

*Q) What are you currently working on?*

A) A million things - wrongful termination arbitration, residual audits, credit violation issue, and disability discrimination issue - I have a very varied role which keeps things interesting.

*Q) What do you like to do during leisure time?*

A) I love to read, hike, and cook (and eat!). I love to spend time with my friends and family. I enjoy running and exercise and an occasional yoga class. I have a mild addiction to Sudoku puzzles.

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## ADVISORY BOARD SPOTLIGHT

### MONIKA GRUTER CHENEY '95

Executive Director and President, Board of Directors  
The Gruter Institute for Law and Behavioral Research

INTERVIEW BY JUSTIN CAOUCETTE '08



**M**onika Gruter Cheney is head of the Gruter Institute for Law and Behavioral Research, a non-profit legal think tank in Portola Valley, California that was founded by her grandmother, the late Margaret Gruter. As Executive Director, Monika leads a team of scholars and professors with the purpose of using interdisciplinary behavioral research findings to inform law and public policy. “Law regulates behavior,” she says, regarding the role of behavioral research in policy, “so it makes sense to understand what

human behavior is.” The Gruter Institute emphasizes the idea that human biological research is rapidly merging with behavioral theories, making biology an important factor in policies aimed to regulate behavior.

Monika’s success in bridging behavior and policy comes partially from her background in law. Before assuming the role of Director for the Gruter Institute in 2003, Monika practiced law in the intellectual property and technology transactions group at Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati, in Palo Alto, California. During her practice she also served as legal counsel for the Gruter Institute in the position of Secretary of the Board. Prior to this she practiced in the litigation department of Thelen, Reid & Priest, focusing on commercial and government contracts defense litigation. Monika earned her J.D. in 1998 from Georgetown University Law Center and her B.A. in Philosophy, Politics and Economics and International Relations from Claremont McKenna College in 1995.

The Berger Institute is pleased to have Monika as a member of its Advisory Board. As a working mother of a 3-year-old son and a 9-month-old daughter, she relates to the mission of the Berger Institute in making it easier to balance work and family. Acknowledging the difficulty of maintaining a full-time career while having children, Monika encourages the use of social science research to seek “real solutions that can help both families and corporations.” She believes policies can be implemented which help create balance for working parents without taking away from the corporations employing them.

Monika envisions how the mission of the Gruter Institute can be extended to the realm of work and family and to the Berger Institute. “Many behavioral questions arise when we think about how to manage work and family [through policy],” she insists, citing the issue of how postpartum depression rates are affected by a mother’s return to work as an example of a research question that is of interest to policy-makers who legislate paid leave. “We want to know what we’re up against in terms of biology. Will new mothers suffer from health problems if they are obligated to return to work before they are ready?” Work-family policy, she advises, should take a cue from human biological research. “The more we understand about the biology of families, the better we can regulate the workplace to be family-friendly.”

In addition to biological research on postpartum depression in new mothers returning to work, Monika will also be leading the Gruter Institute in upcoming conferences on the interaction of emotions and legal institutions, the evolution of mechanisms for solving collective action problems, and the role of neuroscience for judges.