

Psych Matters

Spring 2011

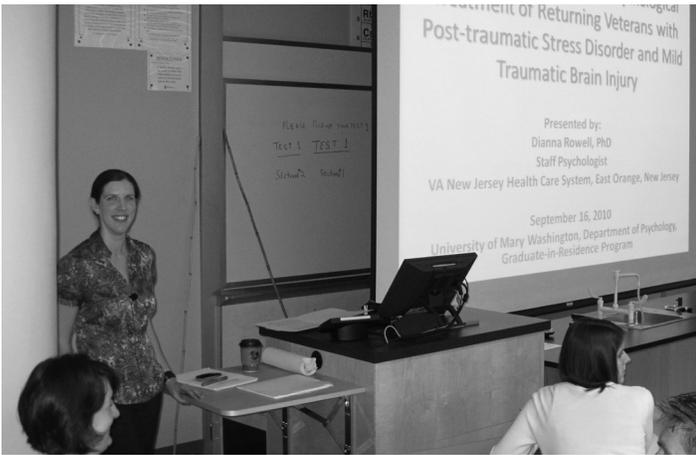
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The Newsletter of the University of Mary Washington Department of Psychology

Graduate in Residence Dr. Dianna Rowell Discusses Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

by Rachael Wonderlin ('11), Psychology Student Representative



Dr. Dianna Rowell '97

Every year, the UMW Psychology Department brings back one of its graduates to discuss the development of his or her professional life and the fruits of his or her labors with the UMW community. In September, 2009, the sixteenth annual Graduate in Residence, Dr. Dianna Rowell, visited the department. Dr. Rowell graduated from MWC in 1997. During her visit, she met informally with faculty and students, lectured in a couple classes, and gave a talk on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) which drew a huge crowd.

When Dr. Rowell was an undergraduate, she majored in Psychology and Classics. After graduating from MWC, Dr. Rowell attended SUNY Albany where she earned her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology. Currently, Dr. Rowell lives in Hoboken, NJ, and commutes to East Orange, NJ, where she works for the Veteran Affairs New Jersey Health Care System as a Staff Psychologist.

As a psychologist at the Veterans Affairs New Jersey Health Care System, Dr. Rowell assists veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Veterans are assigned a case manager who not only provides treatment, but also helps him or her manage other issues related to receipt of care, such as attending appointments. Most of these veterans have completed

numerous tours overseas, and many return with mental and physical issues. PTSD and mTBI are two of those issues.

In 1980, PTSD was added to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Since then, more research on PTSD has been done and, in turn, a better understanding of the disorder exists. PTSD is characterized by persistent re-experience of a trauma via memories, flashbacks, dreams, and even physical sensations. As a result, some of the problems individuals can experience include anxiety, depression, difficulty concentrating, difficulty experiencing pleasure, and insomnia. Symptoms of PTSD are relatively common; 94% of individuals who experience a traumatic event experience some symptoms immediately after the event. Three months after the event, 47% still experience some symptoms.

Another disorder Dr. Rowell discussed was mTBI, which is also commonly experienced by veterans. Generally, mTBI is an injury resulting from exposure to a blast which might occur when an improvised explosive device is detonated. Some types of mTBI are like a serious concussion. These injuries can cause persistent damage, especially if the injury is not treated quickly and properly. It is estimated that over 300,000 soldiers have mTBI. Given the causes of these disorders, it is not surprising that mTBI and PTSD are highly comorbid.

Despite her presentation of the grave statistics regarding the incidences of PTSD and mTBI and the potential distress and disability that can be caused by these disorders, Dr. Rowell was very hopeful about the treatment of PTSD and mTBI. With respect to both disorders, time is of the essence. Positive outcomes are associated with faster diagnosis and treatment of these disorders. The longer a person goes without treatment, the worse the prognosis.

Immediately after her talk, Dr. Rowell answered questions from the audience and a lively discussion ensued. Furthermore, the content of the talk and the questions that followed provided fodder for many in-class discussions the next day. The Psychology Department would like to thank Dr. Rowell for coming "back home" to visit and share her experiences. Your work is important and inspiring, and we are glad to have had the privilege of learning about it.

Career Column: Innkeeper

by Dr. Virginia Mackintosh, Assistant Professor and Career Advisor

The majority of our graduates do not head off to graduate school, instead preferring to take their degrees and hit their career paths running. Career Column highlights some of the interesting directions our students have taken since their graduations.

Mary Ann Mayer ('83) did not major in Psychology with the plan of becoming an innkeeper, but a vacation she took in the early 90's lured her "to the dark side" and she fell in love with the idea. A friend suggested Mary Ann stay in bed and breakfasts because Mary Ann was travelling with her 8-year-old niece. Mary Ann took her friend's advice and, from day one of the trip, she was hooked (thanks in part to an innkeeper finding a way to feed Mary Ann's picky niece a good breakfast).



Mary Ann Mayer '83

Right after the trip, Mary Ann began an eight-year career as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She worked in a residential facility for adults with chronic mental illness. Mary Ann enjoyed the work, but found herself taking the residents' problems to heart. And, in the back of her mind, was the thought of running a B & B. When her father retired in 1999, he and Mary Ann decided to invest in an inn together. They searched all

around New England before finding the Mt. Washington Bed and Breakfast in Shelburne, New Hampshire. The inn had just what they wanted - big rooms, each with a private bath. The only major change they made was turning the bar into a breakfast room. Mary Ann said, "I knew from psychology and social work that I did not want a bar in my home!"

Having a background in psychology gives Mary Ann insight into dealing with the public. She understands the neuroses of her guests, and is not easily offended. When guests arrive at the inn tense and angry from the difficulties of their lives at home, Mary Ann relishes watching the stress melt away as people sip hot chocolate and eat fresh-baked cookies while gazing at Mt. Washington.

Mary Ann's ability to "get almost anyone to talk" serves her well in her work. She explains that most B & Bs have comfortable rooms and good food; it is the innkeeper that really distinguishes a particular B & B and keeps customers coming back. Mary Ann connects with her guests, using her counseling skills to find out if a guest is unhappy and to determine what she can do to make him or her feel better. She also thinks a background in psychology is "wonderful for making you innovative in marketing."

While the downswing in the economy has reduced the number of people traveling, making business slow, Mary Ann is very happy with her choice of career. She says, "Every day people tell me how beautiful my house is, how great my cooking is, and what a nice person I am. I love what I do!"

For many years, Mary Ann has participated in the annual Psychology Department Topher Bill Auction by graciously donating stays at the Mt. Washington Inn. In addition to offering stays at the inn, Mary Ann donates batches of her delicious, homemade granola. Both of these items are favorites at the auction. Thank you, Mary Ann, for your generosity.

For more information on the Mt. Washington Bed & Breakfast, please visit the following website: www.mtwashingtonbb.com



The Mt. Washington Inn

Keep In Touch

Keep in touch with your psychology department and fellow graduates. **Join the UMW Department of Psychology Alumni Group on Facebook!**

The department encourages visitors to the psychology department website, psyc.umwchandler.net. You will find information about obtaining an advanced degree in psychology, careers in psychology, opportunities for research and internships in psychology, activities sponsored by our chapter of Psi Chi, and more!

Please consider recognizing the Department of Psychology with a monetary contribution.

Please make checks payable to the University of Mary Washington Foundation, and specify that the donation is for the Psychology Department. Please send checks to the following address: University of Mary Washington Foundation, Jepson Alumni Executive Center, 1119 Hanover Street, Fredericksburg, VA 22401-5412. Your donation will be used to support student scholarships and student presentations at conferences.

We appreciate your support!

Faculty News

Dr. Mindy Erchull, Assistant Professor, published a paper titled, "I'll get that for you': The relationship between benevolent sexism and body self-perceptions," in *Sex Roles*. In addition, Dr. Erchull presented a poster titled, "Whose orgasm is it anyway? Faux orgasms and women's sexual subjectivity," at the American Psychological Association meeting last August.

Dr. Erchull and Dr. Miriam Liss, Associate Professor, published a paper titled, "Empowering or oppressing? Development and exploration of the Enjoyment of Sexualization Scale," in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. They published three papers in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. These papers are titled, "Men want equality, but women don't expect it: Young adults' expectations for participation in household and childcare chores," "Well...she wants it more: Perceptions of social norms about desire for marriage and children and anticipated chore participation," and "Everyone feels empowered: Understanding feminist self-labeling."

In addition, Drs. Erchull and Liss presented a poster titled, "Empowerment through sexualization? The Enjoyment of Sexualization Scale in feminists," at the American Psychological Association meeting last August, and another poster titled, "Young adults' ideal and actual expectations for self and partner life trajectories," at the Association for Psychological Science meeting last May.

Dr. Chris Kilmartin, Professor, published a chapter titled, "Incremental

terrorism: Cultural masculinity, conflict and violence against women," in the book *Cultural Dimensions of Conflicts*. Also, he wrote an online article titled, "Violence is a men's issue" for *The Good Men Project* magazine, and an article for the *Free-Lance Star* titled, "Let's not wink at 'rape lite' – or blame the victim." In addition, he served as an expert and writer for a U.S. Army sexual harassment prevention training film titled, *Amateur Night*.

Dr. Kilmartin made a number of presentation this year, including "A model of gender-based violence: Primary, secondary and tertiary prevention" at the National Summit on Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Across the Lifespan; "Preventing sexual assault and harassment in a military setting: Lessons learned" at the American Men's Studies Association meeting; "Using humor and drama in men's work" at the National Psychotherapy with Men meeting; and "Sexual assault: The perpetrator, the victim and the social context" at a continuing education workshop in Fredericksburg.

Dr. David Kolar, Associate Professor, presented a poster titled, "Interjudge agreement between children and adults," at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology meeting last January.

Dr. Virginia Mackintosh, Assistant Professor, and colleagues published a paper titled, "Hope and worry in mothers of children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder or Down Syndrome," in *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*. The study found that

hope served as a protective factor against psychological distress, and mothers who reported lower worry had more education and older children or children who were higher functioning.

Dr. Jennifer Mailloux, Associate Professor, gave a presentation titled, "Bring out your brains: The logistics and value of dissection in psychology courses," at the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology last January.

Dr. David Rettinger, Associate Professor, presented a poster titled, "Cheating and cheaters: The influence of personality," at the Association for Psychological Science meeting last May.

Dr. Holly Schiffrin, Assistant Professor, was appointed president of the Virginia Academic and Applied Psychologist Academy of the Virginia Psychological Association. In addition, she presented a poster titled, "The impact of affect on cognitive processes," at the Association for Psychological Science meeting last May.

Dr. Schiffrin was also invited to write an op-ed on the impact of money and the recession on happiness that was published in the *Free Lance Star* and was picked up by numerous national papers. Last, Dr. Schiffrin was interviewed on the National Public Radio program *With Good Reason* about research on strategies to increase happiness.



Dr. David Rettinger

Dr. David Rettinger Receives Promotion

Congratulations to Dr. David Rettinger who served his first academic year as Associate Professor with tenure at UMW. Dr. Rettinger is a Cognitive Psychologist who teaches courses in his area as well as General Psychology, Research Methods, and History of Psychology. Occasionally, he teaches a seminar in judgment and decision making. Dr. Rettinger's research interests are in the area of academic dishonesty/moral decision making. Currently, he is the chair of the Academic Affairs committee, and he serves as an advisor to Mortar Board and the Honor Council. Also, Dr. Rettinger supervises the Psychology Department Computer Lab Aides.



A Moment in the History of the Psychology Department

**Historical information
courtesy of Dr. Tom Moeller,
Professor Emeritus**

In '79-'80, Dr. Topher Bill, late Professor of Psychology, discussed the idea of using "microcomputers" for instructional purposes with the other psychology faculty for the first time. The following year, the department purchased its first "microcomputer" which was placed on a portable cart. A while later, in '83-'84, the first computer lab was set up in Chandler Hall, following

renovation of the building. The computer lab contained Apple computers and was nicknamed, "The Apple Orchard." Today, Chandler Hall contains two computer labs for general use, one on the first floor containing 12 machines and another on the second floor containing 19 machines. The machines in those labs today are PCs (the Apple computers were replaced with PCs in '84-'85), and printing and scanning are available. Business and psychology students are allowed to use the labs to complete their coursework in those disciplines. In '06, the second-floor computer lab was dedicated to Dr. Topher Bill without whom we might not have any computer lab space in Chandler Hall at all today. His picture and a plaque indicating the dedication hang in that lab currently.

Psi Chi Inducts New Members

Assistant Professor **Hilary Stebbins**, keynote speaker, welcomed a number of psychology majors into the UMW chapter of Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology. The fall 2010 inductees were: **Tia Bach, Ellen Beste, Elizabeth Brenner, Sydney Hitchens, Renata Iunes, Lilly King, Frank Knizer, Stephanie Martin, Kathryn Rizzo, Riplee Royster, Taryn Tashner, and Mary Wilson.**