

# Psychology

# Newsletter



IUP Department of Psychology Newsletter

Spring 2020, Issue 2



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## WELCOME

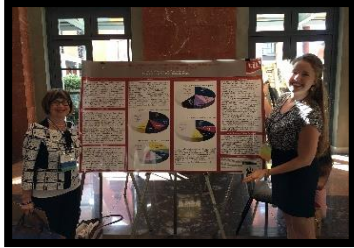
Welcome to the second issue of the IUP Psychology Department Newsletter! We hope you enjoy catching up with the Department and learning a bit about what we have been up to during the last year. The goal of the Newsletter is not only to provide information, but also to serve as a tool to connect with alumni and others currently or previously affiliated with the Psychology Department. In this Newsletter, you will find information about faculty and student activities and achievements, as well as Department events. You will additionally find stories about undergraduate alumni from 1992 to 2014. Their stories showcase the diverse paths that Psychology majors can take. Hopefully we can expand the Newsletter in the future to include varied topics of interest. If you have information and/or ideas about what to include in future Newsletters, please let us know. Please send us information about what you are doing. You can email us with any feedback, information, ideas, or questions at [psychology-newsletter@iup.edu](mailto:psychology-newsletter@iup.edu)

Most of this Newsletter was put together before the coronavirus hit. Classes and many activities have gone online. Despite canceling some activities, IUP and the Psychology Department are still functioning. We wish everyone the best as we deal with this international emergency. These are difficult times for everyone and we hope the Newsletter provides some positive distraction. It also provides a way of staying connected when we most need to. Stay healthy!



## *Faculty Activities and Achievements*

**Dr. Pearl Berman** continues to work to promote violence awareness through active participation in the National Partnership to End Interpersonal Violence (NPEIV). This partnership includes psychologists, criminologists, social workers, medical doctors, police officers, judges, and lay people from across the United States who are implementing a comprehensive plan to end interpersonal violence in three generations. Each year, Dr. Berman brings students with her to NPEIV's conference, where students attend all planning sessions and see



*Dr. Berman and Graduate Student, Megan Faye*

“live” how to be a violence prevention professional. At the conference in September 2019, Dr. Berman presented research that she conducted with an undergraduate and several graduate students. The theme for the 2019 forum was ending oppression across the lifespan. In addition, Dr. Berman was awarded the 2020 Child Advocacy Studies Award by the Zero Abuse Project.



*From left to right: Karin Hecht, Alexandra Hosack, Megan Faye, Angela Townsend*



**Dr. Tara Johnson** was on sabbatical in Spring 2019 and used this time to work on three research projects. As a developmental psychologist interested in adulthood, her main area of research focuses on cognitive aging. During the sabbatical, she finished data collection with older adults and statistical analysis for a project that examined potential strategies to eliminate age deficits in destination memory (the ability to remember to whom you told what information). Drs. Johnson, Katie Stanko (IUP undergraduate alumna), and Susan Jefferson (IUP PsyD alumna) are finalizing a manuscript to be submitted very soon that snowballs on their 2018 publication. The main finding was that the use of imagery (e.g., picturing images connecting a celebrity face with a fact) improved destination memory accuracy for both younger and older adults, eliminating the age deficit and improving confidence accuracy. A second project involved collecting online data from adult children of any age who are currently estranged from one or both parents. After Dr. Johnson received some training on qualitative data analysis during her sabbatical, she began to organize themes from the open-ended responses on the survey. However, data collection is ongoing through the Spring 2020 semester. She plans to work on this extensive data set and submit a publication by Spring 2021. The last project involved participating in an IDEAL-N grant (Institutions Developing Excellence in Academic Leadership – National) as the social scientist on the grant team. The team collected data from IUP science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) faculty on their perceptions of avenues and barriers to promotion, as well as perceptions about leadership positions at IUP. Dr. Johnson presented the research at a plenary

session at a meeting held at Case Western Reserve University for institutions involved with the grant, and at a STEM conference in Cleveland, OH. She also reported at various IUP events and has been collaborating with the IUP grant team on a manuscript. Insofar as the most important perceived avenue for promotion for women was informal mentoring, the grant team has institutionalized this finding by scheduling regular semester social gatherings for women. Insofar as the most significant perceived barrier to both promotion and leadership positions was balancing work/life and having enough time, the team has held a time management workshop and two gatherings to discuss this balance.

**Dr. Krys Kaniasty** continued his international collaborations, which resulted in a few



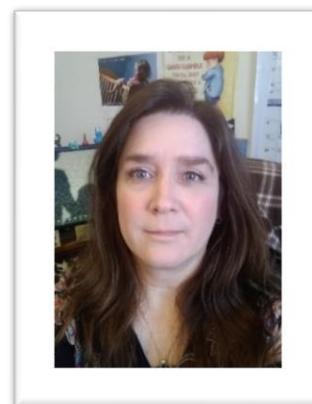
publications since our last issue. With colleagues from the Stress and Anxiety Research Society (STAR, [www.star-society.org](http://www.star-society.org)), he co-edited a volume entitled *Stress and Anxiety: Contributions of the STAR Award Winners* that features chapters written by recipients of STAR scholarly awards. Dr. Kaniasty is a past president of the society and a past editor of a scholarly journal that was associated with it (*Anxiety, Stress, & Coping: An International Journal*). Dr. Kaniasty also published two literature reviews about interpersonal and community dynamics in the aftermath of disasters. One paper entitled “*Social support, interpersonal, and community dynamics following disasters caused by natural hazards*” is part of a special issue on socio-ecological psychology published by *Current Opinion in Psychology* (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2019.07.026>). Another review, published in *Disasters*, summarized research findings on social support dynamics in the wake of disasters that occurred on the continent of Australia and Oceania between 1983 and 2013 (“*A scoping review of post-disaster social support investigations conducted after disasters that struck the Australia and Oceania continent*”) (<https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12390>). This paper is a product of a collaborative effort initiated when Krys was a Visiting Research Fellow at the School of Psychology, Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand (Spring 2016). Both reviews support the claim that parsimonious categorization of post-disaster social support and community dynamics along the two axes of mobilization and deterioration processes still represents a viable framework for understanding post-disaster individual and communal resilience. An article, “*The impact of received social support on posttraumatic growth after disaster: The Importance of both support quantity and quality*,” culminated another longer-term international partnership and was published in *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*. This project, led by Fanhong Shang (a newly minted PhD recipient educated in China & Australia), showed that the influence of the amount of received social support on “post traumatic growth” was moderated by the quality of support received by the survivors of the 2013 Lushan earthquake. In other words, enhancing the quality of help provided to disaster survivors is vital because “more” support is not necessarily better. (<https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000541>)

## *Busy Students and Alumni*

### **Undergraduate Alumni**

*Several undergraduate alumni responded to last year's Newsletter. From 1992 to 2014, undergraduate psychology majors have pursued varied careers and taken varied paths. Here are some of their stories. Please send us your stories for future issues.*

My name is **Meredith Ketcham** and I am a 1992 graduate of the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Psychology Department. I have a BA in Psychology with a minor in Child Development and Family Relations. I am currently the Administrator for Warren County Children and Youth Services in Warren, PA. I have held this position since 2018, but I have worked in the child welfare field since I graduated. I started my career working as a placement caseworker in New York, working for the Department of Social Services of Orange County. Then I moved to Illinois and worked as a foster parent recruiter for a private agency that provided foster care and case management to dependents with developmental disabilities. I moved back to PA in 1995 and began working for Crawford County Human Services, Children and Youth Department. I held various casework positions until 1997 when I was promoted to a supervisor. I left Crawford in 2014 to become the Director of Warren County Children and Youth until my recent promotion to Administrator.



My psychology degree has made it possible for me to achieve the success I have experienced in my field. It has opened doors and provided me with many different opportunities to learn and grow. I have lived and worked in both urban and rural areas and have always been able to rely on the skills and knowledge I obtained through my degree to assist me in my work. I use my degree every day, even though I no longer work directly with families on a daily basis. I would urge anyone to explore the vast employment opportunities a psychology degree offers. There is an overwhelming need for mobile therapists, behavior specialists, school social workers, school-based therapists, family-based team members, case managers, child psychologists, trauma therapists, human trafficking therapists, and child psychiatrists. Unfortunately, no matter how hard we try, the need for these services never goes away. Best of luck in however you choose to use your degree.

**Kacey Schaum** is a 2009 Bachelor of Arts in Psychology graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Upon graduation, I immediately entered the Master of Education in Higher Education Administration and Student Personnel program at Kent State University in Kent, OH. When I finished my graduate degree, I worked at The University of Alabama in Huntsville, AL for four years as the Assistant Director for Student Life. I then took on the role of Assistant Dean of Students for Leadership and Involvement at The University of Mississippi. In 2016, I moved back to Ohio to work as the Assistant Director for the College of Arts & Sciences in the Career and Leadership Development Center at Ohio University (OU). That is where I participated in neuropsychology research (Brain Based Career Development model), which my colleagues and I published in 2019.



(<https://www.nacweb.org/store/2019/brain-based-career-development-theory/>) Recently, I moved to Virginia Beach, VA to serve as the Associate Director for Experiential Learning at Old Dominion University (ODU). As someone who career coaches students, it is still so common to hear that psychology majors fear that they will not find a job with only their bachelor's degree. My entire class at OU for the psychology department was about selling your strengths and skills as a psychology major to employers. I also work directly with employers, and so many of them have told me that they want psychology majors because of their skills (e.g., interpersonal development, critical thinking, problem-solving, team development).

Additionally, I would add that advice I have is to get involved as a student and stay connected. For example, two ODU staff members who were IUP graduates were on my search committee. Was that their reason I got this job? No... but it helps to have those connections. Also, I was involved as a Peer Advisor when I was at IUP and that ultimately led me to my entire career. Dr. Catherine Dugan, who still works at IUP, has continued to be my mentor since I worked for her at Orientation, from 2006-2009. I was also a member of Alpha Sigma Tau (AST) at IUP. When I relocated to VA Beach, I found two co-workers who are AST alumni from other institutions, and now I am getting involved in the AST Tidewater Alumni Chapter. I didn't know anyone when I moved here, so my undergraduate experience in a sorority has continued to help me connect with others.

My name is **Adam Rizzo**, and I graduated from IUP in 2012. After graduation, I enjoyed my summer off but at the end of it, I went straight back to school for an online master's degree at Tiffin University in Criminal Justice and Crime Analysis. While obtaining a master's degree, I worked in direct care for the intellectually and developmentally disabled and briefly at a YMCA, before getting the first job that I felt was the closest to what I ultimately wanted to do. Finished with my master's degree, I became a Corrections Officer at a county jail. Given that I wanted to work in the criminal justice field, I felt this job was my first foot-in-the-door to something bigger. I wanted to help society in some way to make



it safer. I was there for two years until I found my current job at Renewal, Inc in Pittsburgh, PA. I am a case manager in a work release program where I have a caseload of individuals whom I help employ and help complete any other treatment necessary for their release from jail. I have been at this job since November, 2015, so I have just passed the four-year mark (the longest I've been at a job). I enjoy my employment's location because I've gotten to know the city of Pittsburgh better and am aware of fun events and annual activities that take place there. Ever since my IUP graduation, I have made it to every IUP Alumni Day at Kennywood and at PNC Park, where I have gotten a nice collection of IUP/Pirates baseball caps. Even though I don't see my graduating class at these events, I still enjoy attending and being among other IUPers. I want to try to get people who went to IUP but never knew about these events, to come along with me.

If I had any advice to give... I originally started at IUP as a Respiratory Care major and I began to feel "lost." I really didn't feel that my heart was in it anymore and I was worried, because I was in two years deep, and I thought I was stuck with it. Luckily, IUP offered a career aptitude test that helped me figure out what I'd like to do and Psychology was one of the results. I was back on track and was studying something that I was much more interested in. It's never too late. If you're not happy or no longer excited about that career path you're heading towards, you have help out there. Use it. We all have to start somewhere, and with a little hard work, you could be at a job that you love and have fun at. Even after two years with Respiratory, I still graduated in four years and on time after making the switch to Psychology. Things CAN work out in the end.

**Katie Stanko**, IUP class of 2014, finished her PhD in Cognitive & Brain Sciences with a graduate certificate in Lifespan Studies from Louisiana State University (LSU) in August 2019. As an undergraduate, Katie discovered her passion for lifespan developmental psychology (i.e., “the womb to the tomb”), with a particular interest in older adults. At IUP, Katie worked with Dr. Tara Johnson for her honors thesis investigating strategy use in older adults for destination memory. As Katie was a first-generation college student, she also received support from the McNair Scholars program on her path to her PhD. At LSU, she received the Huel Perkins Fellowship for first-generation and underrepresented doctoral students. A large portion of Katie’s research at LSU focused on successful aging—why



do some people live to be 100 and in great health, while others die at 50 after chronic illness? Additionally, she studied the influence of stress and trauma on successful aging, specifically after experiencing a natural disaster. For her dissertation, Katie studied successful aging and psychological resilience in middle-aged to older adults who experienced Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Great Flood of Baton Rouge in 2016. Currently, she serves as Project Coordinator for the Mitochondria and Psychological Stress study at the University of Pittsburgh, in Dr. Anna Marsland’s behavioral physiology lab. Most people know that mitochondrion is “the powerhouse of the cell.” But did you know that mitochondria produce their own DNA that is passed down maternally? Preliminary research in the lab shows that when undergoing psychological stress, such as giving a public speech, mitochondria release DNA into the cell and bloodstream. They

hypothesize that this mitochondrial DNA will cause an increase in bodily inflammation, a known risk factor for poor health. In this study, they will test the relationships between mitochondrial DNA, stress, and inflammation, with an overall goal of better understanding why stress can be harmful to one's health. As Project Coordinator, Dr. Stanko is in charge of creating the study protocol, recruiting and testing participants, and ensuring compliance with all procedures. Katie comments that this position was ideal for her, as she is getting more insight into biological aspects of aging to complement the psychosocial expertise she gained in graduate school.

Dr. Stanko also believes in the power of mentoring. She notes: As a first-generation college student, without mentorship, I would not have even known where to begin with regard to graduate school. I was afraid that getting a PhD would isolate me from my blue-collar roots and family, but having others' experienced advice helped ease the transition. If you have any questions about grad school, careers, or life after college, feel free to email me at [KatieStanko@pitt.edu](mailto:KatieStanko@pitt.edu).

## Graduate Alumni

**Camille Interligi** graduated from the Department's PsyD Program in 2017. Camille's



dissertation (under the direction of Dr. Maureen McHugh), "Finding What Feels Good" Workshop: Re-imagining the Discourse of Young Adult Female Sexuality," involved the development, conduct, and evaluation of a workshop encouraging a sex positive approach to college women. She found that participation in the workshop was correlated with higher levels of entitlement to pleasure from self, and to self-efficacy in achieving pleasure. In their evaluation of the workshop, participants noted that "talking with others about sexuality is a critically important part of recognizing and respecting sexual

diversity among others, and of feeling normalized regarding one's sexual practices, preferences, and desires." Camille and Dr. McHugh presented and published together, addressing sexuality, frequently focusing on sexuality and older women, and on desire, desirability, and sexual scripts and discourses. Following graduation, Dr. Interligi developed (with some colleagues) a sex salon in the Pittsburgh area that incorporates the sex positive approach advocated in her dissertation. The salon meets monthly in various homes and gives its diverse members a chance to talk about sexuality. Camille's dissertation, and her experiences with the sex salon are the basis of a workshop accepted for presentation at the 2020 conference of the Association for Women in Psychology (AWP) in Austin, TX. Dr. Interligi and Dr. McHugh continue to work together on projects that critically examine how older women's sexuality is impacted by ageist stereotypes, limited sexual education and information, and heteronormativity. In 2019, they published a chapter on "Older Women and Sexual Health" in the *Routledge International Handbook on Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health*. These themes will also be addressed at the AWP conference in a symposium on *Heteronormativity, Shame, and Sexual Agency*. In 2019, Camille received funding to participate in a week-long workshop in Loveland, CO with Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes, which focused on the clinical application of her book, *Women Who Run with the*

*Wolves*. Camille is currently a Staff Psychologist in the Counseling Center at the University of Pittsburgh, where their research is focused on diversity in sexual practice and outreach program development. Their approach to therapy is collaborative and affirming and is influenced strongly by the tenets of intersectional feminism and social justice. Camille especially loves working with students around issues of gender, sexuality, and race; relationship concerns; and navigating life with other marginalized identities.

## Current Undergraduates and Graduate Students

On August 16, 2019, Psychology major and Philosophy minor, **Abigaëlle “Abby” Vertil**, was sworn in as a student member of the IUP Council of Trustees. A student member is appointed yearly by the Governor to the Council, which meets quarterly. To apply, Abby wrote an essay about her leadership experiences and was interviewed by the entire Council. Abby serves on the Student Affairs Committee and finds it “interesting to be in the room to represent the student body of IUP when important decisions are being made.” She connects with students through chat groups on Facebook and represents their interests concerning varied issues, from advising to housing to diversity. One of Abby’s goals as a Council member is to contribute to “making college fit for everybody,” no matter what their circumstances or experiences may be. Part of her role as a student trustee includes attending formal functions on campus and attending PA Council of Trustees meetings. She also sits on the Executive Board of the IUP Student Government Association (SGA), which enables her to serve as a liaison between the Council of Trustees and the SGA. She participates in Advocacy Days when SGA goes to Harrisburg to talk to PA state representatives to advocate for the State System of Higher Education. Abby is a 2017 graduate of String Theory High School in Philadelphia, a performing arts school where she majored in dance. At IUP, Abby is a Promising Scholar and received an Aramark Scholarship in memory of Nicole Chichy. She is a student in the Psychology Department’s Honors Program, as well as a resident assistant on campus. And if all of that is not enough to keep her busy, she is also a new mother of son Logan who was born on September 12, 2019. Abby plans to pursue a career in Industrial/Organizational Psychology.



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**Victoria Hawth**, a clinical psychology doctoral candidate, recently received a \$1,000 grant for her dissertation entitled “Confirmation bias and pedophilic disorder diagnosis in the decision making of Sexually Violent Predator commitment evaluations” from the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA). Her research examines the role confirmation bias plays in various aspects of Sexually Violent Predator (SVP) evaluations. Results from this study will provide more data regarding whether clinicians are unduly or implicitly influencing juror or judge decision making in SVP cases. Considering the high ramifications for those committed and society in general, as well as the overall yearly costs of SVP commitment, efforts focused on reducing forensic bias and promoting evidence-based practice should be considered highly important. Victoria received her BA in Psychology at Louisiana State University. She is a fifth-year doctoral student who is currently on internship in the forensic outpatient track at the Ohio Psychology Internship Consortium. Her long-term goal is to become board certified in forensic psychology, and have a career in which she completes various forensic evaluations and provides treatment to forensic populations. Her dissertation advisor, Dr. Anthony Perillo, comments that “public safety and people's freedom are at stake during SVP evaluations, so the forensic psychologists doing these evaluations have a duty to avoid being overly influenced by potentially biasing information. Victoria has developed a study that will offer forensic psychologists insight into the extent to which we are prone to view a case through the lens of that person's past diagnosis. I am thrilled that ATSA is supporting her work and very proud of Victoria!”



## *Department Activities, News, and Events*

- **The Stanley W. Lore Undergraduate Psychology Scholarship** is given to a junior psychology major who has achieved an exceptional academic record. The scholarship was established in 1987 by the Psychology Department at IUP in honor of our first chairperson. One to three awards are typically granted each year. The 2019-2020 recipients are **Courtney Burkhardt** and **Rebecca Maher**.

*After more than 30 years, the Lore Fund could use some replenishing. To donate, please go to [iup.edu/Lore](http://iup.edu/Lore)*



*From left to right: Dr. Pearl Berman, Courtney Burkhardt, Rebecca Maher, Dr. Tara Johnson*

- Named in honor of the founder of the Center for Applied Psychology, the ***Richard Magee Scholarship*** honors a member of the PsyD Program’s third-year class who demonstrates outstanding clinical skills, leadership among their colleagues, and service to the community and colleagues. The current Magee scholars are **Megan Faye** and **Kermeka Desai**.



**Megan Faye’s** childhood dream was to be a psychologist working in aggression and violence prevention. She graduated from the University of Mary Washington in 2016. Before graduate school, Megan worked in a variety of settings, including with Alzheimer’s patients, children, survivors of sexual trauma, and refugees. At IUP, Megan is a teaching associate and has completed practica directed toward providing treatment services to both victims and offenders of violence. Her dissertation explores the experiences of therapists working with people who have committed sex offenses. She is currently interviewing for her internship year in forensic settings, working towards that childhood dream job.

**Kermeka Desai** graduated with a BA in Psychology from UCLA in 2013. She spent a year working as a Behavior Therapist for children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder before beginning the Clinical Psychology PsyD program at IUP. As a fifth-year student, she is currently completing her full-time internship at the Ohio Psychology Internship Consortium in the Forensic Track, where she regularly engages in treating self-referred and court-ordered individuals and groups and completes forensic evaluations for the courts. Her dissertation focuses on clinician decision-making regarding imminent risk of violence. She presented preliminary findings of this research at the American Psychology-Law Society’s annual conference in March.



- **PSI CHI**



Psi Chi is the International Honors Society in Psychology. IUP’s chapter of Psi Chi also functions as our Psychology Club. We aim to make the content of our bi-weekly meetings relevant to a broad audience and welcome everyone to attend meetings (whether or not students are official members). Psi Chi has been very active since the last newsletter. We hosted a Question Persuade Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention workshop and a Green Dot Bystander training. Individuals from Hopeful Hearts, including Gordon Thornton (professor emeritus),

talked about the grieving process and provided tips on how to handle grief. Our current PsyD students participated in information panels where they shared why they chose to pursue a PsyD and discussed clinical jobs that students can obtain post-graduation. We also had a few local therapy dogs and their owners (including our graduate secretary Sheila Gardner and her dog Clover) teach us about the role of therapy dogs and jumping through hoops (literally). While we are sad that we won't be able to hold in-person meetings for the second half of the spring semester due to the coronavirus, we are doing what we can to continue supporting our students. For example, we hosted a Zoom meeting to give students the opportunity to share with each other how the pandemic has affected them.



We are always interested in hearing from alumni! If you would like to talk with current students about job opportunities, career trajectories, advice on life after college, or any topics/issues of interest, please email the Psi Chi Faculty Advisor, Dr. Stephanie Davis, at [sdavis@iup.edu](mailto:sdavis@iup.edu). We can organize a remote meeting via Zoom or you can join us in-person once we are back on campus.

Psi Chi is also celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Chapter of the international society. Congratulations!!

- In February, 2020, **Dr. David LaPorte** and several generations of PsyD Program students attended the International Neuropsychological Society's annual meeting in Denver, CO. **Dr. Kristina Talbert** graduated in 2013 and is currently completing her postdoctoral residency requirements with Neuro Assessment & Development Center in Salt Lake City, UT. **Dr. Navya Kamath** graduated in 2019 and is currently in the first year of a two-year postdoctoral fellowship in pediatric neuropsychology at the Indiana University School of Medicine. **Dr. Karen Kosky** graduated in 2019 and is currently a postdoctoral fellow specializing in adult neuropsychology in the Department of Health Psychology at the University of Missouri. **Ms. Rebecca Frazier** is a neuropsychology intern at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, PA and will be graduating in 2020. **Mr. Christopher Metzger** will also be graduating in 2020 and is currently completing an internship at the Columbus VA in Columbus, OH, with major rotations in neuropsychology and health psychology. **Dr. Emily Brickell** graduated in 2017 and is working as a neuropsychologist at Ochsner Health System in New Orleans, LA.



*From left to right: Dr. Kristina Talbert, Dr. David LaPorte, Dr. Navya Kamath, Dr. Karen Kosky, Rebecca Frazier, Christopher Metzger, Dr. Emily Brickell*

## Transitions

In May, *Dr. Pearl Berman's* term as Department Chair will come to an end, and *Dr. Lisa Newell* will start as the new Department Chair. We are grateful to Dr. Berman for her service as Department Chair for the last three years. We wish her well as she returns to a full load of classes and continues her work on violence prevention.

All the best to *Dr. Cora Lou Sherburne*, who came to IUP in 2000 and retired in December, 2019.

Best wishes to *Ms. Donna Buggey*, who, after 20 years as the administrative helm of the Center for Applied Psychology (CAP), retired in March, 2020.

Congratulations to *Dr. Laura Knight* for being promoted to Associate Professor and to *Dr. Lisa Newell* for being promoted to Full Professor.

## Psychology Day

Since May 2016, the last Friday of classes means **PSYCHOLOGY DAY** in the Psychology Department. This daylong event is designed to further the professional development of our students, and it enables Psychology faculty and students to present their work in talks and poster sessions. Psychology Day starts with a Keynote Address, and also showcases presentations by alumni and local mental health agencies on careers and practicum opportunities in psychology. Dr. Don McAleer, PsyD Class of 1988, gave last year's Keynote Address, "A Backwards Look into the Future: How I Ended up in Medical/Neuropsychology and Potential for Your Future." Last year there were presentations on Preventative Mental Health (Roxanne Wray, LPC), College Student Mental Health (Jessica Miller, PsyD), and Medically Assisted Treatment for Opioid Addiction (Richard Kutz, PsyD). In addition, last year featured undergraduate training workshops for Narcan, Bystander Intervention, and Suicide Prevention.

Unfortunately, this year's Psychology Day is cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. We look forward to next year.

If you are interested in participating in future Psychology Days, please let us know! There is always a session on "Where are They Now?" We strongly encourage undergraduate and graduate alumni to present their work, talk to students about working as a psychologist, and talk to students about what you did after graduation and how a psychology degree prepared you for the work you do. We are also looking for other types of presentations or activities for students, such as workshops or panel discussions. We are interested in any interesting ideas. Please email the Psychology Day Committee at [psychology-day@iup.edu](mailto:psychology-day@iup.edu).

## *Musings*

*This section of the Newsletter serves as a forum for presenting ideas about psychological issues and topics. In this musing, Dr. David LaPorte muses about paranoia. Musings by students and alumni are welcome. If you are interested in submitting, please contact us at [psychology-newsletter@iup.edu](mailto:psychology-newsletter@iup.edu)*

Targeted Individuals  
By David J. LaPorte

In 2015 Dr. LaPorte published a book on paranoia entitled, *Paranoid: Exploring suspicion from the dubious to the delusional*. When not talking or writing about paranoia, Dr. LaPorte can be found hiking, skiing, or submerged under water somewhere.



Do you feel that the government, or some other group (e.g., Mossad) has selected you to be the subject of psychological and physical torture using methods such as microwave attacks involving Synthetic Telepathy (aka: voice-to-skull signals), psychotronic surveillance, and stalking? If so, then you might be a Targeted Individual. TIs, the term such individuals use to refer to themselves, reportedly number in the hundreds of thousands in the US and many more worldwide. These individuals believe that they are the undeserved victims of organized *gang stalking* that interferes with their sleep, burns them with space or terrestrially-based technologies, and makes their lives a living hell. Such gang stalking is purposeful in that the individual feels selectively targeted for harassment. Hence the term *targeted individuals*.

So, what do we know about these individuals from a scientific standpoint? The short answer is very little. Most of what has been published to date has appeared in popular print/online media (e.g., *New York Times*, *BuzzFeed*, *Wired Magazine*). Such articles typically interview a few TIs and then a few “experts.” However, none of the experts appear to have talked to the TIs directly. Reading accounts of these individuals, it is not hard to conclude that they are suffering from paranoid delusions. However, every clinician working in this field has experienced someone who has related a story that on first blush appears quite fantastical and seemingly delusional, only to find out that it is actually true. I have met God, or someone who believes that they are, dozens of times in my career. I assume that most of these individuals are not deities but are suffering from a delusion. I have also met someone who was one of Stalin’s henchmen. For real. It is also not easy to dismiss the claims that TIs make about microwave weapons directed against them when there is the possibility that US diplomats in Cuba may have been subjected to such a “weapon.” It is perhaps a bit easier to reject claims made by the TI community that mass shootings in the US are the result of subliminal messaging techniques by the FBI and CIA using cell phone towers and GPS satellites that presumably implant murderous thoughts into the heads of the shooters. At least one study coming from Australia that surveyed TIs found that most were

probably delusional. This is in contrast to finding that few others who have been stalked in the more traditional sense (e.g., followed from class, showing up at someone's place of work) were found to be delusional.

There are all kinds of delusions, including the belief that one transforms into a wolf or wild beast at times (lycanthropy), or that family members have been replaced by imposters (Capgras Syndrome). In the case of TIs, the type of delusion would appear to be of the *persecutory* type. Individuals with persecutory delusions typically believe that others harbor malicious intent and are out to get them. We tend to think of schizophrenia, and paranoid schizophrenia in particular, when we think of paranoia. However, paranoia is found in a wide variety of clinical conditions ranging from paranoid personality disorder, to Alzheimer's, to posttraumatic stress disorder. In the case of TIs, it would appear that symptoms reported are consistent with Delusional Disorder, Persecutory Type. Delusional disorder is a rather rare condition that in some respects is similar to schizophrenia. However, unlike schizophrenia, people who suffer from delusional disorder are typically not manifestly strange and do not have peculiar speech patterns (aka thought disorder). In many respects, they are relatively normal until the issue they are paranoid about comes up. In the case of TIs, it is gang stalking with the use of dubious weapons.

For something to be considered a delusion it must be a fixed belief that is largely unamenable to change despite evidence to the contrary. It does not necessarily need to be implausible or bizarre. For example, what is implausible in one generation may not be in another. One hundred years ago if you said you were being surveilled by aircraft, you might have been labeled as delusional. In the age of helicopters, drones and satellites, such a claim cannot simply be dismissed as delusional. Thus, when TIs claim they are the victim of microwave weapons, can we be absolutely sure that they are not?

What are we to make of TIs? At least one point is clear—these individuals are truly suffering. If you felt that all of your physical and emotional ailments were due to somebody using a magnetron and microwave weapons to specifically harass you, you would likely not be a very happy camper. And you might be an angry camper as well, since no one believes you, except for other TIs. That anger is now being turned into activism as billboards and posters in subway systems throughout the world now draw attention to gang stalking and government malfeasance. Government hearings at the local and national levels are looking into the claims of TIs. But until a sufficient number of these individuals are properly evaluated we must suspend clinical judgment. That is what science requires of us.

## *In Memoriam*

We are saddened that Dr. Carl Schneider died in 2019. Dr. Schneider was Department Chair from 1989-1999. He was a physiological psychologist who was active in creating the Drugs and Behavior course for the graduate program. While he was Chair, he oversaw the renovation of Uhler Hall to serve the PsyD Program's needs (e.g., space for the Center for Applied Psychology) and to enhance the Department's research facilities. As you can see, faculty colleagues remember him fondly and with gratitude.

- Carl Schneider was a boss, a scholar, mentor, and a dear friend. Demanding and fair, creative and industrious, encouraging and supportive, caring and entertaining. He was really funny too, and his piquant sense of humor was a great stress-buffering resource for himself and for all of us. Classical performance arts lover, sophisticated chef, and avid traveler. Ola, Natalia, and I think of him often – the Hun, Cyclops, and Gummy Bears Man. –*Krys Kaniasty*
- There are a few things that immediately come to mind when I think of Carl. Carl was direct and honest, and he had a wonderfully unique sense of humor. He loved doing and talking about physiological psychology and he constantly worked to keep up with research in his field. I was a beneficiary of Carl's relaxed approach to being a mentor and collaborator, and I have missed him since the day that he retired. –*Raymond Pavloski*
- I remember that Carl was Chair when I got to IUP and I will always appreciate his support as I was starting my career. He was interested in my work and made sure that I had the resources I needed. –*Catherine Raeff*
- Carl was a steady hand on the wheel of the department, recognizing all the unnecessary nonsense and helping us to navigate around most of it. He was a helpful friend and a dedicated scientist. The department will not see his like again. –*Lloyd Stires*
- Dr. Schneider was interested in neural regeneration and worked with salamanders. He would grow a foot from a head and an eye on the back. I remember that the regenerated parts were functional. He enjoyed showing new psychology majors or high school students his bizarre salamanders. –*Gordon Thornton*
- Dr. Schneider was an extremely effective Department Chair who was very fair minded in his treatment of faculty. During his tenure as Chair, he tackled many difficult issues and helped to move the Department forward. One thing many members of the Department may not know is that Carl had an amazing, keen, and sometimes irreverent sense of humor. –*George Walz*
- Dr. Schneider was sensitive to the different needs of faculty and provided varying types of support that encouraged us to succeed in our profession. As a new faculty member, Dr. Schneider and his wife, Dr. Barbara Marquette, graciously offered their home as temporary housing for my family when my new housing was not immediately available. This action greatly enhanced my initial introduction to IUP and I will always be grateful for their kindness. –*Susan Zimny*

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