

# Psychology Department Newsletter

Issue 4, February 2004

Price: One of those candy conversation hearts you have leftover!

## The Psychology of Politics

If you have anything you'd like to share with the readers of the Newsletter, contact the Psychology Department Student Worker,

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or Department Coordinator Mary Lonergan

By Gina Pustovar

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004, the polls will open and the citizens of the United States will have the opportunity to vote for their next president. The voting process that will take place in November is relatively straightforward (or so we hope-let's not bring up the "floating chad" incident of 2000's presidential election). However, the process that will get our presidential candidates onto those ballots, currently underway across the nation, is much more complicated and time-consuming. Currently, there are four Democratic candidates for the presidency, all of whom will have to vie off in the special elections called "primaries" in order to secure that one Democratic nomination for office (see page 3 for a run-down of the candidates). In hopes of winning the primaries, the candidates are bombarding TV, radio and newspapers with their campaigns, traveling to the key states that will decide whether or not they will be on that ballot in November. The exploits of the presidential hopefuls are constantly being analyzed by newscasters, talk show hosts, celebrities, and even students like us all over the world-so why shouldn't psychologists get involved?

Many psychologists find politics to be an intriguing subject, as evidenced by the multiple political psychology classes and specialists in the psychology world. CSB/SJU has one such class, offered approximately every other year. But there are multiple psychologists who are currently debating the role they feel organized psychology should take in the daily political policy debates. On the one side, there are those who believe that organized psychology, namely the American Psychological Association (APA), should remain impartial to the political issues of the day. These psychologists argue that the APA should restrict the official political statements they make to only the ones that are justifiable by hard data. By stating that there should be restrictions on the official statements psychologists are allowed to make, these psychologists are suggesting that

politics should be "divorced" from psychology. The APA itself frequently claims that its political views are based on "science," and those in favor of separating politics from psychology feel that the APA should focus mainly on scientific and professional issues.

The opponents of this position object to the suggestion that politics can not and should not intermix with psychology. This side proposes that politics in psychology is inescapable, and there is no reason that the two should be separated, either in practice or in research. One of the main issues that these two sides argue about is the fear that political views will influence psychological research. The proponents of political/psychological separation worry that any psychologist with a political stance who performs research will use that research as a means to further their political agenda. Those psychologists in favor of allowing psychology and politics to mix claim that this danger is not alleviated by trying to separate the two: instead, they say, the possibility is aggravated. Their solution to the problem? To require psychologists who are performing research to identify the potential political implications of their research for themselves and for those who come into contact with their studies. By doing this, the possible political influences will be out in the open and will be easier to analyze.

The effect of politics on psychology is significant, as is the influence that psychology can (and does) have on politics. The issues outlined here are intended to supply only a brief introduction to the debates that exist in both sectors. It would be helpful to examine the effects that psychological knowledge has on politics, and it would probably make interpreting the upcoming presidential election, and the primaries involved beforehand, much more meaningful.

*"The opponents of this position object to the suggestion that politics can not and should not intermix with psychology."*





# Psychology In The News

How is psychology affecting our world?

## Link between exercise and changes in the brain found

By Julie Sanem

A study in the February issue of the Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences is the first to show, using high resolution magnetic resonance imaging, anatomical differences in gray and white matter between physically fit and less fit aging individuals. "We found differences in three areas of the brain, the frontal, temporal and parietal cortexes," Arthur F. Kramer, author of the study, said. "There were very distinct differences particularly in two types of tissue: the gray matter and white matter. Nobody has reported this before." In addition, Kramer suggests that older women benefit more cognitively from increased physical activity as they age than do men.

The study involved well-educated men and women aged 55 to 79. Their fitness ranged from sedentary to very fit, competition-ready athletes. Fitness was measured by results of one-mile-walking and treadmill stress tests. Three-dimensional scans of the participants' brains done using MRI were used to estimate tissue atrophy in a point-by point fashion in the targeted regions of the brain.

The study's meta-analysis made a number of other conclusions. Exercise programs involving both aerobic exercise and strength training produced better results on cognitive abilities than either one alone. Older adults benefit more than younger adults, possibly because older adults have more to gain as age-related deficiencies become more prevalent. More than 30 minutes of exercise per session produces the greatest benefit.

While this study shows the benefits of exercising in later adulthood, it is never too early to get into the habit of exercising!

*"More than 30 minutes of exercise per session produces the greatest benefit."*

## Law forces patients to take medication

By Sue Schulzetenberg

There's good news and bad news for people with mental illnesses. The good news is that there's medication for many mental illnesses. The bad news is that you have to take the medication, even if you don't want to take it.

This month, New York's highest court upheld Kendra's Law with a vote of 6-0. The court said that the law, which allows caseworkers, family members and roommates to seek a court order to force patients with mental illnesses to take their medications, is constitutional.

Kendra's Law opponents were disappointed with the ruling, saying that the law was unconstitutional because of due process protection rights. Opponents of Kendra's Law also believed detaining patients who refuse to take their medications for 72 hours without a hearing was unconstitutional. New York's jury believed that Kendra's law helped protect patients and others.

Kendra's Law was named after Kendra Webdale, who was killed after being pushed in front of a subway by a person with schizophrenia who didn't take his medicine. Laws similar to Kendra's Law are effective in at least 40 other states.

## New Mad Cow disease similar to human diseases

By Sue Schulzetenberg

Italian researchers recently discovered a new form of mad cow disease with characteristics similar to Creutzfeldt - Jakob disease and Alzheimer's disease found in humans.

The new form, BASE, was found in two of eight cows examined by Italian researchers. Researchers found amyloid plaque, which is found in people with CJD and Alzheimer's disease, in the cows with BASE.

Researchers predict amyloid plaque may be in five percent of the cattle with mad cow symptoms. The discovery of BASE does not indicate an increased threat to humans.

# The 2004 Presidential Candidates

## DEMOCRATS

John Edwards

Freshman North Carolina Sen. John Edwards entered the race January 2, 2003. A millionaire who made his fortune as a trial lawyer, Edwards is one of two Southerners in the race. Edwards was considered a possible running mate for Vice President Al Gore in his unsuccessful bid for the White House in 2000.

John Kerry

Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry was the second Democrat to enter the race, announcing December 1, 2002, that he would form an exploratory committee for a presidential run. First elected to the Senate in 1984, the 60-year-old Kerry is a decorated Vietnam War veteran. He considered a presidential run in 2000.

Dennis Kucinich

Rep. Dennis Kucinich entered the race February 18, 2003, by filing papers to form a presidential exploratory committee. Kucinich, a four-term congressman from Cleveland, Ohio, is running on an unabashedly liberal platform.

Al Sharpton

The Rev. Al Sharpton entered the race January 22, 2003, by filing papers to form an exploratory committee for a presidential run in 2004. The Democratic activist is the head of the National Action Network, a civil rights group. He ran unsuccessfully for U.S. Senate in 1994 and New York City mayor in 1997.

## REPUBLICANS

George W. Bush

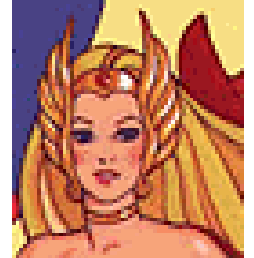
President Bush took the first formal step in his re-election bid May 16, 2003, by filing his candidacy with the Federal Election Commission, a move that allowed him to start building his campaign structure and raise funds. Bush is expected to try to remain above the political fray, enjoy the benefits of an incumbent with no primary opponent and wait to formally declare his candidacy.

Contributed by CNN.com

# Coordinator's Corner

By Department Coordinator Mary Lonergan

Happy Leap Year, Psychology Majors! Take a few minutes during Spring Break to reflect on what Leap Year Day means to you. In my opinion, it is the most peculiar day on the calendar and should be celebrated. Stay up late on February 28 to "ring-in" the Leap Year. Challenge yourself to make a Leap Year's resolution – something you would like to accomplish within the next four years. Your college years are a time of tremendous transition and growth, so take a "leap", make some goals, and continue to plan how you want to use this special time in your life.



Keeping with this theme, I want to alert you to some upcoming opportunities in the Psychology Dept. First of all, I strongly encourage you to check out the Student Employment webpage, which has a number of job postings in the Psychology Dept. Currently, we have openings for office assistants, teaching assistants, and lab/animal care workers. Read through the job descriptions, and if they are of interest to you, get your applications to my office ASAP.

Secondly, there has been a huge demand for the GRE preparatory course, which is primarily intended for students who plan to continue education in graduate school (as most graduate school programs require GRE test scores). The course will begin the week following Spring Break and will be offered for six weeks every Tuesday afternoon from 4:30 to 6:30. If you are interested in taking the course, please contact me to register (preference will be given to junior and senior majors). Also, the text listed below will be used during the course – feel free to buy a copy at a bookstore over break and begin reading.

Finally, use the upcoming break to relax and rest your minds. The end of the school year can be particularly stressful (especially for graduating seniors), so please be sure to take care of yourselves and each other.

Have a \*stellar\* Spring Break!

Mary Lonergan  
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GRE Book: Cracking the GRE. (2004 Ed.). The Princeton Review.

# Psychology Department Newsletter

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## Faculty Spotlight: Mary Loneragan

By Julie Sanem

Mary Loneragan is the Psychology Department Coordinator. Department Coordinator is a one year position that will be open to graduating seniors. Watch your email for more information on this position and the application process.

### **Why did you want to be department coordinator?**

There are a number of reasons why this job appealed to me. My interest in the job began when I first met a “Psychology Coordinator” my sophomore year. I needed an academic advisor in the Psychology Dept., so I made an appointment with the Coordinator to help me with this task. After meeting with him, I thought about how neat it is to meet with and advise students. I had often given informal advice to my friends, and I admit that I have a bit of a “helping nature.” When I discovered that this job would be available someday, I knew that I would apply. While I made this decision as a sophomore, the reasons for applying kept mounting. This job is an excellent transition from college to graduate school and/or other professions in psychology. Furthermore, I hope to teach at a college or university someday, and being the Psychology Coordinator has given me a plethora of experience in the academic world. Plus, it has been a delight to work with the Psychology faculty AND the students – I’ll certainly miss them next year.

### **What is your favorite part of your job?**

While it does require a lot of energy, I do enjoy co-teaching PSYC 399 (Psychology Teaching Practicum). Both semesters we have had a dedicated and energetic bunch of Teaching Interns, which definitely makes the class function successfully. I’ve also have a *great* team of student workers, so interacting with them has been fun and helpful. The faculty has also been very appreciative of my efforts, so I do enjoy helping them and hopefully making their day a little easier.

### **What does your job entail?**

This job is truly a hodge-podge of departmental duties. I assist in the day-to-day operations of the Department, which includes clerical work (i.e., overseeing the department budget and reviewing student applications), purchasing supplies for the department, helping with course scheduling, attending

departmental meetings and recording minutes, supervising student workers in the Department, and advising Psychology majors. I also co-teach the Psychology Teaching Practicum (PSYC 399) two days a cycle, and occasionally I teach a class for a professor in his/her absence. As Department Coordinator, I’m also responsible for organizing special events for Psychology students (i.e., Graduate School Panel, GRE Preparatory Course, Senior Reception, etc.). The job certainly keeps a person busy, and the variety of tasks can be challenging and interesting at the same time.

### **How has your interaction with the professors changed now that you are their co-worker rather than a student?**

Working with the faculty has definitely changed the relationships I have with them. To be honest, there was a bit of a transition period early on; however, now I’m very used to working with them. They each have their own personal quirks and behaviors (which I’ve observed and studied through the year), and I look forward to seeing them each day. I truly feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with them on a professional level and to get to know them better on a personal level.

### **What are your plans for next year?**

I plan to attend graduate school next fall and study biological and cognitive neuroscience. Most graduate programs are still pondering their selections, so no plans have been finalized yet.

### **How has this position helped you prepare for your future plans?**

Being the Psychology Coordinator has given me an opportunity to further develop skills in a professional, academic setting. This experience will certainly be useful as I continue my education and pursue a career in academia. In fact, this position provides duties and an environment that would prepare any Psychology graduate for future career goals.

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# Psychology Department Newsletter

## Psychology Humor

Two men are in a hot-air balloon. They drift into a dense cloud bank and are stuck there for hours. Finally they emerge, and they look around at the ground below in hopes of figuring out their location.

They see a man in a garden and shout down to him.

“Hello down there! Can you tell us where we are?”

The man below replies, “You’re in a hot-air balloon.”

The first man looks at his friend and comments, “Just our luck: a psychologist.”

His friend asks, “Why do you say he’s a psychologist?”

The first man answers, “Well, what he said was obviously true, but it didn’t help at all.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Three professionals were sitting outside the gates of heaven waiting for judgement. They began to argue about which of their trades represented the oldest profession.

The Doctor said, “Well, the Bible says that God took a rib out of Adam to make woman. Since that clearly required surgery, then the oldest profession is surely medicine.”

The Engineer shook his head and replied, “I don’t think so.

The Bible also says that God created the world out of void and chaos. To do that, God must surely have been an engineer. Therefore, engineering is the oldest profession.”

The the Psychologist grinned in triumph. “Ah,” he said, “but who do you think created the Chaos?”

Announcement: the mental-disease-of-the-month club is being disbanded immediately.

The reasons being:

1. During dipsomania month, the club party spent 10 times its budget on refreshments.
2. During kleptomania month, all of the club furnishings were removed, and (as aforementioned) the budget was already spent and gone.
3. During megalomania month, the club organization broke down due to having sixteen claimants to being Club President, etc.
4. During multiple personality month, our club roster roughly tripled in size with no increase in dues.
5. During paranoia month, the inflated roster dropped to zero as each member changed his or her mailing address and left no forwarding address for the club.

## Psychologist to Know: Mary Cover Jones (1896-1987)

By Sue Schulzetenberg



Ever wonder what happened to psychology subjects after the experiments? Were subjects like Little Albert scared of white rats the rest of their lives? Mary Cover Jones wondered that, and dedicated much of her career to studying long-term human development.

Mary Cover Jones attended Vassar College for undergraduate studies and Columbia University for graduate studies. While at Columbia University, she conducted an experiment that would later earn her the title “mother of behavior therapy.” The goal of her study was to uncondition a young boy’s fear of a white rabbit. The young boy was Peter, and the study was conducted under the supervision of John B. Watson, a behaviorist known for his study of conditioning a young boy known as Little Albert. “Little Peter,” as Jones’ subject became known, was a three-year-old boy who was afraid of a white rabbit. In the experiment, Peter and three other children were brought to the laboratory for a play period. The other children were not afraid of the rabbit. The rabbit was moved closer and closer to Peter during each play period for several months. Eventually, Peter was able to pet the rabbit on the back. Peter’s fears of the

white rabbit returned after he was taken out of the study due to scarlet fever and being scared by a large dog. However, his fears again diminished when he returned to the study and was given food, or when he was around other youth when the rabbit was present. At the end of the study, Peter went home with a diminished fear of white furry objects, though there was some concern about Peter’s welfare at home because of a highly emotional mother, the death of a sister, and a jealous brother.

Still interested in the long term development of children, Jones completed a doctoral dissertation on the development of behavioral patterns in young children using a sample of 365 infants from three Baby Welfare Stations. Her longitudinal work continued when she moved to University of California, Berkely, where her husband, Harold Jones, who she married in 1920, was offered the position as Director of Research. Mary Cover Jones took the position of Research Associate at the university.

At the University of California, she conducted studies on fifth and sixth graders. When the subjects were in middle and older adulthood, she conducted several follow-up studies. **(Jones cont’d on back page)**

## Announcement from Dr. Stelzner

This year's "CELEBRATING SCHOLARSHIP AND CREATIVITY DAYS" will take place Monday, March 29 through Saturday, April 3.

If you have a course paper, an ILP, a senior project, an honors thesis, or any other academic work that you would like to present or discuss with others on campus, talk to the professor who supervised the work about participating in this event. If the professor/moderator of your work recommends that you participate, they can contact me for additional information.

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Have a fun (and safe!) spring break! We hope you're all going somewhere warm!!

## Psychology Department

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## *Jones cont'd from p. 5*

As a result of her studies, Jones published over 100 articles. Her articles include studies on psychological and behavioral effects of early and late physical maturation in adolescence and developmental antecedents of drinking behavior.

Jones' interest in following up on her subjects increased as she continued her studies. In her later career, Jones remarked that she wouldn't treat a three year old without conducting a follow up and seeing potentials for stability and change. Before Jones died at the age of 92, she told her sister that she was still learning about what matters in life.

Since many of her longitudinal studies still continue today, the field of psychology is also still learning about life development and life in general. However, with the help of Jones, we are now a little closer to understanding how people are affected by circumstances in the long term. Every human subject studied suggests a life span of developmental study.

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