



Boyd Briefs: November 15, 2013

From Dean Dan

I want to thank [Lewis Roca Rothgerber](#) in Phoenix and [Durham Jones & Pinegar](#) in Salt Lake City for hosting receptions in the past few weeks for alumni and friends of Boyd. Next week I will make my fifth visit to Reno since becoming dean in July, this time to talk with undergraduates at the University of Nevada, Reno about our law school. During these trips, Christine Smith, Carolyn Barnes, and I meet with our accomplished alumni and we see again and again how Boyd contributes to legal communities in cities and states throughout the region.

Thanks especially to Sonya K. Boun '04, Matthew H. Engle '08, Michael J. Hammer '08, and Kristina N. Holmstrom '04 at Lewis Roca Rothgerber in Phoenix; and Ryan Pahnke '05, Matthew Orme '10, and managing partner Kevin Pinegar at Durham Jones & Pinegar in Salt Lake City.

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FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Sara Gordon

[Sara Gordon](#) is a scholar whose interdisciplinary work draws upon her knowledge and interest in cognitive and social psychology. Professor Gordon is part of a cohort of faculty members at the Boyd School of Law who write about [law and psychology](#).

Professor Gordon recently published an article titled *[Through the Eyes of Jurors: The Use of Schemas in the Application of 'Plain Language' Jury Instructions](#)*. The article draws upon cognitive and educational psychology research about "schemas" to offer new insight about the process of jury decision-making. A schema is a name given to the phenomenon whereby individuals organize and interpret new information by placing it within the context of what is already known and familiar to them. Essentially, schemas operate as shortcuts that simplify reality. Although new experiences and new information can generate new schemas, pre-existing schemas can also thwart that development. Indeed, once schemas are established, they can persevere in the face of evidence to the contrary and notwithstanding instructions to disregard them.

Professor Gordon contends that a juror's schema about what constitutes a robbery, for example, might involve an armed perpetrator (even when that's not the law). And she argues that, as presently constituted, jury instructions—even so-called plain language jury instructions—may not suffice to neutralize that schema. Specifically, she makes the case that jurors should be provided with explanations of the applicable law, including examples of how the law applies. She also describes and advocates for a process that would require jurors to “consider the evidence from both sides and to create plausible explanations for both sides of a case.”

As this article appears in print, Professor Gordon already has another article under review for publication. In this most recent piece, titled *What Jurors Want: Motivating Juror Cognition to Increase Comprehension*, Professor Gordon draws upon research about motivated cognition to further explore juror comprehension of the law and to advocate for improvements to the process of jury decision-making.

Professor Gordon, who recently joined the tenure track, teaches in Boyd's highly-regarded lawyering processing curriculum.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Brian Vasek

Hittle House is a residential treatment facility for juvenile sex offenders and sexually reactive children suffering from psychological trauma, abuse and neglect in Columbus, Ohio. For two years prior to his matriculation at Boyd, Brian Vasek worked at this facility, as Program Supervisor and as a Direct Care Worker, overseeing and disciplining adolescent boys suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, and other illnesses.

Needless to say, the experience had a profound effect on Brian, his outlook on society's youth, and his career objectives.

In his time at Hittle House, he developed a deeper appreciation for the effect of juvenile rehabilitation efforts in his home state of Ohio. “The state's vast and varied approach to juvenile justice demonstrated the impact private treatment, rather than detention, could provide the most at-risk youth,” Brian says. “I witnessed this transformation personally as I began mentoring the residents, one of whom I kept in contact with long after I left the facility. He graduated from the program thirteen months after placement, and I believe he is a testament to the functionality of behavioral and cognitive therapy for juvenile sex offenders.”

Though his mind remains open to various options, Brian envisions a professional life wherein he advocates for the rights of adolescents. “I have begun to explore the possibility of opening my own practice, focusing on family law, and finding a way to promote and better our youth diversion programs in the state of Nevada.”

Affected and informed by his work at Hittle House, Brian currently is President of Boyd's Child Advocacy Law Association. He also serves on the law school's Community Service Committee, as a staff member on the *Nevada Law Journal*, and as an Admissions Office Student Ambassador.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Terry Moore '01

Terry Moore '01, Las Vegas, is a Shareholder with the law firm of Marquis Aurbach Coffing (MAC) where he practices primarily in real estate law, landlord-tenant law, and escrow and title insurance law. In 1998 Terry obtained his bachelor's degree with honors in environmental studies from UNLV. He is a member of the Boyd School of Law's Charter Class.

As a native Las Vegan, Terry has always been committed to his hometown and serving his community. Boyd's commitment to encouraging law students to provide pro bono services is a lesson that has stayed with Terry throughout his legal career. He credits Professor Mary Berkheiser for instilling within him the drive to help those less fortunate. "Mary was always there pushing each of us to dig deeper into the case file and to look closer at the issues when it came to our pro bono clients, since she knew they needed that assistance the most," Terry says.

Terry's commitment to pro bono services continued after he graduated from Boyd. After working for DeLanoy, Schuetze & McGaha for a year and a half, Terry joined MAC in 2003. In his first year with MAC, the firm was awarded the 2003 Access to Justice Large Firm Award. Then, after he became a partner in 2008, Terry was selected by his firm as partner in charge of the firm's pro bono services. Terry's efforts paid off with MAC receiving the 2009 Law Firm of the Year Award by the Las Vegas Chapter of the National Bar Association for its pro bono efforts, and the 2012 Pro Bono Award of Excellence from the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada for the firm's involvement with the Children's Attorneys Project.

In his spare time, Terry is an aspiring chef and wine enthusiast (as his Facebook friends will attest). He also enjoys traveling with his two children, Zachary and Madeleine, and his girlfriend Stacey.