

Psych E-Newsletter

Winthrop University Psychology Department

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What's going on in Psychology at Winthrop?

Advising season has ended, and final exams are rapidly approaching. Many of our students have submitted research to multiple conferences and are awaiting pending acceptances in January. Our department is also very excited because we have been speaking with Josh Rivedal, author, playwright, and international speaker on suicide prevention, about his work (interview inside), and he has agreed to come speak to Winthrop's students, do a book signing, and also donate a book to our library. Look for more information over the holiday break and in early January 2014! The psychology club and psi chi also have some fun holiday events in the works, so keep a lookout for an email - you don't want to miss it!

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Sarah Reiland

BY: Keisha Carden

Could you give us a brief description of your research?

To identify cognitive factors that contribute to the relationship between past stressful life events and current emotional wellbeing in college students. Previous studies conducted by the Principal Investigator at other institutions suggest that although rates of past trauma exposure are fairly high among college students (45-55%), less than 15% of trauma-exposed individuals endorse clinically significant levels of posttraumatic stress or depression symptoms (Reiland, Lauterbach, Harrington, Palmieri, *in press*; Reiland, 2010).

Specifically, cognitive factors that are examined in this study include attributions (i.e., explanations for why something happened), beliefs about the importance of past experiences in determining one's identity, beliefs about the nature of others and the world in general, and cognitive flexibility.

Tell us briefly about the theoretical framework you used in developing your research?

Social-Cognitive perspective. Our thoughts, behaviors, and feelings represent in interaction between our personal characteristics and factors of the environment/situation

What are your research plans for the next five years?

I'm conducting research on the relationship between substance abuse, childhood maltreatment, and perpetration of violence with a colleague at the University of Alabama. I'm also involved in a study that involves developing a Risk Screen to predict future PTSD in returning OEF/OIF veterans with colleagues working at VA Medical Centers in several states.

Tell us how your research has influenced your teaching. In what ways have you been able to bring the insights of your research to your courses at the undergraduate level?

Students are usually interested in PTSD, so we spend some time talking about it in Abnormal Psychology.

Her Research Interests

Dr. Reiland's research interests focus on risk and resilience following exposure to potentially traumatic events or other significant life stressors. She is interested in collaborating with students on research projects. She currently teaches General Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, and Psychology as a Discipline and Profession. She is also the faculty-liaison for the Psyc 340 Field Experience.



Frequently Asked Questions About Undergraduate Research



Q: Why should I do research as an undergraduate?

A: Undergraduate research (1) teaches you about a field you are interested in, and (2) helps you define your own style. There is no one reason for doing research; hundreds of students would tell you a myriad of answers. Rather, undergraduate research is an enriching process by which you gain skills.

Q: I'm not a scientist or an engineer. Can I still do research?

A: ABSOLUTELY!

One of the greatest myths about research is that it involves supercomputing and lots of test tubes. Professors in the humanities and social sciences

have supported undergraduate research for years. There are also many interdisciplinary projects that transcend departments.

Q: Do I have to wait until I'm an upperclass student to conduct research?

A: No.

Many freshmen and sophomores decide to explore their options by volunteering in labs and networking. Through this process, they develop the necessary skill set and move on to the positions that really interest them during junior and senior year.

Q: How do I know which faculty are doing research?

A: Take the initiative to do your homework.

Faculty are involved in dynamic work that changes from day to day. There is, usually, a theme and a particular niche in which a given faculty member will work. This is what you must look for. Start by visiting department websites.

Q: Can I do a project outside of my home department?

A: ABSOLUTELY!

Wintthrop has ample opportunities to pursue any and all interests. Taking time to pursue research outside of your major and department is a great chance to explore and become a well-rounded student. Often, you'll learn that the techniques and principles applied in a given field relate to the one you are studying. Interdisciplinary synthesis is a powerful tool that you will develop. It is a skill that will be called forth once you leave Wintthrop.

Josh Rivedal

Suicide Prevention

By: Keisha Carden

Some of you may remember Josh Rivedal's presentation last year of The Gospel According to Josh. His presentation centers on the prevention of suicide. We contacted him following the suicide of Abby Carroll. If you didn't see his presentation last year, here is some background information on him.

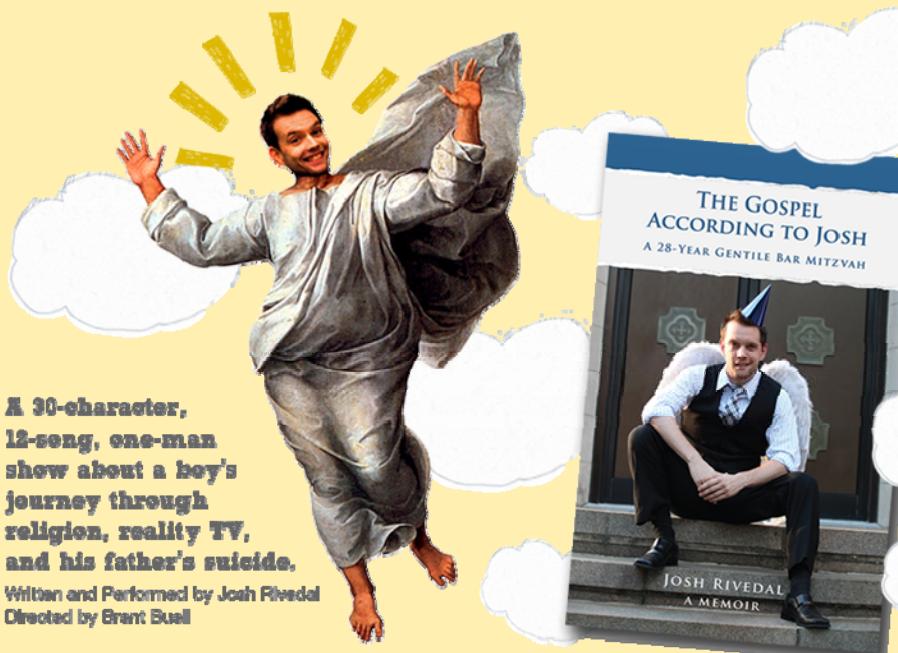
Josh moved from New Jersey to New York City at the age of 21 to tackle the world of fame, fortune, and the Broadway stage...in what he thought would be a stepping stone to Hollywood and a star on the walk of fame.

Eight years later and through a series of remarkable life events, a bad economy, and mixture of collegiate and self-education; Josh reinvented himself as an international public speaker, author, playwright, theatre producer, educator, business consultant, and entrepreneur.

He currently serves on the board of directors for the New York City chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Please enjoy the following interview and pick up his book The Gospel According to Josh in stores and on Amazon now.

Josh has agreed to visit our campus next semester to speak again about suicide prevention in light of Abby Carroll.

Get to know him in the following interview!



A 90-character,
12-song, one-man
show about a boy's
journey through
religion, reality TV,
and his father's suicide.
Written and Performed by Josh Rivedal
Directed by Brent Buell

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your background?

I'm originally from New Jersey but have been living in New York City for a little more than eight years. I guess I'm the working class kid of a NJ state employee and a schoolteacher. My parents sang in church a lot so naturally I've been singing all of my life. When I came to New York it was originally to be an actor and a singer. I still act and sing professionally but much of my work these days involves producing theater and writing—playwriting, a book, and some ghostwriting as well.

How did you become an international speaker on suicide prevention and what moved you to speak on this subject?

I took a class in public speaking while still in college back in 2011. Learning that skill set plus my acting and improv theater background certainly helped on the speaking end of things. I started speaking on suicide prevention because I lost my father to suicide in 2009 and he lost his father (my grandfather) in 1966. Suicide was never spoken about in my house except in secret. After I lost my father, in 2010, I created a 30 character one-man play called The Gospel According to Josh about my childhood, my foray into show business, and the relationship I had with my father. It played in New York and got great reviews. After I put that show up, in January 2011, I suffered from a clinical depression that led me to nearly take my own life. But I got help and decided that I wanted to start helping people who didn't think they could ask for help. And so I combined the one-man show The Gospel According to Josh with some education and my public speaking to create a program geared toward suicide prevention and mental health awareness. I have to use my talents to help others.

“Remember Abby for the good person she was ... She was a person with hopes and dreams.”

Our student body recently suffered a great loss. Abby Carroll committed suicide a couple of weeks ago and many of our students are still suffering from feelings of sadness, anger, and guilt. What would be your advice to them?

Take the time to grieve. Acknowledge it and allow yourself to feel everything you're feeling. It's okay. Remember Abby for the good person she was and not for her final act. She is much more than the suicide. She was a person with hopes and dreams. Also, talk to a counselor or mentor or clergy member—someone whom you trust who is a professional who can help you sort through your grief. I've been in a similar position of anger, sadness, and guilt, and talking to a professional about it was one of the best things I could have ever done for myself.

Do you have any recommendations for how Winthrop might go about implementing more suicide awareness and prevention?

Continue to talk about it in a productive way. Bringing in professionals for workshops and training can help ensure that students are aware of helpful resources. Getting RAs and peer educators into this training would be a tremendous help. This is definitely a good place to start.

What were you like in school?

I think my persona grew from a shy kid to being mildly unconfident to becoming something of a social butterfly. I was always interested in the creative arts. I got decent grades—I probably should have tried harder in math and science.

What are your ambitions for your writing career?

I have a TV show that I need to get rolling and on television. I have an outline of a three part children's fantasy novel series that teaches kids resilience and the basics of Spanish. I'll probably get to work on that in 2015. A documentary combined with a full fledged film about how the Chinese were the first to discover America. And I currently have a Spanish language Christmas musical which I wrote, opening in Miami for a six city national tour this Christmas season.

What inspired you to write your book?

The death of my father. My own near suicide attempt. The betrayal and redemption of my mother and our relationship. The response that play, which the book is based on, had already been getting.

Give us an insight into your main character. What does he/she do that is so special?

That would be me. I'm the main character. We'll refer to him in the third person for this question. He never gives up. He ends up using the people around him to find help, and hope, and recovery. He learned how to take the lemons that life gives us, and turn them into lemonade, lemon meringue pie, lemon soda,

Where do you get inspiration before you sit down to write, or go to speak to an audience?

I just need to be well rested. I have to give myself completely to the process and eliminate distractions like phone, Facebook, and TV.

Do you work to an outline or plot or do you prefer just see where an idea takes you?

I work off of an idea and then I outline. An outline is a loose map to help guide me in the direction I want to go. Sometimes the map changes a little but that's the creative process.

How do you think you've evolved creatively?

I can be multidisciplinary and I feel just as creative wearing the hat of a producer as I do playwright, author, or actor.

What was the hardest thing about writing your latest book?

It was such a personal story and I had to relive some of the demons I faced to be able to write about them

Tell us about the cover and how it came about.

I wanted to have something that said "Gospel" and something that also had a "party" "Bar Mitzvah" or "celebratory" nature to it. I also wanted it to be amusing despite some of the heavy subject matter because there is a good deal of comedy in the book. So henceforth came the idea of a guy sitting in front of a church wearing a suit, a party hat, and angel wings.

Is there any marketing technique you used that had an immediate impact on your sales?

Doing a pre-launch book sale.

"He learned how to take the lemons that life gives us, and turn them into lemonade, lemon meringue pie, lemon soda, and lemon muffins (metaphorically speaking, of course)."

Tell us about your launch party and other marketing techniques you used.

I did a "Gentile Bar Mitzvah" launch party which was a play on words on my book's title. It was me and a bunch of friends and a few folks I didn't know and we ate, drank, and partied. I also have offered the book as a fundraiser for a few organizations and that has gone well. Selling at speaking gigs is a good idea. It's all drops in the bucket.

Did you get interviewed by local press/radio for your book launch?

Yes. I got interviewed by my hometown paper in Jackson NJ. I also recently did a post book launch interview for a newspaper in my current city in Astoria, Queens, NY. I did a little small time national press as well.

Did you make any marketing mistakes or is there anything you would avoid in future?

This is really the process of learning by doing. I was fairly well prepared but there are small things here and there that will sound tedious in this interview that would have made a significant impact.

What is your favorite quotation?

Be the Change you Want to See in the World.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Relax dude. Enjoy it a little bit. Explore a little more. Be nice to yourself.

What advice would you give to aspiring writers?

Be objective about your work. Be willing to listen (and tune out) criticism. Be relentless in the pursuit of becoming a good writer. Learn how to be a smart business person.

Where do you see publishing going in the future?

Toward self and print on demand publishing.
Niche publishing.

Can you give us any details about your upcoming break into Broadway?

I'll be producing my one-man show with a slightly different structure (now based on the book) in May 2014. It will be big and bad and fun. I'll be announcing the theater I'll be in, in late January 2014, and then tickets will go on sale. Exciting!!

For more information, visit these sites

www.joshuarivedal.com

www.thegospelaccordingtojosh.com

"Be the change you want to see in the world."



Raising Awareness for Suicide Prevention

By: Amber Grant

Suicide is a preventable cause of death, but prevention requires all of us to speak up. We can prevent suicide among students and enhance services for students with depression, substance abuse, and other behavioral health problems that put them at risk of suicide. Winthrop provides students counseling services on campus. You may contact Health and Counseling Services at (803) 323-2206 to speak with a professional counselor.

If you are in crisis, call **1-800-273-TALK**

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Suicide Warning Signs

Talking about suicide	Any talk about suicide, dying, or self-harm, such as "I wish I hadn't been born," "If I see you again..." and "I'd be better off dead."
No hope for the future	Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and being trapped ("There's no way out"). Belief that things will never get better or change.
Getting affairs in order	Making out a will. Giving away prized possessions. Making arrangements for family members.
Saying goodbye	Unusual or unexpected visits or calls to family and friends. Saying goodbye to people as if they won't be seen again.
Withdrawing from others	Withdrawing from friends and family. Increasing social isolation. Desire to be left alone.
Self-destructive behavior	Increased alcohol or drug use, reckless driving, unsafe sex. Taking unnecessary risks as if they have a "death wish."
Sudden sense of calm	A sudden sense of calm and happiness after being extremely depressed can mean that the person has made a decision to commit suicide.

Common Misconceptions about Suicide

FALSE: People who talk about suicide won't really do it.

Almost everyone who commits or attempts suicide has given some clue or warning. Do not ignore suicide threats. Statements like "you'll be sorry when I'm dead," "I can't see any way out," — no matter how casually or jokingly said may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

FALSE: Anyone who tries to kill him/herself must be crazy.

Most suicidal people are not psychotic or insane. They must be upset, grief-stricken, depressed or despairing, but extreme distress and emotional pain are not necessarily signs of mental illness.

FALSE: If a person is determined to kill him/herself, nothing is going to stop them.

Even the most severely depressed person has mixed feelings about death, wavering until the very last moment between wanting to live and wanting to die. Most suicidal people do not want death; they want the pain to stop. The impulse to end it all, however overpowering, does not last forever.

FALSE: Talking about suicide may give someone the idea.

You don't give a suicidal person morbid ideas by talking about suicide. The opposite is true — bringing up the subject of suicide and discussing it openly is one of the most helpful things you can do.

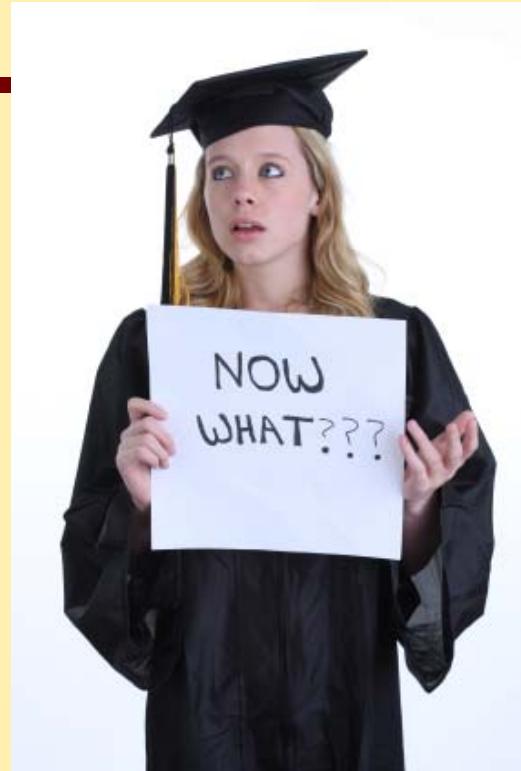
Thinking About

By: Ronata Morrison

Junior Year

Throughout the Year

- Begin researching available programs
- Review grad school guides/directories
- Request promotional materials
- Visit schools' websites
- Talk to faculty/alumni/current students in the program
- Start exploring financial aid resources
- Sign up for required standardized test and take a practice test
- Attend Career Center graduate school workshops
- Identify potential letter writers
- Order an unofficial transcript



Senior Year

Fall Semester

- Write the first draft of your statement of purpose
- Request your letters of recommendation from faculty
- Order official transcripts
- Write final draft of statement of purpose
- Complete and mail your applications
- Apply for aid available through program

Spring Semester

- Complete and submit financial aid applications
- Visit prospective campuses if possible, and talk to faculty/students to help you make your final decision
- Follow-up with schools to make sure your file is complete
- After receiving acceptance from the school of your choice, send in the required deposit, and contact other schools and decline acceptances
- Write thank you notes to people who helped you

Happy Thanksgiving



The last day of classes is Monday, December 2. Study day will be the following Tuesday, December 3rd (Enjoy hot chocolate, coffee and doughnuts in DIGS!). Final exams will begin Wednesday, December 4th. Study hard, eat well, get some sleep, and rock those exams! Good luck!!

And if you don't do so well....

