



Issue No. 7

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## Mind Over Matters

WCPC Monthly Newsletter

Building community and identity by encouraging members to share ideas and experiences, and offering support to one another in pursuit of present and future educational goals.

The Year in Reflection

By: Annah Jensen

As 2016 comes to a close I find myself looking back on this tumultuous year, a lot has happened around the world. The Summer Olympics were held in Rio de Janeiro, NASA's Juno spacecraft made it to Jupiter, Britain voted to exit the EU, North Korea tested its 5th atomic bomb and a hydrogen bomb, there were countless terror attacks, and the US held its Presidential Elections.

Our club also had a great year! We hosted our first Brainweek with the Dana Foundation in March to raise awareness of neuropsychology and research. We held a fundraising walk Steps 4 Vets in June and raised over \$500 for the Non-Profit Organization [Give an Hour](#), that works to provide free mental health services to U.S. military veterans and their families. We started a members book club; reading articles and books related to our field and holding discussions at our monthly meetings. Held a fun Halloween Costume Contest for our members, had an awesome fundraising sales event, and our monthly newsletter has come back.

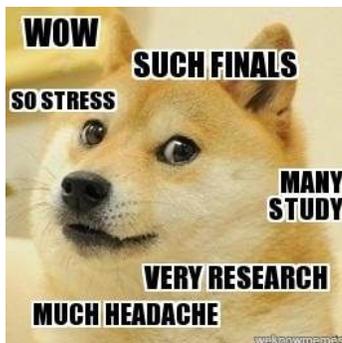
I'm so proud of our board and members for all we accomplished this year and cannot wait to see where 2017 takes us!

### Upcoming events:

**December 6th 11am-12pm PT, \$10 - [Free Yourself from the Pain of Your Past](#)** Webinar. In this Webinar, Dr. Lisa Firestone will explain how processing our story can help free us of the pain of our past, so we can live fully in the present. Drawing upon attachment theory, psychological differentiation and Separation Theory, this Webinar will teach tools to identify and liberate ourselves from the old, unresolved traumas that limit us today. It will show how we can create a coherent narrative of our experiences, so they no longer hold the power to affect us in the same way.

**December 8<sup>th</sup> 11am-12:30pm PT, \$15 - [Mind: A Journey to the Heart of Being Human with Dr. Daniel Siegel](#)**. In this Webinar, neuropsychiatrist and author, Dan Siegel, M.D., will explore these findings and focus on the interrogatives of the mind—the Who, What, Where, When, How, and even Why of the mind—of your mind, of what the human mind may actually be about.

**There will be no General Meeting this month! Good luck on your finals and enjoy your break & holidays! Our next meeting will be January 17th**





## What I've Learned <sup>1</sup>

By: Kelly Odoms

It seems ironic how my decision to enroll in a social psychology class seemed to coincide perfectly with the current unrest plaguing the country. I was particularly drawn to the section on ways to reduce prejudice. I enjoyed learning about how reducing prejudice works when people from different races, ethnic or gender groups work together in situations of interdependence while having an equal position within the group. This concept really resonated with me as a parallel to the press conference in the wake of the police targeted shooting in Dallas where Police Chief David Brown told Black Lives Matter protesters “we’re hiring”. The police force should reflect the community they protect. It stands to reason that increasing diversity within the police force provides a great opportunity for officers of different races, ethnic groups and genders to work together in both a professional and a casual setting and not just when they are enforcing the law. Another benefit of a more diverse police force is that it allows the dominant group in the department to see that the few officers of color with whom they work are not an exception of the stereotype.

This solution seems easy in premise, but our country’s long history with racial prejudice makes it especially challenging. How do you get a group who justifiably has a mistrust of law enforcement to become police officers? Right now the police are looking like Judge Dredd – judge, jury and executioner. There are examples of police departments and community groups making a concerted effort to forge lasting community relationships. Some police departments regularly participate in local community events such as cookouts like the one arranged by members of Black Lives Matter and police officers in Wichita, Kansas. These types of efforts demonstrate to communities that often feel marginalized that being a police officer is an honorable profession that lives up to its creed to protect and serve and that officers actually care about the people they are policing, which could be a valuable recruiting tool.

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### **This month in Psychological History**

In 1904 Ivan P. Pavlov received the Nobel prize. The prize honored Pavlov's work in the physiology of digestion, but Pavlov mentioned his work with conditioned reflexes in his acceptance speech.

Sam, a rhesus monkey, one of the most well known monkeys of the space program, was launched into space on December 4, 1959. Housed in a cylindrical capsule within the Mercury spacecraft atop a Little Joe rocket in order to test the launch escape system (LES). Approximately one minute into the flight, traveling at a speed of 3685 mph, the Mercury capsule aborted from the Little Joe launch vehicle. This was the first American behavioral experiment in space, SAM performed a shock-avoidance task during a 55-mile high suborbital flight, SAM was trained by W. Lynn Brown. Frederick H. Rohles, Jr., directed the project for the U.S. Air Force. After attaining an altitude of 51 miles, the spacecraft landed safely in the Atlantic Ocean. Sam was recovered, several hours later, with no ill effects from his journey. He was later returned to the colony in which he trained, where he died in November 1982 and his remains were cremated.

In 1973 The American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders' list of psychiatric disorders. The nomenclature was revised to "sexual orientation disturbance," which "by itself, does not necessarily constitute a psychiatric disorder."



## **The Psychological Impact of Discrimination on Transgender Americans <sup>2</sup>**

By: Courtney Sylvester

For transgender people, or people whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth, life can be a minefield of potential hazards, ranging from being fired from their job, kicked out of their home by their parents, or even being killed for who they are. There are between 700,000 (Gates, 2011) and 3,000,000 transgender Americans, which is between 0.25 and 1 percent of the population (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2009), and nearly all of these individuals face continual discrimination from society at large. Over 97 percent of the 6,000 transgender Americans surveyed by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (2009) said they faced discrimination at work alone, with infractions ranging from being denied access to a bathroom to outright harassment. The impact of this discrimination is considerable on both the personal and societal levels, and it is up to each of us as part of society to create a world that embraces and welcomes everyone.

Discrimination is not just a social illness; it can become internalized and create very real psychological problems. Transgender people face higher rates of depression and anxiety than their cisgender counterparts, and they face 18 times greater risk of suicide attempts than the general population, and this is in large part due to the stigma, discrimination, and stress they face from society (Bocking, 2015; Sher, 2015). In fact, researchers for the New England Journal of Medicine link the discrimination transgender people face to “increased stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and suicide” as well as “increased risk of bullying, verbal harassment, sexual assault, and nonsexual violence” (Schuster, Reisner, & Onorato, 2016). The more discrimination a person faces, especially familial rejection, suffering sexual violence, or being homeless, the greater is the risk of suicide (Haas, Rodgers, & Herman 2014). Yet such mental and psychological suffering may not be inevitable. Among populations that are more supported by their family and friends and have greater access to medical and psychological care, the rates of depression and anxiety are about the same as for the general population (Haele, 2016). Fortunately, this means the psychological suffering of transgender Americans is changeable, and you and I can do something about this to make the world more equitable and safer for us all.

Each of us can work to reduce the suffering of and discrimination against our transgender friends and family through three simple things: How we speak, treat others, and act. To start, we can watch what we say about others, such as refraining from assuming a person’s gender or sexual anatomy and allowing each person to identify what name and pronouns we should use to refer to them, and then abiding by that. This, of course, has a direct impact on those in our lives we know to be transgender, but it can also create a climate that is welcoming or fear-inducing for those who are not open about their gender identity. For instance, if we were talking about Caitlyn Jenner in public, someone overhearing that conversation might deduce how we feel about transgender people and internalize it based on whether we refer to Jenner as “her” or if we make comments about Jenner’s appearance. In addition to the words we use, we can also show we care by how we treat others in our lives. If a person close to us were to come forward as being transgender, we should treat them with the same respect and love as we always had, changing only what pronouns and name we use to refer to them if they so choose. After all, they are still the same person they have always been; they are just now free to express all of themselves and should receive the acceptance and appreciation they deserve. Lastly, we can do something by acting and participating in organizations dedicated to equality for people of all genders, from ensuring access to bathrooms that align with one’s gender identity to asking legislators to add transgender people to equality and anti-discrimination laws. In this way, by what we say, how we treat others, and what we do to act, we can work to reduce discrimination against our transgender friends, family, and fellow students. Even one person standing up for what’s right can make all the difference in the world.



### “Madness is the Emergency Exit”<sup>3</sup>

By: Annah Jensen

As you may know I love comics and my favorite comic of all time is Batman, a story of the boy who became a vigilante to “clean up Gotham”. Batman’s arch-nemesis is The Joker and he happens to be one of my favorite villains. To me he’s crazy for the sake of crazy, unrelenting, unapologetic; just doing what he does for the fun of it. There have been countless theories on how he became who he is, as if there needs to be a reason. I’m not going to try and classify or psychoanalyze The Joker here, after all he’s the combined creation of artists and writers. Rather I’m going to give you some background with little quips of input from your humble author.

The Joker was first introduced into the Batman universe in the spring of 1940 (Batman #1); he’s depicted as a homicidal maniac who takes glee in finding creative ways to kill his victims and confound the police for his own seditious amusement (Piperson, 2014). The Joker is killed off, but thankfully the editor decided the character was too good to lose so he was brought back in a later comic. There’s no origin story for him yet, he’s just a homicidal madman. In those early years he was Batman and Robin’s arch-enemy; killing the majority of his victims. In the 1950’s with the implementation of the Comics Code the Joker was softened. He became “a thieving trickster, a much more camp and light-hearted villain to go up against the blunted, less brutal Batman” (Whitbrook, 2015) that continued through the early 1960’s when he vanished from the comics realm.

In 1966 with *The Batman TV series*, *Batman: The Movie* and the 1st animated adaption *The Adventures of Batman* the Joker returned, still as a campy joker. It’s not until the TV series ended and the Batman comics were struggling that the Joker comes back as a darker ruthless killer. His popularity wouldn’t surge until the 1970’s when he was portrayed as mentally unstable character with the capacity to kill; the Joker became a character to be feared, rather than mocked or easily defeated. Even though in the comics he was back to his darker roots, in the animated series he was still a campy-trickster. It wouldn’t be until the 1980’s that The Joker really came into his own; in the comics both The Joker and Batman became darker and darker.

In 1988 Alan Moore and Brian Bollard published [The Killing Joke](#), by far my favorite graphic novel of all time; dark, gritty, and full of madness! In it The Joker fools authorities into thinking he’s still in Arkham while escaping. Then he captures Commissioner Gordon shooting his daughter Barbara in the maylee; he proceeds to send Gordon on a mad little trip on a funhouse ride crafted specifically for his doom. The Joker set this whole thing up to prove a point to Batman, who naturally will come to the rescue. To prove that there is only one small difference between the two men, “One bad day” as he puts it. You see Batman and the Joker are opposites, Batman a broken boy who took to arms against injustices and the Joker a broken man that took to a life of crime to cure his pain. The following year [A Death In The Family](#) storyline in the main Batman comic saw the Joker beat Jason Todd, the second Robin to death with a crowbar. The Joker was no longer just a major villain to Batman, but a personal threat to his loved ones (Whitbrook, 2015). They once playful banter between Batman and The Joker was no more!



In 1989 we are graced with Jack Nicholson’s portrayal of The Joker in Tim Burton’s [Batman](#). It was a perfect combination of the trickster from the 1960’s and the original madman. Many, including myself, would say that this incarnation was one of the best to ever come across the big screen. Not to downplay Nicholson’s The Joker but he’s second runner up to the 1990’s [Batman: The Animated Series](#) Joker voiced by none other than Mark Hamill; that’s right, Luke Skywalker is The Joker! To me this is the best Joker, it’s the madness of the comics in motion, the camp of the 1960’s, and that laugh! How Hamill ever came to that voice and that laugh I will never grasp, but I will never imagine anything else when I read the comics. This is where I cut my story short, abrupt I know, perhaps it’s all the talk of madness. I do hope your curiosity is peaked by what you’ve read enough to pick-up a comic and have some fun among the lunacy of the upcoming semester.



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*Thanks to all our contributing writers! See you all in January for our next issue!*

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