

For Immediate Release

**On the Psychology of Social Media: At WPA,
Woodbury University Students Turn the Research Lens
On Online Communities, Television, Smartphones**

***Capping Their College Careers, Eleven Graduating Seniors Present Papers
At Western Psychological Association Conference in Las Vegas***



LOS ANGELES, Calif. (June 15, 2015) – It was the most open of times, it was the most guarded, it was the age of Twitter, it was the epoch of Facebook.

Or so one might well conclude, based on a series of academic papers from a group of Woodbury University Psychology seniors. Eleven graduating students were invited to present their senior thesis research papers at the 2015 Western Psychological Association (WPA) Convention in Las Vegas in May. And social media was definitely top of mind, not so much as a way to communicate but as a phenomenon to study.

At the conference, researchers delivered posters, symposiums, workshops and the like during daily sessions. Work from undergraduates was welcomed, enabling the 11 seniors to be judged alongside graduate students, doctoral candidates and professional psychologists. While other institutions likewise submitted undergraduate work, Prof. Joye

Swan, Ph.D., and Chair of the Psychology Department, estimated that undergrads comprised less than 10 percent of conference attendees.

“What is really fascinating is the kind of research the students are conducting,” Dr. Swan said. “Because [the Psychology degree] is part of Woodbury’s School of Media, Culture & Design, we talk to students about media in all its forms — social media, the Internet, Facebook, Twitter, texting — all of which is very new in human evolution. We’ve never communicated this way before and we’ve never had access to this much knowledge.”

Presentation titles drive the point home: “Impulsive Behaviors After Social Media Browsing,” “Set Down the Cell Phone and Get Social!” “Cell Phone Use and Relational Openness,” “Early Media Use, Aggression, and Antisocial Behavior in Children,” “Road Rage for Video Games: A Look at Rage Quitting,” and “Self-Esteem During Periods of Television Viewing: The Reality of It,” among others.

According to Dr. Swan, the scope of the student research may be responsible for the remarkable acceptance rate at the last two conferences, in part because students are examining new data, not reiterating previous studies.

For the second year running, Woodbury’s Psychology seniors have jump-started potential careers in the field. A year ago, 12 of 13 graduating psych majors presented their findings at the 2014 WPA. In 2012, the Department of Psychology instituted a graduation requirement that students must submit their final theses to a regional or national research conference. Woodbury helps defray some of the costs of attendance for those whose papers are accepted.

“This is the direction Psychology is going, because it’s completely unexplored and yet it’s taking over the culture,” said Dr. Swan, who oversaw the WPA initiative along with thesis advisors Dr. Michael Faber and Dr. Jacquelyn Christensen. “Media technology is changing the way we communicate with each other. What impact is all of this having on our lives? I love that about our students’ research -- they’re saying ‘This is what is affecting my life, this is what *I’m* curious about.’”

In her thesis, Psychology student Paulette Rosette explored the relationship between frequent cell phone use and romantic relationships. “My hypothesis was that the more time one spends on their phone during a date, the less likely they will self-disclose to their partner,” Rosette said. She is currently completing an internship in the field while applying for graduate school, where she hopes to earn her license in Marriage & Family Therapy.

About Woodbury University

Founded in 1884, Woodbury University is one of the oldest institutions of higher education in Southern California. It offers bachelor’s degrees from the School of Architecture, School of Business, School of Media, Culture & Design, and College of Transdisciplinarity, along with a Master of Arts in Media for Social Justice, Master of Architecture (MArch), Master of Interior Architecture (MIA), Master of Science in Architecture (MSArch), and Master of Leadership. The San Diego campus offers Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Architecture degrees, as well as an

MSArch degree with concentrations in Real Estate Development and Landscape + Urbanism. Woodbury ranks 15th among the nation's "25 Colleges That Add the Most Value," according to *Money Magazine*. Visit woodbury.edu for more information.

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