

# An Interview with Dr. Steve Derne, Professor of Sociology

Brendan Mahoney

---

## **What's great for you about GREAT Day?**

*Derne:* On GREAT Day students present research that shows an accomplishment in school beyond grades. It shows that they've contributed to sociological knowledge. I'm always impressed by how students rise to the occasion and do professional, focused presentations.

## **Why does undergraduate research in general matter to you?**

*Derne:* We are teaching students to be sociologists, historians, and physicists. Students understand the process of doing sociology best by actually doing sociology. They learn how to develop interesting questions and ways to answer those questions and they learn how to write papers reporting the results of their research. Completed research projects are the best indication of success in graduate school. Doing undergraduate research helps students gain admission to graduate school.

## **What's your interest in the specific topic being researched in the following paper?**

*Derne:* Nonordinary, mystic experiences are understudied in sociology and the other social sciences, yet they are an important aspect of the human experience and offer their own wisdoms. Undergraduate research is most helpful in areas lacking much empirical research. These are the areas where students have a real chance to contribute to knowledge.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Brendan Mahoney. An Interview with Dr. Steve Derne, Professor of Sociology.

*The Proceedings of GREAT Day* (2015): 28-28.