked into this work, I saw the absolute bulk of publications in journals such as Clothing and Textiles, which is a social psychologist, I had not even known existed.” As he dug further into this material over the year, he was fascinated to learn that most of this work tends to be authored by people in fashion school and PhDs who work on fashion and clothing. “That’s where a lot of this psychological work is going on, even though the authors wouldn’t necessarily call it psychological work, nor is it located where you would normally look for social and personality articles.”

As it turns out, ideas about the psychological effects of clothing have been around for many years. As an example, Dr. Gurung speaks about New Zealand’s national men’s rugby union team, nicknamed the All Blacks, who won the World Cup for the third time in 2015. “Their uniforms are all black, and when I dug into why they were called the All Blacks [in 1905], it is because they thought that black would be an intimidating color. Psychologically, they nailed it because that is now completely borne out by the psychological research. Black is indeed seen as a little tougher and intimidating, whereas red is hands down the best color.
to wear if you want to get somebody’s attention in a positive way.”

Dr. Gurung has seen a lot of social psychology research dating back as early as the 1970s and early 80s. In fact, he once stumbled into an early textbook on the social psychology of clothing published during this time period. As he explains, “The book is now out of print, but it really straddled the clothing and textile work with social psychology before this type of research began to sort of fade away. Although there is still a lot of work going on, there was actually a lot more work on the psychology of clothing in the 70s than there is in mainstream psychology now.”

The Future of Clothing
According to Dr. Gurung, “As human beings, we make extremely quick, automatic judgements based on superficial characteristics. However, the more we know about the types of these automatic judgements that are made, the better that we can resist them. After all, just because we may make an automatic judgement does not mean that we have to stick with it.”

An example Dr. Gurung comes back to often—one that he finds to be quite unsettling—is when people say that women shouldn’t wear certain items of clothing. More often than not, he says, their reasoning for this is because “it will make men ‘do things.’”

In response, Dr. Gurung says, “No. We should be working on changing men’s behavior, not saying, ‘Try not to distract or tease the boys.’”

Recently, the biggest debate has been about leggings and yoga pants in schools. I actually spoke to a principal who said, ‘I am thinking of banning them.’ When I asked him why, he said, ‘I think they are distracting the boys.’ So I said, ‘Then, go talk to the boys because you cannot just blame the clothing. Instead, you have got to change those behaviors.’”

According to Dr. Gurung, there is still a really big question when you think about the future of the science of clothing and how it can be used to benefit society. In particular, he believes that researchers need to psychologically determine what is “appropriate.” He says, “People always use that phrase, ‘You are not dressed appropriately,’ but what is appropriate and what are the judgements being used for
appropriateness? Clothing should never be used as a justification because this can lead to a classic statement such as, ‘His sexist behavior was justified because she wore a short skirt.’ You hear that a lot where people blame the victim, but I don’t think we should go that route. I don’t think the answer is just, ‘Okay, do not wear shorter skirts.’ It has got to be more than that.”

“The future of clothing,” Dr. Gurung believes, “is manipulating clothing and varieties of clothing to see how perceptions change. For example, there are so many variables such as the cut, how revealing it is, and in fit, which you can manipulate to change how you are perceived. I don’t think we have all of the answers for how to best influence perceptions based on clothing, and I think that there is still a lot more to be done to get a much better sense of what little things you can change to influence how you are perceived. My hope is that we can reach a point where we can find those right buttons—pun intended—to press where we can defuse automatic negative perceptions and reactions to clothing.”

To pursue this aspiration, Dr. Gurung says, “I think my next big project is on mixing together my social psychological work on clothing with my pedagogical research on learning. I’ve got things in the works where I really want to take a close look at how important clothing is in the context of learning in the classroom. I have already published some work showing that faculty should dress well, but I want to do some more work on whether there is an optimal set of clothing for learning. For example, if you come to class in your sweats, are you nonconsciously not learning as much as if you came in with something more formal? Even if the answer is no, I would much rather it be no than miss out on something overlooked that could be very influential. My real goal, and what I am doing more continuing work on, is to pull together a lot of good research into a clear-cut, useful plan for how students should study.”

Why You Should Get Involved
About 10 years ago, Dr. Gurung was teaching his Intro Psych students about research on waist-to-hip ratios and how women with a waist-to-hip ratio of .7 are perceived as more attractive. By the end of that day, he got an e-mail from a student who said, “I find that fascinating, but my roommate and I both have a .7 waist-to-hip ratio. Why is she seen as more attractive than I am?” Dr. Gurung soon discussed this question with the class, and a large part of the answer that they discovered was that the two students wore different types of clothing. He says, “That really got me thinking about how, even with the same body shape, you can tweak perceptions just by manipulating what you wear based on color, shape, or fit. That is what started a whole line of research.”

To anyone interested in studying the science of clothing, Dr. Gurung says, “Clothing research walks a really neat line between political correctness, biological automatic processes, and psychological processes. I think it is a fascinating topic to study and also a great entry point for people who want to dabble in research and experimentation. It is very fun, and there is just so much to be done.”

In particular, Dr. Gurung recommends for students to take Research Methods courses early, which are required in most departments. “If you really learn how to do research well, you can do anything or take on any topic, so get as many experiences as possible. Do independent studies, honors projects, and research assistantships too.”

Dr. Gurung also encourages student research at his university by creating a “little pipeline” where students start as research assistants, go on to do an independent honors project, and then complete an honors project.

Ask Yourself This
During and even outside of his research, Dr. Gurung has witnessed his fair share of people who became nervous when they discovered that he is an expert in the science of clothing. Chuckling, he says, “Yes, I see a lot of self-consciousness and a lot of self-checking of attire, so sometimes I really don’t say too much about that because it can make people uncomfortable.”

Considering the significance of your appearance, take a moment to imagine yourself standing before Dr. Gurung or one of your peers. What would this person think about your clothing? Are you “dressed appropriately” for your situation, or are there changes that you could make to improve your appearance?

Dr. Gurung’s Psi Chi Involvement
To further support psychology students, Dr. Gurung decided to help charter a Psi Chi chapter at his university about 11 years ago. Since then, he has been a Psi Chi advisor, coadvisor, Midwestern Regional Steering Committee member, and Midwestern Regional Vice-President. Among his Vice-Presidential accomplishments, he notes being proud of the Midwestern Region’s Facebook page, which he launched about two years ago. More importantly, he worked hard to streamline the poster application process for MPA. This resulted in dramatically more proposals so that the undergraduate program at MPA is now, as he identifies it, “a force to be reckoned with.”

Dr. Gurung also brought in big-name speakers for the convention such as Dr. Albert Bandura. He says, “I think that was historically one of the most attended Psi Chi events. The unofficial number is approximately 3,500 people. The room was maxed out with standing room only at about 1,300 people. More than a thousand others were waiting outside to get in. It was a rock concert.” In the next years, Dr. Gurung invited Drs. Janet Shibley Hyde and Susan T. Fiske. And of course, he dressed his best throughout these endeavors too!

Reference

Regan Gurung, PhD, is the Ben J. and Joyce Rosenberg Professor of Human Development and Psychology at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay. He has published articles in a variety of scholarly journals including American Psychologist, Psychological Review, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, and Teaching of Psychology, has a textbook, Health Psychology: A Cultural Approach, relating culture, development, and health published with Cengage (now in its third edition), and is also the coauthor/coeditor of 12 other books. An award winning teacher (The CASE Wisconsin Professor of the Year, the UW System Regents Teaching Award, the UW-Green Bay Founder’s Award for Excellence in Teaching) his research interests span social psychology, health psychology, and scholarship of teaching and learning.
Chapter Activities

With more than 1,100 chapters, Psi Chi members can make a significant impact in their communities. Reviewing Chapter Activities in Eye on Psi Chi is a great way to find inspirational ideas for your chapter and keep in touch with your chapter after you graduate.

Activities are listed in the following categories:

• COMMUNITY SERVICE
• CONVENTION/CONFERENCE
• FUND-RAISING
• INDUCTION CEREMONY
• MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT
• RECRUITMENT
• SOCIAL EVENT

Share your chapter’s accomplishments with others in the next issue of Eye on Psi Chi. Chapter officers and advisors are encouraged to visit http://www.psichi.org/default.asp?page=chapter_activities

Submission deadlines*
Fall: June 15
Winter: October 15
Spring: December 15
Summer: February 15

* Reports received (postmarked) after the deadline will appear in the next issue of Eye on Psi Chi.

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EAST
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

COMMUNITY SERVICE: In November, members visited a local nursing home called Home 2 Me to help older adults with baking and bingo. They then wrapped up the semester with two trips to Concordia, a nonprofit senior healthcare facility where members assisted with activities and baking. This was the first collaboration the chapter has had with this facility. They hope to visit again because of all the positive feedback.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter organized a panel for students about the recent scandal with APA. Professors informed students about the workers at APA who were found to be participating in U.S. torture. This was a major insight for students who had not heard about this incident and for students who wanted to learn more.

FUND-RAUSER: The chapter collaborated with the department’s Psychology Club to participate in bake sales to raise money for different causes. In October, all profits of one bake sale went to a nearby homeless shelter in hopes to help with the upcoming cold weather. There were also two bake sales in November, and those proceeds went to the Leukemia Walk in Pittsburgh (PA).

Temple University (PA)

INDUCTION CEREMONY: In December, the chapter had its induction ceremony, honoring its newest members before their friends and family in the largest gathering of guests and inductees yet. The semester’s new officers welcomed members and experienced the gravity, responsibility, and reward of leadership. The expansion of membership was accompanied by the revitalization of officers as the chapter added a new student government representative to its ranks for the upcoming spring semester. The event concluded with the presentation of members with their certificates and pins, and an inspiring speech on the importance of psychology in a changing world from Dr. Marsha Weinraub. Afterward, guests, inductees, and officers mingled while enjoying a catered lunch. The chapter concluded the semester with a sense of kinship and belonging to the greater cause of cultivating psychology.

SOCIAL EVENT: Members got social this Halloween by hosting a costume party with the chapter’s sister organization, the Temple Psychology Majors Association (PMA). Relations between the chapter and the PMA have been strained in the past, but the two organizations made efforts to work together this semester.
Members from both organizations commingled, competed in a costume contest, and enjoyed free Halloween treats. New connections were formed, and the two organizations grew closer, encouraging more fruitful partnerships in the future.

**Chapter Activities**

**Midwest**

**DePaul University (IL)**

**Fund-Raiser:** Members, officers, and advisors participated in the American Heart Association 5K walk to raise funds and awareness for heart disease and stroke. Dr. Zimmerman (coadvisor) created a team webpage, and the team received donations from faculty, staff, and members. The chapter raised more than $700. This fund-raising opportunity allowed members to get involved with a cause near and dear to many who have had friends or family members suffer from heart disease and/or stroke.

**Community Service:** The chapter had the privilege of volunteering at the Greater Chicago Food Depository to help families and children in need. Kristie Jones (president-elect) registered the chapter for the event and promoted the event through e-mail. On a Saturday afternoon, the chapter traveled to the Greater Chicago Food Depository to contribute to the mission, "No one should go hungry." Working with a team of volunteers, the chapter helped package more than 24,000 pounds of sweet potatoes that were distributed to food pantries across the Chicagoland area for the Thanksgiving holiday.

**Ohio State University, Newark Campus**

**Fund-Raiser:** Members conducted several bake sales, raising $200 to benefit the local humane society. In addition, a second fund-raiser resulted in a donation of $150 to the local food bank.

**Convention/Conference:** Three members submitted their research to be presented at a regional convention, and officers held a GRE preparation session for students. Psi Chi initiated a research luncheon series, in which student researchers took turns presenting their current research projects. This monthly event has been well-received by students and faculty alike.

**University of Michigan–Flint**

**Meeting/Speaker Event:** At the start of the school year, the chapter cosponsored an event with the Psychology Department and Psychology Club, featuring an insightful lecture called "Traumatic Stress: The Impact of Natural and Technological Disasters and Interpersonal Stress" by Dr. Russell Jones (Virginia Tech University). He spoke about his experiences with trauma through natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina. He also spoke about his research on mental health following the Virginia Tech Shootings that occurred on April 16, 2015.

**Social Event:** In November, the chapter assisted Student Government and Psychology Club in putting on a mental health event a few weeks before finals. The event highlighted the importance of bringing attention to mental health and destigmatizing it. This event had various activities such as massage therapy, Tai Chi, mindfulness sessions, Jeopardy featuring celebrities with mental health disorders, and other relaxation activities. Officers assisted Student Government in organizing and hosting the event by advertising and coming up with activities. Many students attended to learn more about mental health and to clear their minds of stress.
SOUTHEAST

Life University (GA)

INDUCTION CEREMONY: Students gathered to welcome the new fall 2015 members. Six students were inducted, pledging their commitment to uphold and honor Psi Chi and its mission.

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter gathered to represent psychology. Officers met and voted, along with other Psi Chi members, on the upcoming quarter’s goals. The important topic of discussion was how to serve as a bridge to the new winter quarter students.

Roanoke College (VA)

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: The chapter cosponsored an event with the Student Government Association, the Psyc Association, and the psychology department to bring Dr. Erin Baker, a user experience researcher at Facebook, to campus. She spoke about what her job entails and additional possibilities for working in the technology sector with a liberal arts degree. Additionally, she spoke about her personal journey to becoming an employee at Facebook and her recommendations to others interested in a similar career placement. The event concluded with a lively question-and-answer session. The event was well attended with more than 100 students and seven faculty from various departments!

MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT: During the October meeting, Dr. Osterman spoke about the psychology of fear. Her presentation focused on the evolutionary advantages of fear and social psychology’s perspectives on fear and phobias. Students engaged with her by asking questions and challenging her assertions. After Dr. Osterman’s presentation, students played a competitive Halloween-themed trivia game led by a Psi Chi member. Teams were required to identify sounds, scenes, and quotes from popular horror movies and were rewarded with candy for correct answers. More than 66 students attended the event!

University of Mary Washington (VA)

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The chapter decided to raise money and collect supplies for care packages to be sent to children with leukemia through the Virginia Rose Foundation. The chapter chose this particular foundation in honor of an officer who knows Virginia Rose and her family well. The chapter set up tables at various sporting events and supplied materials to decorate cards and drop off supplies, as well as accept monetary donations. The chapter also hosted a member-exclusive event to decorate hats to be sent to the children. In total, the chapter was able to raise more than $100, collect around 50 homemade cards, decorate 20 hats, and collect many supplies.

SOCIAL EVENT: The chapter decided to kick-start its own campaign of #ThisPsychMajor to highlight what chapter members and alumni were doing with their degrees. This campaign also functioned to spread awareness in the Psychology Department of different jobs that can be done with a psychology degree, as well as promote Psi Chi with the hashtag #PsiChiUMW.

CONVENTION/CONFERENCE: The chapter was responsible for facilitating the Fall Research Methods Poster Session, which showcased research being done in the Research Methods courses in the psychology department. This poster session was attended by professors and students alike, giving students an opportunity to gain valuable experience discussing their research. This semester,
projects focused on everything from cognitive dissonance to word recall with different types of music.

West Virginia University

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** The speaker for the November meeting was Andrew Wheeler, MS, an alumnus now working as a senior recruiter for a technology firm. After obtaining his undergraduate degree in psychology, Andrew went on to earn an MS in the labor and industrial relations program. Andrew shared his professional journey with the chapter, beginning with work in food services as a student. Sharing sage advice about how employers view applicants, he stressed the importance of one's online presence and presenting oneself in a professional manner. Contrasting seeking out a job with seeking out a salary, he advised chapter members to be open to possibilities and to be comfortable about the future, without knowing exactly where one might end up. Having someone who was recently a student made him very relatable to chapter members. Andrew's messages resounded with both students and departmental faculty.

**SOCIAL EVENT:** The chapter's Holding Every Life Precious suicide prevention and mental health awareness program hosted a wine/beverage glass painting night with the goal of stress reduction. Allowing students a couple of hours of relaxation time, this event unleashed members' creativity! Not only was this event a good opportunity for members to unwind at the end of the semester, but it also allowed members to interact, build new friendships, and de-stress before final exams!

Winthrop University (SC)

**MEETING/SPEAKER EVENT:** Joshua S. Walker spoke about his experiences with bipolar disorder such as when he originally thought something was different about him, when he was diagnosed with the disorder, and how it has affected his life. To advertise for this event, the chapter wrote the information for the event on clothespins and spread the news around campus. The chapter cosponsored this event with the university’s DiGiorgio Student Union.

**SOCIAL EVENT:** The chapter sponsored Halloween Trivia, a fun social event. Every year, the chapter has a big turnout. Dr. Darren Ritzer creates trivia questions associated with Halloween and psychology. Members participating in this event usually get into groups of two and come up with their own team names. If they cannot come up with a name, Dr. Ritzer has premade names that he assigns to groups. These names are usually hilarious and make the event even more fun. Throughout the event, Dr. Ritzer hands out door prizes that typically relate to Halloween such as Dr. Who socks or Halloween movies. At the end of the event, the top three teams win cash prizes. This event is fun for college students and gives members a break from the stress of college life.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:** The chapter sponsored a community service opportunity for members to write letters to soldiers thanking them for their service. At this event, the chapter supplied construction paper, markers, and crayons for members to decorate and write their cards. At the end of the event, cards were all collected by the community service officer to be mailed overseas to the soldiers fighting for our country. This experience was rewarding and allowed members to show appreciation for the individuals fighting for the freedoms that Americans experience every day. This project taught students to be grateful for the things that they have.
Dress Smart on Your Big Day!

Consider purchasing our Psi Chi graduation regalia and other merchandise items. From T-shirts to decals, we have everything you need to impress your family and friends wherever you go. Navigating our store—cart to checkout—is quick and easy.

Check back often for new items and promo codes on our store’s main page.