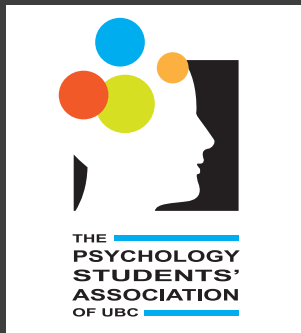


Issue 5, March 2012



Decision making,  
community  
service learning,  
events and faculty  
interviews

send comments to  
[psa.editor@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:psa.editor@psych.ubc.ca)

or visit  
<http://psa.psych.ubc.ca>

# Ps $\Psi$ ched!

## Welcome to UBC's Psychology newsletter!

Sponsored by the Psychology Student Association, this newsletter aims to keep students and faculty alike in the know about one of UBC's most diverse and populated departments.

We hope to provide insight about opportunities for student involvement and career possibilities after graduation, information about the new and exciting

research being explored and reveal the many subfields and career trajectories available within the field.

Not to mention, we hope to provide a platform for staff and students to speak to their interests, contribute articles to the newsletter and express their opinions on a monthly basis.

Read on to find out more!

"We are what we  
repeatedly do.  
Excellence then,  
is not an act,  
but a habit."

– Aristotle

# A Letter from the Editor

## Enjoy Spring While It's Here



### Ashley Whillans

I am a fourth year Honours psychology student with a keen interest in wellbeing, happiness and health. I am currently working with Dr. Edith Chen, studying the effects of empathy and perspective taking on health in families with adolescent children.

Hey there friends,

I hope you had a great “reading break” – I know I did, even though I think I got a little less reading done than I would have liked – but, maybe that’s a good thing. (I guess I’ll find out after I write midterms next week).

Just in case you aren’t sick of studying yet, in time for finals, our latest issue of *Psyched!* has lots of study essentials – including an article about procrastination, how to look at the bright side of statistics, as well as a few tips from Professor Sunaina Assanand – and, of course, a few esoteric GRE words to keep all those future or current exam writers entertained.

Yet, while studying is important all year long, with graduation (for some) just around the corner, don’t forget to find ways to enjoy the last weeks of the semester, too! As Daniel Gilbert wrote in his book *Stumbling on Happiness*, “We treat our future selves as though they were our children, spending most of the hours of most of our days constructing tomorrows that we hope will make them happy” (Daniel Gilbert – *Stumbling on Happiness*).

Taking this quote a step further, while your future exam-writing selves are important, remember to make your present-day selves happy and to find some time to enjoy the

year’s home stretch – especially if you are approaching the finish line.

Ashley

Ashley Whillans  
*Psyched!* Founding Editor  
The Psychology Student  
Association of UBC

## Contributors

### Kino Zhao Assoc. Editor



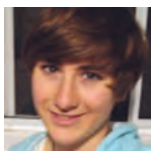
### Pavel Kozik Contributor



### Leena Wu Staff Writer



### Jade McGregor Staff Writer



### Carly Thornton Staff Writer



### Meghan Buckley Staff Writer



### Estephanie Sta.Maria – Contributor

I am a 4th year studying Psychology and Speech Science. Driven by curiosity, I am interested in the intersections of cognitive development, communication, and educational potentials in children.

As well, I work as a research assistant in the Centre of Nursing and Health Behaviour Research and am involved with UBC’s Community Learning Initiatives.



### Charlie Deng – Contributor

I am a third year student working in Dr. Hewitt’s perfectionism lab and my research interest involves bonding, social comparison, competition and perfectionism.

I enjoy studying philosophy, math, computer science and of course psychology. I admire the works done by David Hume and Mischa Elman.



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# PsΨch Stimuli

## Check out the upcoming events!

### PSA Sponsored Events

#### 14th Annual PSA Conference

Our mission is to provide a professional environment for undergraduate researchers to showcase their work, gain experience in presenting at conferences, and contribute to the scientific community. Undergraduate researchers present either a poster or an oral presentation.

Date: Saturday, March 31st, 2012

Tentative time: 9am – 5pm

Place: 1250 CIRS Bldg, UBC campus

Keynote speaker: Helen J. Neville, Professor of Psychology at the University of Oregon (Ph.D., Cornell University; M.A., Simon Fraser University; B.A., University of British Columbia

Applications now closed.

### Undergraduate Conferences

#### MURC

The Multidisciplinary Undergraduate Research Conference (MURC) is a one-day celebration of undergraduate research at UBC. This is an excellent opportunity for students to present to an interested audience of fellow undergraduate researchers. The top presenters from this year's Conference will be invited to submit papers for possible publication in the conference proceedings. They may also be asked to compete to represent UBC at the U21 Undergraduate Research Conference this July at Waseda University in Japan.

Applications are available online – conference takes place March 24, 2012.

### Announcements

#### Grad Photos:

You can book your appointment anytime between now and April 30, 2012 (deadline) to

get a 15% discount off of your graduation photo order(s)!

Just don't forget to book your appointment and bring your PSA membership card at the time of ordering.

You will need to go on their website at [www.evangelosphotography.com](http://www.evangelosphotography.com) and book an appointment, or call Evangelos Photography Ltd. at 604-731-8314 or 604-732-3023.

More information relating to graduation photos, or PSA in general, can be found on the PSA website: <http://psa.psych.ubc.ca/>

#### Research Announcement:

Dr. Peter Suedfeld's REST Lab

Our presentation at International Astronautical Congress (IAC) 2012 in Capetown, South Africa, "*Personal growth following long-duration spaceflight*" (Suedfeld, Brcic, Johnson, & Gushin) was selected to be the keynote address for the entire Space Life Sciences Symposium, which was comprised of eight full paper sessions (*Behaviour, Performance and Psychosocial Issues in Space; Human Physiology in Space; Medical Care for Humans in Space; Radiation Fields, Effects and Risks in Human Space Missions; Astrobiology and Exploration; Life Support and EVA Systems; Biology in Space; Living in Space - Education and Outreach in Space Life Sciences*) plus several poster sessions.

#### Upcoming Speakers:

Speaker: Frans de Waal, C.D.

Candler Prof. of Psych. & Director of the Living Links Centre at the Yerkes National Primate Research Center at Emory Univ.

Title: Morality Before Religion: Empathy, Fairness and Prosocial Primates

WEB URL: [http://www.psych.ubc.ca/media/docuploads/deWaal\\_poster\\_PW%20series.pdf](http://www.psych.ubc.ca/media/docuploads/deWaal_poster_PW%20series.pdf)

The talk will be on "*Morality Before Religion: Empathy, Fairness and Prosocial Primates*" and it will be held on Thursday, March 8, at 3:00-5:00 pm in the Frederic Wood Theatre. A reception will follow.

### Undergraduate Advising

#### BA Advising

Drop in hours are Tues/Fri from 10-12 and 2-4 in Kenny 2502.

Students majoring in Psychology are not required to seek Departmental advice. You are, however, strongly encouraged to review your program with a Faculty of Arts advisor well before you plan to graduate.

Make an appointment with advising by on Weds/Thurs via telephone (822-2755) or e-mail ([undergrad@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:undergrad@psych.ubc.ca))

#### BSC Advising

E-mail Dr. Kiran Soma ([ksoma@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:ksoma@psych.ubc.ca)), Dr. Boris Gorzalka ([bgorzalka@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:bgorzalka@psych.ubc.ca)), or Dr. Michael Souza ([souza@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:souza@psych.ubc.ca)) to ask a quick question or to book an appointment.

#### Careers advising

E-mail Undergraduate Advising ([undergrad@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:undergrad@psych.ubc.ca)) to book an appointment to meet with Dr. Sunaina Assanand.

## Contact us

phone: 604-822-6147

email: [psa.editor@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:psa.editor@psych.ubc.ca)

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# Community Service Learning

## Involving students in the real world



**BY CARLY THORNTON & ESTEPHANIE ROSE**

How would you like to improve your resume, gain relevant work experience, absorb more from your courses, and contribute to the community all at the same time? Community Service Learning (CSL) is your opportunity to do all of the above! CSL offers placements for students in organizations concerned with improving community life. Students then work to attain goals defined by each organization, and relate their community experiences to classroom learning.

### Professors who Support CSL:

Among UBC's psychology professors who are supportive of the CSL initiative are Dr. Tom Ehmann and Dr. Sunaina Assanand.

Dr. Ehmann offers CSL placements through his course PSYC 420: Community Psychology. Community Psychology is an action-oriented area of psychology that encourages civic participation and the building of communities while remaining empirically grounded.

As a professor, Ehmann expressed his excitement toward involving students in community endeavors. Among his biggest thrill is seeing how many of the ideas, theories, and actions that come up during CSL placements resonate with students and nurture their enthusiasm and curiosity, he explained.

Likewise, Dr. Assanand expressed enthusiasm about incorporating CSL components in her course PSYC 320: Gender Psychology. She also emphasized the benefits of CSL, above and beyond looking great on a student's resume.

"It is not simply about work site placements, which certainly benefit the student. . . In addition, CSL takes learning out of the classroom and brings the course content to life," she explained. Furthermore, she believes CSL really fosters a sense of civic responsibility among her students.

### CSL Options:

Organized with the help of UBC CSL coordinators, placement options encouraged in

Ehmann's class include the *Mount Pleasant Neighborhood House*, *Canucks Autism Network*, *UBC's Trek Program*, *Metro Vancouver Dream Centre Society*, *Mosaic*, as well as Vancouver-based public schools.

Comparably, Assanand's class can choose from five organizations that deal with gender issues covered in the course material. These organizations are *LEAF's No Means No Program*, *the Court Watch Program*, *Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services*, *YWCA's youth and college mentorship program*, and the *Beauty Night Society*.

### Why participate:

Overall, CSL complements the course materials. "Students get to work within settings that assist [often disadvantaged populations] wherein a student gets to have a first-hand look at why the organization came into being," explained Ehmann.

Assanand also emphasized the role of the community partners as "co-educators", as students assist in helping to fulfill the goals of the organizations.

Recognizing that students may find CSL challenging to fit their already busy schedules, Assanand encourages students to seriously consider becoming involved with CSL.

"[Such] enriched learning opportunities are few and far between, whether they be community service learning, exchange programs, [or] community based research placements, but they are so immensely valuable – so valuable beyond your undergraduate degree", she said.

### Expectations:

Throughout the term, Ehmann and Assanand encourage students to engage in weekly reflections and discussions with their peers. At the end of the course, students complete a final paper that synthesizes their community service as it relates to the course material and their sense of civic responsibility. Altogether, CSL combines the empirical principles of psychology with personal reflection.

Whether students continue in psychology or

not, Ehmann expressed hope that by asking students to reflect on their CSL experiences they would remember the main principles of Community Psychology and apply them by "considering (and reflecting) on context, interactions between multiple layers within the system, personal values, and community strengths rather than only focusing on deficits."

### Going Forward:

Over the last two years that PSYC 420 has been taught, Ehmann has received positive feedback, and is happy to see CSL components being used in other UBC psychology courses. Additionally, Assanand hopes to integrate CSL into her other courses including PSYC 307: Cultural Psychology and PSYC 322: Adulthood and Aging.

Overall, we encourage you to keep a look out for CSL opportunities throughout your studies, and take your degree, learning, and communal contributions to the next level! Ψ

### Additional Information Community Service Learning Placements

#### Community Psychology:

- Mount Pleasant Neighborhood House (<http://www.mpnh.org/>)
- Canucks Autism Network (<http://canucksautism.ca/>)
- UBC Trek Program (<http://trek.ubc.ca/>)
- Metro Vancouver Dream Centre Society (<http://www.vancouverdreamcentre.ca/>)
- Mosaic (<http://www.mosaicbc.com/>)

#### Gender Psychology

- LEAF No Means No Program (<http://www.westcoastleaf.org/index.php>)
- Court Watch Program (<http://www.canadacourtwatch.com/>)
- Vancouver & LM Multicultural Family Support Services (<http://www.vlmfss.ca/>)
- YMCA Youth Mentorship Program (<http://www.ywcavan.org/content/YOUTH/115>)
- Beauty Night Society (<http://beautynight.org/>)

# Music that looks like a rainbow and words that taste like bacon?

## An Introduction to Synesthesia

BY PAVEL KOZIK

### The Experience of Synesthesia

Whenever James Wannerton hears the word “jail” he automatically tastes bacon in his mouth. This unusual experience of auditory stimulation leading to a taste sensation is a form of synesthesia. More broadly speaking, synesthesia is any condition in which stimulation in one sense consistently leads to further stimulation in the same or a different sense.

If you have ever been on a road trip, you’ve likely discovered that you and your friends have different musical tastes and preferences. For most of us however, the experience of hearing music goes no further than an auditory sensation. For certain synesthetes this auditory sensation is just the beginning. On hearing musical notes such as a B-flat or a D-sharp, these individuals perceive colours – a B-flat might elicit a burst of blue, while a D-sharp might elicit a stream of pink. Listening to music within a dark unlit room has been described by some of these synesthetes as comparable to a personal light show.

As you read this article, hopefully the print is legible and well spaced, with the letters themselves a distinct black contrasted on a white background. There are synesthetes, more formally known as grapheme-colour synesthetes, for whom letters elicit colours. For these individuals, the letter “B” might be seen as being blue, the letter “Q” might be seen as being pink, and the letter “K” might be seen as being a dark burgundy. A grapheme-colour synesthete while reading this article will see more than just black text on a white background, they will see a unique mix of colours.

### The State of Synesthesia Research

While a fascinating condition no doubt, scientific interest toward synesthesia has only recently experienced somewhat of a resurgence. Although it was a popular research topic during the late 19th to early 20th centuries, after the rise of behaviorism interest in the topic began to decline.

It is only after the cognitive revolution that synesthesia began to once more captivate scholars and draw scientific inquiry. Following this revival, scientists have returned to one of the most fundamental questions of all, what is the actual cause or origin of synesthesia? Unfortunately for our curiosity there is currently no definitive answer, but there are two dominant hypotheses.

### Incomplete Neural Pruning Hypothesis:

The first dominant hypothesis claims that synesthesia arises due to incomplete neural pruning. During early infancy the brain undergoes rapid change as certain neural connections are retracted and removed. We may imagine the brain during development like a cluttered office that is being reorganized in an attempt to become more efficient. As this pruning process advances, neural connections that may have facilitated synesthesia are removed. Connections between the sound processing part of the brain and the taste processing part of the brain may be retracted or weakened, and with this, we lose the potential of experiencing tastes after hearing sounds. From this hypothesis, it may be that we all initially had the potential to develop synesthesia early on in life; however for most of us, this potential was soon dispelled.

### Inhibition Theory of Synesthesia

The second hypothesis takes a different turn, and states that we all have the neural connections required to experience synesthesia, yet, these connections are strongly inhibited. Each of us may have neural connections from the letter-identification part of the brain to the colour-perception part of the brain, though these connections are inhibited from communicating with one another. In the case of grapheme-colour synesthesia however, these neural connections are inhibited to a lesser degree (if at all) and from this the two brain areas are free to communicate. Granted such neural freedom the letter “B” may have the potential to elicit the colour blue.



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### Now what?

As questions about synesthesia continue to puzzle and allure us, we remain passionate about finding answers. What is the actual cause of synesthesia? Is synesthesia beneficial for certain tasks? What role does conscious awareness play? Does culture and upbringing impact synesthetic experiences? Although this is only a very brief introductory article, it is evident even here that there is still much left to discuss, investigate, examine, and even debate. Let us hope that curiosity towards synesthesia may continue to spark scientific inquiry for many years to come.

### For Further Reading:

- The Frog Who Croaked Blue by Ward
- Wednesday is Indigo Blue by Eagleman & Cytowic

If you have any questions please feel free to contact the author:

pavelkozik@gmail.com

Or synesthesia researchers at the U.B.C. Vision Laboratory:

ubc.synaesthesia@gmail.com Ψ



# Judgement and Decision Making

## A peek into human rationality, or the lack thereof

BY KINO ZHAO

*This semester, I am taking a course on rationality and human decision making. Now that a quarter of the term has passed, I hope I can do a decent job in explaining some of the topics we have talked about in class, as well as why these topics are so interesting.*

Imagine you are a New York taxi driver in Camerer et al's 1997 study, and assume that you, like most people, do not want to work all day long. How would you schedule your work load? If you wanted to maximize efficiency, the most reasonable thing to do would be to work longer on the "good days" when lots of people were calling taxis, and work less on the "bad days" when fewer people needed a cab. However, surprisingly, if you, like most of the cab drivers surveyed in this study, set yourself a fixed amount of salary to earn each day, you would probably work longer on the "bad days" and shorter on the "good days".

If you have ever taken a course in philosophy, economics, or anything to do with game theory, you probably know a thing or two about how humans *should* reason; but you do not have to take any course to learn humans do not always reason very well. So what happens when, as described above, we fail to reason the way that we should?

In my mind, the question of human rationality began when psychologists and economists decided to talk to one another, and realized that they were operating on different assumptions when it came to human reasoning. In economic models, people are often considered machines that operate under certain principles. People reason their way through the world in more or less the same way, and the structure of the economic system decides whether the result will be utopia or dystopia (e.g., good or bad). Psychologists, on the other hand, consider people to be slightly-smarter than animals and subject to many cognitive errors and biases.

Which side is correct? You might have guessed it – neither side tells the complete story. We all have the experience of giving in to the irresistible temptation of a choco-

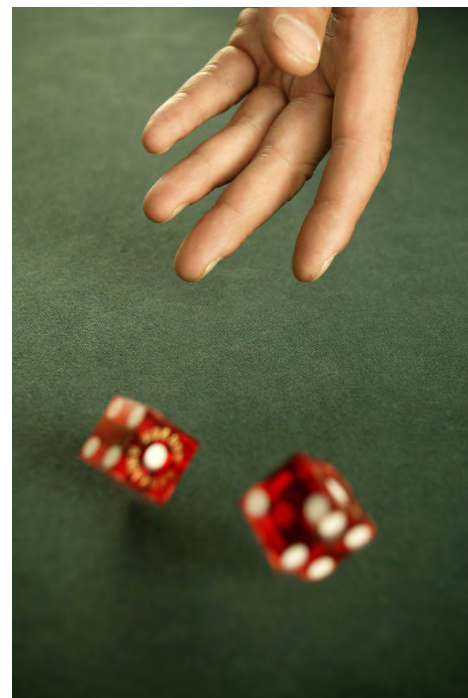
late cake at midnight, but we are also able to drag ourselves away from our favourite TV show in order to study. What this tells us is that human nature is complex and imperfect. In turn, building a system which assumes us to be perfectly rational is probably not a good idea.

First of all, human beings are pretty *irrational*, especially when it comes to judgements of probabilities and large-scaled statistics. For example, professional forecasters predict "an earthquake in California causing a lethal flood" to be more probable than "a lethal flood somewhere in the United States" (Tversky and Kahneman, 1983). Yet, a flood in general occurs more frequently than floods that are specifically caused by an earthquake in California.

On the other hand, we might not be as irrational as many psychologists think we are. Simply twisting the methodology a little, psychologists can make some of these judgemental "biases" disappear (such as overconfidence and base-rate neglect, see Gigerenzer, 1991, for more information).

So, what now? One thing I love about psychology is that, as a science, it is never too late for us to modify our theories or to test new hypotheses about human reasoning. As the popularity of behaviour economics rises, more people have started to become interested in models that account for the "human factor" in decision making. In fact, there are also debates about what exactly we mean by "acting rationally", what the evolutionary values of the so-called biases are, and whether it is always in our best interest to act as rationally as possible.

In short, human rationality is a relatively new field of discussion, to which many UBC researchers (such as Dr. Yoram Halevy and Dr. Joe Henrich) are making significant contributions. Thus, the next time you make a decision reflect on your reasoning. It might not be as simple as you thought it to be, or the most economically beneficial!  $\Psi$



Did I mention I'm taking it with Student Directed Seminar?

### What is SDS?

It is a student-driven seminar course that allows students to examine topics that are not otherwise offered at UBC, while still earning equivalent credits for their effort.

### What is the advantage/disadvantage of SDS?

On one hand, it allows you to meet fellow students, who care deeply about the same topics as you do; on the other hand, a successive student needs to be passionate and take initiative as the course work involves a lot of reading.

### How do I start a SDS course?

Students in their third year of study or beyond may qualify to coordinate Student Directed Seminars. Coordinators will have to complete the same amount of course load as fellow students. The proposal submission deadline is early May.

For more information, check:  
<http://studentdirectedseminars.ubc.ca/>

# Neurological Research in Psychology

## Evaluating the brain's evaluation of itself

BY LEENA WU

How do we differentiate what is good versus what is bad in everyday life? When and how do we learn from our mistakes? Although these moral questions have been around for centuries, neurological researchers, such as those at the UBC Brain Research Centre, are using a different approach in the hopes of finding some answers to these age-old questions.

To help understand the process of human decision making better, researchers are turning to animal models. Specifically, they are studying the role of dopamine (DA) – a ubiquitous neurotransmitter that is implicated in many neuronal processes, including reinforcement learning – in the mammalian midbrain.

DA plays an important role in the error-related negativity (ERN) – an electrophysiological response which occurs when a subject makes a negative prediction error on a task – that is, when the outcome of a task is different from what the subject had expected.

For example, when a child is promised a cookie after lunch but does not receive one, we would see a negative deflection in the event-related brain potential – the ERN. As such, the ERN is thought to be the neuronal signature of the “generic” error detection system – allowing humans and other animals to adjust their future behavior by taking into account the error(s) that they have recently made.

DA can alternatively inhibit and disinhibit the mechanism that generates ERNs following unexpected events. Through its activation, the subject is, in essence, preventing the “words of caution” that comprise the ERN from forming.

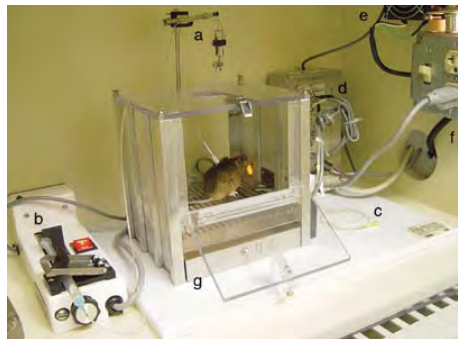
In sum, DA and the ERN are two crucial components to the reinforcement learning system which underlies much of human and animal behavior.

### Our Hypothesis:

According to a widely referenced article by Holroyd and Coles (2002), increased acti-

vation of DA in the midbrain is thought to inhibit the mechanisms of ERN generation – meaning that it stops the error detecting system from being initiated. Branching from this finding, the Brain Research Centre team is hoping to be able to elicit the same firing of midbrain DA neurons to rewards and the presence of ERNs to errors in mice.

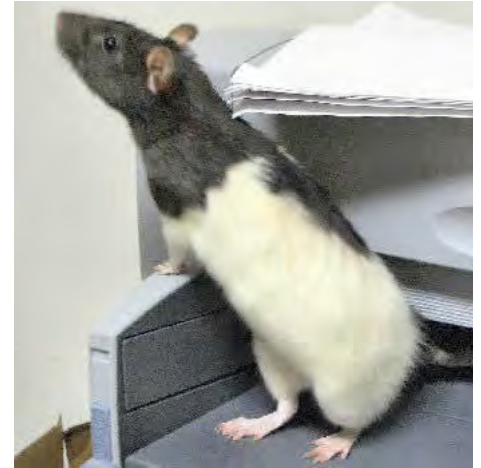
As past research has shown, when a thirsty monkey is *denied* an expected juice reward, the ERN is seen; conversely, when the same thirsty monkey *receives* the expected juice reward, an increase in DA activation is seen. In lieu of these findings, our research team is hypothesizing that by artificially increasing the level of DA in the brain, we will thus be able to suppress the generation of the ERN – and in turn, prevent prediction errors from being made.



### How to test this research question:

To investigate this question, each mouse is first placed into an apparatus composed of a panel with three nose poke holes. Each time the animal pokes its nose through a hole, it is given a feedback signal in the form of odor A or odor B. Essentially, these rats will be trained to make the association that a particular odor consistently leads to reward while the other consistently does not.

In the control condition, when a mouse pokes its nose into a hole and receives an expected reward, there will be an increase in DA activation. On the other hand, when there is an absence of an expected reward, we should witness the ERN – the brain signal associated with making prediction



errors. However, in the test condition we will be artificially flooding the brain of the mouse with DA via a special implant whenever the mouse is deprived of a reward that it had been expecting. Ultimately we are hoping to see no evidence of the ERN in the test condition, regardless of the presence or absence of rewards, because the artificial increase in DA levels will serve to inhibit the manifestation of ERNs.

By investigating one of the most fundamental mechanisms through which the brain learns – by differentiating between when something is good and when something is bad – investigators hope to help the public to understand a little bit better the neuronal aspect of the reasons and rationale for why people do what they do.  $\Psi$

Brain  
Research  
Centre



The Brain Research Centre, which investigates the causes and progression of neurological disorders and injuries, is located at the University of British Columbia's Hospital.

Researchers at the Centre investigate illnesses which affect everyone in some way, whether it is a friend who has an addictions problem, a family member who has Alzheimer disease or someone who has personally suffered a stroke.



# Defining the Procrastination Bug

## Its not just about waiting until the last minute

BY MEGHAN BUCKLEY  
AND CHARLIE (XIAO LEI) DENG

Out of all the trials and tribulations faced by psychology students, few have evoked as much anxiety, profanity, and caffeine consumption as the research paper. Meant to force - ahem, encourage - students to integrate pertinent ideas and information into a coherent whole, the assignment can feel more like an exercise in self-control (no matter the final word count).

For example, let's take average psychology students Sam and Samantha.

It's the day before his 8-page research paper is due and Sam hasn't even started writing. Sure, he's done the research but he's already resigned himself to a long night of self-loathing (and *Modern Warfare 3*). He knows the paper is worth 45% of his final grade, but that nagging feeling of "I've still got time," keeps him from taking the much-needed plunge.

Samantha, on the other hand, has been writing a similar 8-page research paper for over a week and she's only just finished her introduction - for the 7th time. Arduously writing and re-writing each sentence, Samantha can't seem to move forward until each paragraph has been deemed flawless. She knows her final grade is in jeopardy; however, she can't help but turn the paper into a nail-biting free-for-all with her relentless need for perfectionism.

When the term "procrastination", is mentioned, images of a situation similar to Sam are easily spring to mind. Formally defined, procrastination involves the needless delay of (in this case, academic) activities, that one eventually intends to complete, to the point of experiencing emotional distress. What might not be immediately evident is the glaring fact that Samantha's predicament is just as procrastinative as Sam's.

Samantha's case does not fit well with Skinner's paradigm of operant conditioning. For example, if Samantha's perfectionistic stalling was to be followed by a bevy of bad marks she should stop her behaviour (as a result of learning). However, as many of us students can attest, it might not be that simple: Samantha may swear to never procrastinate again; yet, the moment the next assignment is on the

horizon, the same behaviour patterns seem to emerge.

Research suggests that procrastination-related behaviours are associated with the concept of socially prescribed perfectionism (or the perception that others expect perfection). The roots of perfectionism can be traced back to childhood, a time during which love and acceptance can become conditional. Seemingly innocent phrases such as "mummy and daddy will love you if you do this", or "we don't like when you do that", can quickly teach children that, in order to be loved and accepted, they must satisfy or appear to satisfy specific conditions. Such conditions can become increasingly more unreachable until an uncontrollable desire for perfection emerges in the effort to be accepted.

Those concerned about acceptance often use objective outcome criteria to evaluate their self-worth. This approach involves attributing success or failure to personal traits, rather than effort or the situation. For example, if Samantha was to receive a B on her PSYC 101 midterm, she would likely see herself as sloppy or stupid instead of realizing that she may not have studied enough for the exam. Self-worth is ultimately tied to the outcome and thus perfection is sought in order to maintain a high level of self-worth. Accordingly, research suggests that this type of student will not be very resilient in the face of negative outcomes.

For Samantha, the quality of her 8-page research paper is inextricably intertwined with her self-worth and in order to gain the acceptance of her professors, her peers, and even her family members, she must be perfect. Not surprisingly, Samantha's quest for the perfect paper is doomed to fail as perfection simply does not exist and unable to achieve this ideal, Samantha will succumb to a cycle of procrastination.

While the process may result a crippling sense of doubt and a nap that resembles a coma, all due dates will eventually come and that infamous research paper will be handed in.

Procrastination may be an inevitable (and excruciating) part of the journey, but eradicating that feeling of "I've still got time" or "it will never be perfect" is half the battle.



### Further Reading:

- Flett, G. L., Blankstein, K. R., Hewitt, P. L., & Koledin, S. (1992). Components of perfectionism and procrastination in college students, *Social Behavior and Personality*, 20(2), 85-94.
- Hewitt, P.L., & Flett, G.L. (2007). When does conscientiousness become perfectionism, *Current Psychiatry*, 6(7), 49-60.  $\Psi$

Here are some additional steps you can take to put perfectionism behind you:

Write the first draft on paper. It's hard write guilt-free with a word processor constantly telling you "oops, misspelling", and "hey, sentence fragment". Writing on paper can help get your ideas flowing without worrying about spelling and word count.

Remember, the first draft is garbage. If review your first draft 36 hours after completion, you might start to realize your once brilliant draft is actually hard to follow and full of mistakes. Since there's no difference between "perfect", garbage and regular garbage, it's best to get your first draft done as quickly as possible.

Set a time limit and stick to it. Set a deadline but make sure put the task aside once time's up, even if improvement is still possible. Sometimes "good enough", pays dividends: five A's are definitely better than one A+ and four B's.

If your procrastination or perfectionism is getting out of hand, take advantage of UBC's free counselling service at <http://www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell/counselling-services/>



# Give Stats a Chance

## The difference between 218 and Nickelback

BY KATE BLOCK

This time last year, one subject that occupied a significant proportion of my mind was Psyc 218: Analysis of Behavioural Data, aka STATS! (cue the Darth Vader theme song). In fact, I was terrified, and so were others around me. Going into 218, no one felt very confident and if they did, they did not want to expose themselves as a statistics lover.

Loving stats at that time, seemed to me like being that one person in your class who actually likes final exams, or the academic equivalent of admitting Nickelback is your favourite band. I have now learned that that we shouldn't judge so quickly. If you give it a chance, stats is much more likable than exam period, and much more interesting than Nickelback's lyrical repetition.

One reason to give stats a chance is that a lot of our anxiety at the beginning of the year is unwarranted. When we think of stats many of us recount the horrors of high school math, but as Dr. Jeremy Biesanz, a professor who teaches a number of psychology statistics courses, told *Psyched!*, we should not connect statistics to these experiences.

“What most people don't realize is that the math in these courses is really not that hard . . . the heart of statistics is arguments, philosophy really,” he said.

Another great reason to befriend statistics is that you will need it. I am sure you have noticed by now, but just to refresh, psychology is a science and uses data.

In the words of Biesanz, “Statistics provides us with the ability to form inferences on the basis of data. [In psychology] you need data to be able to get answers to these questions. This is what ultimately distinguishes psychology from philosophy. . . I can say this because my wife is a philosopher,” he quipped.

Not to mention, without understanding basic statistics, you will get less out of your psychology courses. “What I want students to understand is the meaning of stats,” said

Biesanz. “Statistics is really one of the tools that we use to further our arguments.”

However, every tool has its limits. In fact, it seems that the more you learn about statistics, the more you learn about its limitations. Biesanz himself has come to be intrigued by statistics and how they help and sometimes hinder the investigation of questions that psychologists are interested in.

“Some of the questions I have, we don't have the appropriate tools for,” he said. As he later explained, he has set out to make better statistical tools with the goal “to not have to change the questions to fit the available statistics, but to develop the right tools for answering the questions.”

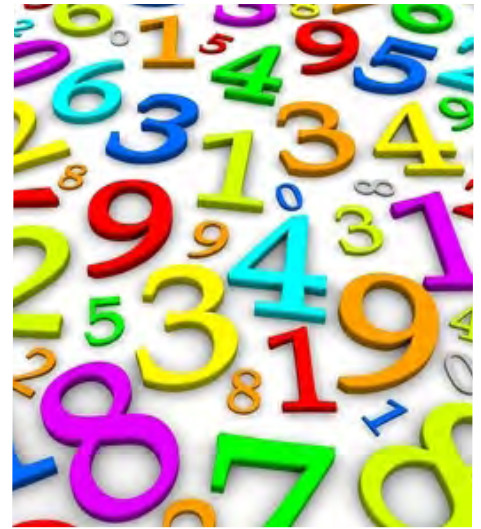
In sum, statistics in psychology opens up a whole new world of research – which is yet another reason to not abandon stats without wallowing long enough to accrue at least a basic understanding.

If you are interested in statistics and psychology, there is one final and even more compelling reason to explore this interest further: The job market.

Academic and non-Academic positions relating to psychology are scarce, because there are astronomical numbers of qualified people competing for them. However, having a statistics background makes you a desired commodity for many universities.

There are fewer applicants qualified for positions in quantitative methods than social psychology or clinical psychology. According to the American Psychological Association, it is estimated that there are 2.4 positions per PhD in Quantitative Psychology but only .3 to .61 positions per PhD in other areas.

You can see, there are many reasons to take a peak behind the curtains of stats' bad reputation. If you invest some time and stay open minded, stats can become a vital and exciting part of psychology. And if nothing else, learning and loving stats is significantly more likely ( $p < .01$ ) than other fields to result in you landing a job!



If we still haven't convinced you, check out the APA website's info on quantitative psychology: <http://www.apa.org/research/tools/quantitative/index.aspx#Ψ>

### 5 Tips for taking undergrad stats

1. Go to every class: No seriously, we all skip classes, but this one is not the one to miss.
2. Stay on track: In other classes you can cram 48 hours before the midterm, but for this one, if you fall behind you won't understand what comes next.
3. Step out: When studying for the exam, make notes that reflect the different steps of going through a problem, e.g. write out and memorize the different steps of t-tests.
4. Do practice problems: When you think you have done enough practice problems, do more!
5. Take advantage of available resources: Ask your TA and your professor lots of questions. If you are shy, ask questions over email. And if you feel like you hit a dead end, which can happen to everyone at some point of their academic career, get a tutor.
6. Get a Tutor: One possibility of getting help for statistics comes from our department. Graduate student Gillian Sandstrom is coordinating a 218 tutoring program that connects students with other undergraduates who have successfully completed their statistics courses. For more information, contact Gillian at [gsandstrom@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:gsandstrom@psych.ubc.ca)

# Prof Profiles\*

BY JADE MCGREGOR

Once upon a time there was a student I will call J.M. In an attempt to dampen her spirits about entering university, her brother, an SFU student, informed her that professors are boring, self-absorbed, and ineffective communicators. Moral of the story? Don't go to SFU^.

Anyways, his remark did not deter her. But later on, she wondered: Who are these people who fill our brains with activity each day? "Prof Profiles" intends to provide some quick snippets of these mysterious people who instruct us for a few hours a week and return to the dark chambers of the Kenny building for many more.

## FEATURED INSTRUCTOR: ANDREA PERRINO

Dr. Andrea Perrino received her Ph.D in Experimental Psychology from the University of Ottawa and has been a Sessional Instructor at UBC since 2002. She teaches between 1 and 3 courses per term, including the sole Sports Psychology course offered at UBC. When she is not on campus she can be found running her business Psyched up: Professional and Personal training.

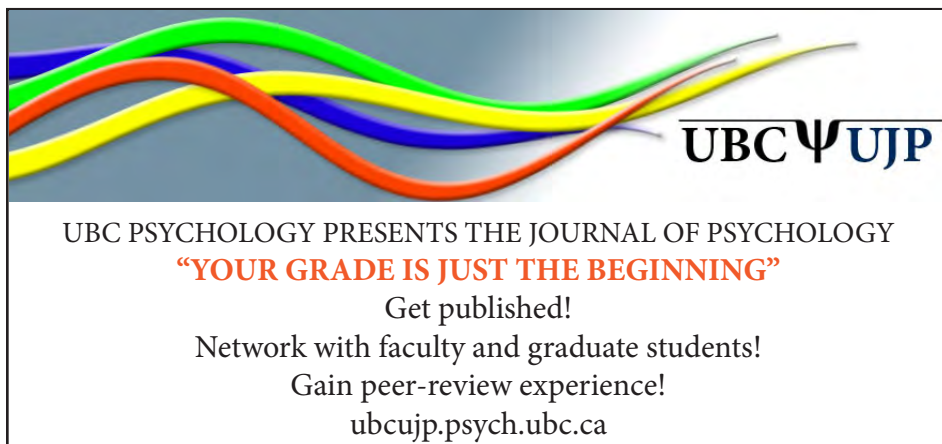
"I also provide talks and seminars for community groups and business," Dr. Perrino said. "Last year I was the keynote speaker for a health and wellness development course at ICBC; as recently as last week I was a speaker at a conference on breast cancer at St. Paul's hospital. You can also find me on the road running or riding my bicycle (competing in long distance triathlons, Ironman) or riding my Harley on a warm summer day."

Dr. Perrino is intrigued by film make-up and set decor, although it is very difficult to coerce her into naming a favourite movie or T.V show. She did not share any stories with me in our interview; you must enroll in one of her courses to find out more about how she rescued a rat from the jaws of a snake, made it her pet and trained it to answer the door.

*Want to know more about a particular faculty member, or have someone interesting in mind you think is worthy of profiling? Contact us and let us know who you'd like to see featured next!*

\*Please note that the term "prof" is used broadly. The author understands that there are varying titles of faculty members (Full Professor, Assistant Professor, Instructor 1, Sessional Instructor etc) that some may wish to protect, but "Psychology Faculty Member" does not provide a catchy title with alliteration.

^ The perspectives of the author in no way reflect the attitudes of the Psychology Newsletter, the Psychology Students Association, the UBC Department of Psychology or the University at large. (This is the author's personal opinion.) Ψ



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Learn how to study smart with Psychology Instructor Sunaina Assanand

*Dr. Sunaina Assanand is an Instructor in the Learning Enhancement Area of Psychology. Dedicated to teaching and to helping students learn, Assanand will provide Psyched! with one study tip each month and in the process, help all of us undergraduate students to achieve our study goals.*

*If there is any aspect of studying that you would like to learn more about, or if you have a specific question you would like answered, please email Ashley psa.editor@psych.ubc.ca. She will be sure to pass your question on to Sunaina for next month's issue!*

"A great challenge faced by many students is taking effective notes during class.

A very useful method of note-taking is the Cornell Method. This method involves dividing each page on which you record notes into two columns: a small column for listing headings, key terms, and questions, and large column for recording your notes during class time.

You can identify points (e.g., key terms) for the small column after class, when you are reviewing your class notes.

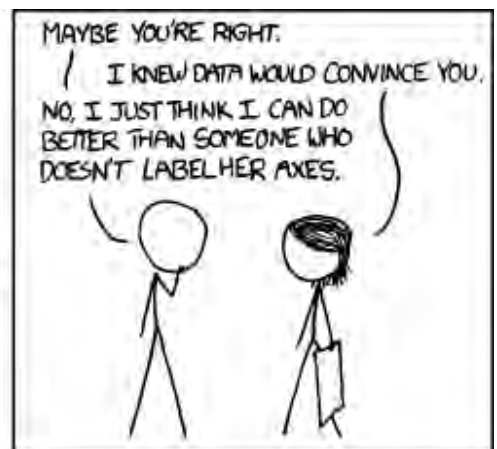
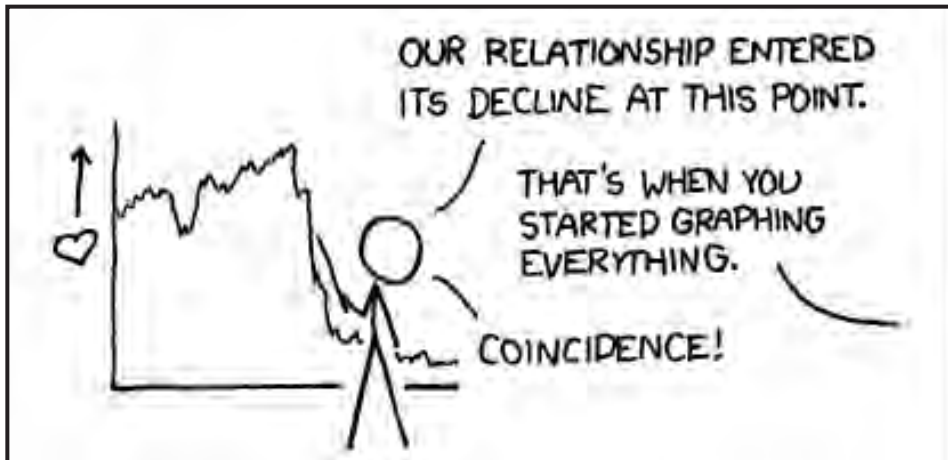
When studying for an exam, use the points that you have noted in the small column to test yourself. This will force you to describe the material in your class notes in your own language. If you can describe this material in your own language, you can be confident in your ability to discuss it effectively on an exam!"





# FUN PAGE!

## Learn a Bit, Laugh a Lot (Or Vice Versa)



### GRE WORDS-OF-THE-MONTH: BY MEGHAN BUCKLEY

**Flout** - verb  
openly disregard (a rule, law, or convention).

Ford decided to flout convention by handing in his term paper a week before its intended due date.

**Dilatory** - adjective  
slow to act; intended to cause delay

Arthur could tell his dilatory habits had finally caught up with him as he frantically attempted to memorize the contents of his textbook two hours before his exam.

**Veracity** - noun  
habitual truthfulness

Dr. Jeltz was not one to throw around accusations of misconduct; however, he was finding it hard to believe the veracity of a student who had been caught trying to sneak away with a pencil and a Scantron during the midterm.

**Curmudgeon** - noun  
a bad-tempered or surly person

After receiving an unfortunate grade on her research paper, Tricia could not help but act like a curmudgeon for the rest of the afternoon.  $\Psi$



If you aren't yet a member, look for our membership drive starting in September, and if you are a member, we look forward to seeing you at the induction ceremony on March 17th!"

### ATTENTION ALL UBC PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS: BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CANADIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION!

I hope this finds you revitalized and bursting with energy and enthusiasm for the upcoming year. For those of you planning on making 2012 your most successful year yet, consider joining the CPA with the intention of furthering your commitment and knowledge base in psychology. Please read on for more details.

My name is Zarina Giannone and I am a fourth year Psychology Major at UBC. I also represent the Canadian Psychological Association here at UBC, serving as a link between our student body and the CPA.

The CPA is the focal point for coordinated action across provinces and territories and from a national perspective. The goal is to use science and practice in support of each other and the discipline as a whole. The CPA is an exciting resource that all students looking to pursue a career in Psychology should utilize. It provides several free online resources that are extremely educational including frequently updated student news, information regarding careers in psychology, student articles and publications, the Annual CPA Graduate School Guide and many, many more!

If you are looking to become more involved within the CPA, then I encourage you to consider becoming a Student Affiliate Member of the CPA. Don't forget that a CPA Student Affiliate Membership also looks great on your CV!

#### Becoming an Affiliate Member of the CPA

Membership benefits and services:

- Reduced fees for students
- Professional Development: workshops on grad school applications, CV's etc.
- Eligibility for CPA Student Success Awards
- Eligibility to present at the CPA Convention
- CPA Journals
- Psynopsis
- CPA News
- Advocacy
- Sections and Special Interest Groups
- Opportunity to join the Student Section free of charge which contains over 1600 students nationwide

Best regards,  
Zarina Giannone [zarina.giannone@gmail.com](mailto:zarina.giannone@gmail.com)

### Psyched! Newsletter: We're looking for you

Currently, Psyched! is looking for a new Coordinating Editor. As editor, you would be responsible for setting deadlines, writing articles and leading a group of talented student writers. For more information and to apply for the position please contact Ashley Whillans at [psa.editor@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:psa.editor@psych.ubc.ca)

Psyched! is the Psychology Student Association's (PSA) departmental newsletter written by psychology students for psychology students.

Published once per month, Psyched! is designed to highlight exciting topics in the psychological community and to inform both students and staff about what's current in the department. Past topics have included career possibilities, relationships tips, faculty interviews, GRE advice, the history of psychology, and more. The process is simple: we write about what we find interesting and in doing so, develop our writing skills while learning about a variety of topics.

Psyched! is a great way to express your opinions by bringing your own perspective to the table, alongside other similarly-minded psychology students. If you think contributing to Psyched! is something you can see yourself doing, please let us know! Positions include graphic design, photography, and writing as either a staff writer or contributor.

Email Recruitment Coordinator and Staff Writer  
Meghan Buckley ([psa.editor@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:psa.editor@psych.ubc.ca)) today!



## YOU could be a VOLUNTEER for



# Psyched!

**HOW?** Psyched! is the Psychology Student Association's (PSA) intradepartmental newsletter written BY psychology students FOR psychology students. Areas you can get involved in include graphic design, photography, and writing (as either a staff writer or contributor). Email Ashley or Meghan at [psa.editor@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:psa.editor@psych.ubc.ca) or go to <http://psa.psych.ubc.ca/newsletter/> for more information.

