

Inside this Issue

- 1 Letter from Psi Chi's Faculty Advisor
- 2 Presenting Research at an Academic Conference
- 3 Lab Spotlight
- Timeline for Applying to Graduate School
- 4 Alternatives to Entering a PhD Program
- 5 Concentrations for Psychology Majors
- 6 Applied Practicum at the Women's Resource Center
- 7 Psychology at GSU: International Dimensions
- 8 Faculty Spotlight: Ciara Smalls
- 9 My Research Practicum Experience
- Cognitive Psychology: A brief introduction to the field
- 11 Graduate Student Survey
- 12 Lab Opportunities

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Gray Matters



Psi Chi's Undergraduate Newsletter for Psychology Majors

Letter from Psi Chi's Faculty Advisor

Dr. Garfin

This past academic year has been immensely productive for Psi Chi at Georgia State University. In addition to welcoming 78 new members to our organization, we sponsored an impressive number of highly successful programs. All students of psychology, regardless of whether they are members of Psi Chi, are welcome to participate in our programs. During the fall semester, we cosponsored with the Psychology Department our annual Practicum Fair and Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference (PURC). Thanks to all of our members who worked hard to insure that these programs ran smoothly. Dr. Michael Owren once again provided us with a wealth of information regarding how to create an effective poster at our Poster Session before PURC. We introduced a new program, "Creating a Curriculum Vita" that was well attended. We plan to add this to our list of annual programs given the very positive response we received. Fall induction included an inspirational presentation by Dr. Diana Robins in which she emphasized the importance of being passionate about your work and keeping an open mind as you move along your career path. Gray Matters, under the direction of Emily Andrews, Editor and Claire Lisco, Assistant

Editor, was our most extensive issue ever. The semester ended with a Psi Chi Social for our members which began with presentations about study abroad opportunities led by psychology faculty. Pizza and a game of "Psychology Charades" served as a much-needed break before finals began. We also hosted our first Executive Board Bar-B-Q to thank our officers for their creativity, dedication and hard work.

The spring semester began with Movie Night and the showing of "The Soloist". This movie, based on a true story, powerfully portrays the challenges and complexities of addressing the needs of the homeless and mentally ill in our communities. Before watching the movie, we had a speaker from United Way provide information about the specific needs of Atlanta's homeless and the programs that attempt to address these needs. Close to 20 students attended this event and brought with them enough items to donate 2 large boxes of food to the Atlanta Community Food Bank. Students were clearly inspired by this event which led to two additional projects. On March 23, Psi Chi sponsored a Hunger Workshop, led by the Atlanta Community Food Bank. This interactive workshop educated students about homelessness, hunger, and poverty in Atlanta and the United States. Based on the increased awareness and sensitivity to these important

social issues, Psi Chi students volunteered to cook, wait tables, and greet guests at the Café 458 in April. Café 458 is an award winning restaurant where all proceeds are given to Samaritan House of Atlanta, a program that facilitates self-sufficiency for homeless men and women. We hope to continue volunteering for this program and investigate other opportunities to engage in community service. Thanks to Marinda Brown for coordinating these programs.

Spring semester also included a GRE practice session and “Writing a Personal Statement” session led by Dr. Rihanna Williams. Students in the process of applying to graduate programs were provided with extremely helpful suggestions by Dr. Williams and we hope to offer this program on a regular basis. We were honored at Spring Induction to have Dr. Christopher Goode share his circuitous career path and enjoyed getting to know a bit more about another faculty member. Last but not least, another issue of Gray Matters has been published. Thanks to our editors and highly capable staff who have put together a wealth of information for our psychology majors. Enjoy!



Presenting Research at an Academic Conference

Romina Stormo

When you work in a psychology lab, it is important to find ways to engage in experiences that will

make your C.V. or résumé stand out. A great way to do this is to present the results of experiments you assisted with or findings from your own work (such as an honors thesis, which can be empirical, conceptual or theoretical) at undergraduate or professional conferences.

Within the field of psychology, poster presentations are the most common, but you can also present your research in the form of a power point or paper. For any of the above mentioned formats, however, first you need to submit an abstract/proposal to your conference of interest several months in advance. An abstract/proposal is a one page general description of your project, and it usually includes a general background on you topic (i.e., the literature review), your hypothesis, the method and procedure, and your preliminary or final results. You do not need to have your poster ready by the abstract submission deadline, but can wait until you hear that your submission has been accepted. You should dedicate at least two weeks to putting your poster together. Also, it is helpful to have your drafts reviewed by faculty and graduate students in your lab.

Posters usually include the following sections: introduction, hypothesis, method, procedure, results, and discussion. Below you’ll find some links about a few conferences that may interest you. While getting accepted to present at a professional conference is much more competitive than getting accepted at an undergraduate one, I encourage you to take a chance and apply to them since it’s a great opportunity to network with professors that

you may be interested in working with, and in some cases, it may directly lead to you getting accepted in grad school. Good luck working on your poster!

Professional Conferences:

National Latina/o Psychological Association (perfect for those interested in community psychology and minorities): <http://www.nlpa.ws/>

Georgia Psychological Association (a great local and student friendly conference!): <http://www.gapsychology.org/>

Women and Girls in Georgia Conference (great for those working on gender issues): <http://www.uga.edu/iws/WAGG/index.html>

American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/convention/>

Undergraduate Conferences:

Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference: <http://www.gsu.edu/gsurc/>

Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference: <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwpur/index.htm>



Current members of Dr. Weaver’s lab

Lab Spotlight

Marinda E. Brown

Dr. Scott Weaver’s Culture, Ecological Context, and Youth Development lab focuses on the ways that culture and environment shape the developmental trajectories of ethnic minority, immigrant, and economically disadvantaged youth. A major aim of this lab is to develop an understanding of the underlying mechanisms that account for health disparities in psychological and behavioral illness, academic achievement, and resilience.

The current project is the Korean Family and Youth Study. This study examines the ecological factors affecting Korean adolescents and families in metro Atlanta. Specifically, this study examines the potential of Segmented Assimilation Theory to explain variability in the developmental trajectories of Korean and Korean American immigrant children. The predictions of this theory have not yet been examined empirically across many immigrant subgroups. The Korean Youth and Family Study is an effort to fill this gap in the literature.

A typical day in Dr. Weaver’s lab involves End Note entry, literature searches, and developing training materials. Research assistants are also responsible for building surveys, pilot testing, writing letters, updating audio files, and working on research ideas for papers or posters. Undergraduate research assistants also discuss potential strategies for recruiting

study participants. Students who become involved with the lab have the opportunity to learn about the daily processes which contribute to a lab’s functioning, such as obtaining IRB approval, the informed consent process, data collection methods, and working with study participants.

What sets Dr. Weaver’s Lab apart from other labs is the high value placed on student input. Student research assistants have the potential to become active in every stage of the research process. Dr. Weaver encourages dedicated students to present the work that they have assisted with at academic conferences. Senior Research Assistant Alice Barrett won the Diversity Award at PURC, and she is now teaming up with Michael Lemke to present posters at the Society for Research on Adolescents Conference in Philadelphia. Student Research Assistant Chizara Ahuama-Jonas will also attend the conference as a SRA Young Scholar.

There are twelve students from diverse ethnic and academic backgrounds currently working in Dr. Weaver’s lab. The time commitment varies from four to ten hours a week depending on the student's role in the lab. Requirements for joining the lab include filling out an application, completing an interview and having a minimum 3.0 GPA. Research assistant and volunteer positions may be available this summer and fall. If you would like to learn more about becoming a volunteer in the lab, please contact Dr. Weaver.



Timeline for Applying to Graduate School

Glenna Read

Applying to graduate school can be a time-consuming and stressful process, especially if you begin the process late. Organization and time management are essential to creating a stellar application. Preparation for graduate school can begin as early as freshman year. However, many students do not begin to consider graduate school until the end of their undergraduate career. This basic timeline will assist you in creating a standout application starting your junior year.

As Early as Possible:

Research or applied experiences are components of your application that graduate schools consider very important. Getting involved in a practicum or volunteering in a research lab are easy ways to gain these experiences. Get involved as early as possible in your undergraduate career. Involvement in these settings will not only show that you are dedicated to research and have clear interests, but will also provide you with opportunities to improve your curriculum vitae (participating in research, presenting at conferences, and writing academic papers) and foster relationships with professors that can serve as references.

A **curriculum vitae (CV)** is similar to a resume but includes only academic information. Academic honors (Dean’s List, Faculty Scholar, etc.), conference presentations, publications, research experience/lab involvement, academic clubs or groups with which you have been involved (Psi Chi, the Honors Program, etc.), relevant skills, and references are common components of CVs. The earlier you begin creating your CV, the more information you will remember to put in it.

Cultivating relationships with professors that you will be able to use as **references** is an important step in creating an excellent application. Although most programs ask for three references, some may require two or even four. Plan your classes carefully, so that you are able to take several classes with the same professor. Get involved with academic groups (like Psi Chi) in order to build relationships with faculty mentors. Also, lab supervisors and people who supervise volunteer activities make great references. Make sure that your references can speak highly of your abilities as a future graduate student.

Fall Semester of your Junior Year:

Take the **GRE**. Taking the GRE in the fall semester of your junior year allows you the opportunity to take the GRE again if you are not satisfied with your score. Make sure you take your GRE well in advance of any graduate school deadlines.

Spring/Summer of your Junior Year:

Begin to **research schools** and programs that you are interested in. Try to find two or three professors at each school with whom you would be interested in working in order to maximize your chances of acceptance. Become familiar with their research so that you are able to see how their research interests mesh with your own.

Fall Semester of your Senior Year:

Many **applications open** online in August or September. Make a **checklist** of required materials for each school. The application process is not standardized and schools will require different materials to be sent in different ways.

Graduate schools will ask for your **academic transcripts**. Some schools will require that your transcripts come directly from GSU. Some schools will ask you to include your transcripts in the packet you send. You can order up to five transcripts at a time on GoSolar and have them sent to you or the school of your choice.

Prepare your **personal statement**. Although certain schools have specific guidelines for personal statements, personal statements typically include information about why the program is good for you, why you are a great candidate for that program, and previous experiences that make you a qualified candidate. Have several people review your statement for typos and errors. The professors or graduate students with whom you work may also be able to

provide valuable feedback on your personal statement.

Send in all of your application materials at least one month before the deadline. GRE scores and academic transcripts may take three weeks or more to arrive at the school after you order them.

The most important factor in a stress-free application process is organization. The earlier you start planning and organizing your application materials, the easier your experience will be. For a more detailed timeline and more information about applying to graduate school, refer to “Getting In: A Step-by-Step Plan for Gaining Admission to Graduate School in Psychology,” published by the APA. Good luck on the application process!



Alternatives to Entering a PhD Program

Hoa Nguyen

An undergraduate degree in psychology provides students with a wide variety of career options. Some psychology students end up pursuing a career in law, medicine or teaching. For those who wish to pursue graduate school in psychology, but do not wish to complete a doctoral program, masters programs are a good alternative. Entering a masters program increases your marketability, gives you the chance to pursue a different career track, and generally takes a shorter period of time to complete. There

Concentrations for Psychology Majors



Sara Gorvy

Many majors offer concentrations, and psychology is no exception. However, many undergraduate psychology majors are not aware of them. These concentrations might benefit you if you are interested in a particular field within psychology. Fulfilling the requirements for a concentration requires a more specific focus in undergraduate coursework.

Community psychology: This concentration is ideal for students who wish to pursue community psychology graduate programs or work for community-based organizations. Community psychology is characterized by an emphasis on prevention over treatment as well as the social context of behavior. Community psychologists tackle social obstacles by applying their research in real-world settings.

Pre-Education: This concentration is geared towards students who want to become secondary school teachers. This degree provides the initial content area preparation for the Alternative M.Ed. Program in Social Studies Education in the College of Education at Georgia State University or a similar master's degree at another university.

Pre-Medicine: Students who wishes to apply to medical school should choose a pre-med concentration. Psychology students concentrating in Pre-Medicine are required to take certain science courses in addition to the usual requirements.

For further information, visit the psychology department webpage or make an appointment with your advisor. If you really want to get a feel for the field in which you are considering selecting a concentration, talk to professors or graduate students who are currently involved in that type of program. Faculty and staff are listed on the psychology webpage.

These programs focus on taking a holistic approach, taking account of both environmental impacts as well as inner emotional, physical, and behavioral health. Most are accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Graduates typically become a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC).

❖ **Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy**

These programs focus on therapy with couples and family from a family systems perspective. Most are usually accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE). Graduates typically become a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT).

❖ **Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling**

These programs focus on the effects of injury, disease, and other disabilities on behavior, health, and personality. Most are usually accredited by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE). Graduates typically acquired a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC).

❖ **Masters in School Counseling**

These programs focus on consultation with parents, teachers, and other school personnel and utilization of resources to meet the developmental needs of the students. Most are usually accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and

a two types of masters programs: a non-terminal masters program, which serve as a stepping stone to getting a PhD and a terminal masters program, which prepare you for licensure or certification upon graduating. Masters program usually take two to three years to complete. Below is a list of alternative academic programs in psychology-related areas that a student graduating with a bachelor in psychology qualifies for:

❖ **Masters in Social Work (MSW):**

These programs focus on clinical practice, case management, and environmental interventions. Graduates of the program typically become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). Most of these clinical-based programs are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

❖ **Masters in Mental Health Counseling**

Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Graduates typically get a School Counselor License.

- ❖ Masters in Industrial/Organizational Psychology

These programs focus on the integration of theory, research, and applied skills within the disciplines of organizational development and leadership for business, industry, and the public sector. They tend to follow a scientist-practitioner model of training and education. Accreditation typically comes from Masters in Psychology Accreditation Council (MPAC).

- ❖ A Masters in Clinical Psychology

These programs focus on clinical practice and assessment. Accreditation typically comes from Masters in Psychology Accreditation Council (MPAC). Some programs offer the opportunity to get licensed as a Licensed Clinical Practitioner (LCP).

- ❖ A Psy.D in Clinical Psychology

These programs follow the scholar-practitioner model of training and education and focus on general practice of clinical psychology. Most are usually accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). Full-time students complete the program typically in four years followed by one full-time year of internship.

As you can see, there are many options to pursue after graduating with an undergraduate degree in

psychology. This list definitely has not exhausted all the possibilities for alternatives to the typical PhD in Clinical Psychology degree. You may want to avoid defining the scope of your opportunities too narrowly before considering all the possibilities available.



Applied Practicum at the Women’s Resource Center

Hoa Nguyen

One of the highlights of my semester has been participating in an applied practicum at the Women’s Resource Center (WRC). Founded in 1968, the mission of this non-profit organization is to create a society in which domestic violence no longer exists. They support the needs of the diverse community of battered women and their children. The WRC has its roots in the 1970’s movement towards the liberation of women from violence and oppression. When you become a part of the WRC, you are becoming a part of a family that supports empowerment and social change. Volunteers and interns have the opportunity to become involved in a variety of ways.

Direct service volunteers and interns are required to complete WRC’s twelve-hour *Domestic Violence 101 and Advocacy Training* class. In these classes, I learned about the mission of the organization and the different opportunities to get involved, such

as participating in the 24-hour hotline, legal advocacy, support groups, family advocacy, child and youth advocacy, dating violence prevention, community education, and the safehouse program. In-class activities and discussions provoked critical analysis of the myths of domestic violence that still exists today.

Currently, I spend most of my time as a mentor for the children at the safehouse. I work closely with Kai Pickett, the child and youth advocate at WRC who was once a psychology student of Georgia State University. She now takes charge of the Children’s Program, guiding other volunteers and interns in how to create a safe and supportive environment for these children. The safehouse provides temporary housing for women and children at a secure and confidential location. Volunteers can also choose to work with the women whether it is through support groups or simply finding a job. At the moment, 32 women and children share this facility with hopes of rebuilding a life free from violence and oppression.

I also assist with the crisis hotline and a dating violence community outreach. Crisis hotline advocates answer questions, provide peer-counseling support, safety planning information, and referrals 24-hours each day. As the purpose of the hotline is to provide a listening ear, each caller is spoken to with compassion and respect. As far as community outreach, I help host sessions about teen dating violence, which seek to carry the message of equality and respect in relationships to students in the metro-Atlanta area. The presentation informs high school students about the definition,

prevalence, and red flags of dating violence.

Participating in an applied practicum is a great way to attain hands-on experience, develop new skills, and gain valuable work experience. Besides gaining self-awareness, you will also build connections, which can possibly lead to strong letters of recommendation for graduate school or a job. Kim Frndak, the community coordinator at WRC, states “If you are interested in social change and you want to make a difference, not only do we provide direct service to women and children affected by domestic violence, we also work to change the systems that support that violence.”



Psychology at GSU: International Dimensions

Alice Barrett

Did you know that getting involved in psychology at GSU could immerse you in Korean culture or fly you to Argentina? How about studying terrorism in Israel and Ireland or taking the trip of a lifetime to East Africa? These are only a few examples of international opportunities in our department. Are you curious to find out more? Read below for research and travel details by continent!

Central and South America

Dr. Gabriel Kuperminc and Dr. Julia Perilla are leading research and active involvement with Latin Americans in the U.S. and overseas. Dr. Perilla takes a Clinical/Community focus in her research on domestic violence issues among Latinos. Dr. Kuperminc, on the other hand, sheds a Developmental/Community light on this cultural group. He focuses on ways to build positive development in Hispanic adolescents. Last May, Dr. Kuperminc started a month-long study abroad program on Human Rights in Argentina.

“My family emigrated from Argentina,” Dr. Kuperminc states, “so I have always had an interest in Latino cultures. When I first experienced Spanish language brokering through my post-doc research, I became particularly interested in the development of Latino kids and how they are adjusting in school. The population I study is a good illustration of the resilience – the ability to thrive despite having to face a lot of challenges in life. Researching resilience in an immigration context is an opportunity to study how factors like culture, community, neighborhood, family, and school play into this process.”

Africa

As one of our newest faculty members, Dr. Kelly Lewis has put Africa on the map in psychology. While teaching African-American Psychology and diversity courses, she researches the psychological and physical health implications of

skin bleaching in Tanzania. This year she has started a study abroad program to Tanzania and Zanzibar.

“My interest in Tanzania evolved out of my first research and action project for African American youth,” Dr. Lewis explains. “While spending a year there to study the psychological model Ujama, I noticed that people were bleaching their skin and became inquisitive about why they were attempting to be white at the sake of their own health. This research offers potential to bridge the gap between identity and self-esteem in the psychological literature and link health disparities with negative psychological/behavioral outcomes. It can also inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of culturally relevant prevention and intervention programs to protect the health of communities of color internationally.”

Asia

Are you especially interested in the impacts of terrorism and violence on youth? In that case, you may want to look into the work of Dr. Chris Henrich. In his research partnership with the Ben-Gurion University of Negev, he examines ways that social support can protect children from exposure to violence.

“This type of terror violence research seemed a good extension of the community and weapon violence I had examined in graduate school,” Dr. Henrich explains. “It tests the stress buffering hypothesis about social support in a unique, incredibly high stress situation. Terrorism is going to be an ongoing problem in

Israel and throughout the world. This research gives ways to intervene with [exposed] kids to prevent deleterious long-term Mental Health consequences.”

Also, Dr. Scott Weaver’s research lab is a haven for Korean language and culture. Dr. Weaver is collecting data in metro-Atlanta for a study on Korean youth development. The work of his research team includes translation and effective intercultural communication for visits to Korean churches, community centers, and homes. Assistants help with recruitment as well as survey design and administration.

Europe

To educate students about the root causes of terrorism, Dr. Elizabeth Sheehan and Dr. Lamoreaux are starting a summer study abroad program to Ireland. The religious conflicts that scar Ireland’s history make it an ideal location for the program.

Dr. Sheehan elaborates that “Ireland is a place where we can study terrorism and still be safe, since there has been an official cease-fire since 1998. There have not been any psychology courses at Georgia State focusing on terrorism, so we are trying to bring this important topic to students.” Dr. Lamoreaux is also starting a course on the psychology of violence next fall.

Do any of these projects spark your interest? There are many ways to get involved! Look up your professor of interest on the psychology website and e-mail them to find out more about their activities. For detailed information

on the Study Abroad programs, you can check out the GSU Study Abroad website or come to the 11th floor of Urban Life to pick up a brochure.



Dr. Smalls

Faculty Spotlight: Ciara Smalls

Marinda E. Brown

*“Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal”-
Dr. Ciara Smalls*

Dr. Ciara Smalls is the psychology department’s newest faculty member. She was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. As the daughter of an educator, she spent the better part of her life in school. Dr. Smalls became increasingly interested in learning about home and academic environments that allow economically disadvantaged youth and youth of color to thrive.

She began to understand the importance of identity for youths’ adaptive coping, psychosocial functioning, self-regulation, and a host of other polysyllabic outcomes when she reached college. Dr. Smalls received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 2007. During graduate school, Dr. Smalls pursued her interest in examining the ways in which families help to shape adolescent identity. Her dissertation examined the ways that Black youth process parents’ messages through the lens of their own identity beliefs and the implications of that processing on adolescents’ self-regulation.

Before coming to Georgia, Dr. Smalls worked at the Center for Developmental Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Smalls came to GSU because she fell in love with the people, the diversity of the student body, and the high impact community work in which the university was engaged. She will complete her first year at GSU this summer.

Dr. Smalls’ current fields of interest include racial socialization (e.g., parent messages regarding what it means to belong to a particular racial/ethnic group and guidelines for intergroup behavior), home climate, parenting styles, racial identity, and pathways to resilience among economically disadvantaged and ethnic minority youth. She is preparing to run focus groups and interviews with African American parents to better understand the frequency and motives of their race-related conversations at home.

Dr. Smalls currently teaches Multicultural Psychology at the undergraduate level and Social and Emotional Development at the graduate level. While at GSU, she hopes to equip students with the skills they need to become better scholars and practitioners, educators, or whatever they aspire to be. Welcome Dr. Smalls!



My Research Practicum Experience

Melissa Lawrence

As I approached my junior year of college, I realized that I needed more experience working in the field of psychology. Since I'm interested in school psychology, I wanted to gain research experience with adolescents from various backgrounds. I chose an off-site research practicum at Grady Memorial Hospital which involved assisting with research on a therapy for Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) for African American youth.

The therapy being evaluated is known as behavioral activation. It helps the patient break their cyclical pattern of depression (i.e. staying in bed because of the depression, but also experiencing depression because of staying in bed). One of the primary goals of behavioral activation is to help the patient recommence engaging in the activities that they enjoyed prior to becoming depressed.

I worked closely with Dr. Keeley, a clinical child psychologist and post doctoral fellow for Emory and Grady Memorial Hospital, as well as a team of clinical graduate students, residents, a child psychologist, and a psychiatrist. During my time at Grady, I was able to apply some of what I learned in Psych 3030. For example, I was able to pinpoint a confounding variable in the study. The confounding variable was the therapist, who could potentially influence how the behavioral activation was administered.

My duties consisted of entering data from the clinical assessments, searching for nearby mental health clinics and providing them with flyers and pamphlets containing information about the study. These tasks allowed me to realize the great lack of free or low cost psychological services for adolescents in metro Atlanta.

After my required semester of service, I decided to remain as a volunteer research assistant. By remaining at Grady as a volunteer, I have been able to gain more research experience that can help me to better stand out when applying for graduate school. In addition, I developed a great relationship with Dr. Keeley and the other professionals working on the research study. I have also gotten the chance to explore various graduate programs and now feel more confident in my choice of program.

I strongly suggest that anyone interested in graduate school in psychology become involved in a research practicum in order to determine what research topic interests you and to obtain a

firsthand look at life as a graduate student in that field. The Department of Psychology offers numerous on-site and off-site research internships in a variety of topics, to learn more about them you can go to <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwpsy/3053.html>.



Members of Psi Chi's Executive Board (From right: Chizara Ahuama-Jonas, Hoa Nguyen, Mirjana Ivanisevic, Emily Andrews, Emily Austin and Marinda Brown)



Cognitive Psychology: A Brief Introduction to the Field

Cognitive psychology is at its heart basic science--the pursuit of understanding for its own sake. – Dr. David Washburn

Cognitive psychology wasn't known as such until the 1960s, but its roots extend back into the history of modern psychology. In its purest form, cognitive psychology is the study of cognition, or mental processes involved in attention, perception,

learning, and memory. Early research explored memory capacity and duration, but with the advent of new technologies, researchers are able to delve further into the complicated process of memory, perception, and learning.

In 1868, Franciscus Donders performed one of the first cognitive psychology experiments. Donders studied mental chronometry, or how long a cognitive process takes. His focus was reaction time, the interval between presentation of a stimulus and a person's response to said stimulus. Following Donders, Hermann Ebbinghaus performed his landmark memory experiments in 1885, anxious to discover the capacity or limits of memory. These first investigations into how humans process and retain information were the beginnings of cognitive psychology research.

Perhaps one of the most famous experiments is Ridley Stroop's study, described here by Dr. David Washburn, GSU Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychology:

“Ridley Stroop's (1935) dissertation research examined our inability to ignore the meanings of words when trying to name the color in which the words are printed (see <http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/words.html> for a demo). This study and the so-called "Stroop effect" has been replicated in thousands of published papers, and is one of the most studied phenomena in all of psychology. Why? Because we are fascinated by our own limitations.”

The early years of the 20th century marked a radical shift away from the study of mental processes and gave rise to behaviorism. John Watson, founder of the behaviorist school of thought, suggested that psychology's main concern should be behavior – that is, measurable stimulus and response relationships – not cognition. Behaviorism caught on quickly and soon became the dominant approach in psychology. B.F. Skinner, another prominent behaviorist, published *Verbal Behavior*, which explained language acquisition as a purely behavioral process. A scathing critique from linguist Noam Chomsky brought the psychological community's focus back to cognitive psychology in a period termed the 'cognitive revolution'. Chomsky believed that language acquisition could not be purely behavioral, and argued that children learn to say many things for which they are not positively reinforced or rewarded.

Today, cognitive psychologists seek to understand these same concepts on a deeper level. Fortunately, psychologists now have more advanced technology to aid them in their research. Functional magnetic resource imaging (fMRI) allows scientists to observe brain activity. Other tools include galvanic skin response (GSR) monitors and electromyography, both of which allow researchers to collect physiological data.

There are a wide range of applied uses of cognitive psychology. For example, forensic psychology makes use of cognitive findings on eyewitness memory, creation of

false memories, and lie detection. Research suggests that eyewitness memory is remarkably unreliable, yet juries are known to convict on eyewitness accounts alone. Educators, too, find learning and memory research helpful. Understanding principles of learning allows educators to tailor their material to students and helps them to teach more effectively. For example, an educator who understands George Miller's concept of memory capacity will understand how to help students study more effectively. Treatment of diseases like Alzheimer's and dementia depends on cutting-edge cognitive research on memory encoding and retrieval. As cognitive psychologists learn more about the mechanisms involved in memory, more preventative and specialized care can be developed for those with memory deficiencies.

Georgia State University professors conduct research on a variety of topics in the field of cognitive psychology, aided by student lab assistants and participants. Some specifics of faculty interests include:

- Dr. David Washburn's lab examines how individual differences in attention and planning affect practical tasks;
- Dr. Heather Kleider investigates the effect of racial stereotypes on eyewitness memory;
- Dr. Gwen Frishkoff studies language comprehension;
- Dr. Tracie Stewart studies the cognitive mechanisms of stereotyping and prejudice;
- Dr. Ann Pearman examines how memory changes as adults age.

To learn more about different staff interests and labs on campus, visit the Psychology Department's website and browse the faculty pages (<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwpsy/2477.html>). If a faculty member is doing work that interests you, get involved by volunteering in a lab or completing a research practicum.



Graduate Student Survey

Emily Andrews

For the last issue, we asked professors how best to become competitive for graduate school. For the current issue, we decided to ask psychology graduate students about their experience applying to graduate school and what made them stand out. We hope that you will learn from their insight into the graduate school application process. It must be noted that the results presented below are only based on data from 13 graduate students and therefore are not necessarily representative. However, it should give you an idea of both the commonalities as well as the variability among graduate students who have been accepted to doctoral programs in psychology.

How many graduate programs did you apply to?
 Mean= 7, Median= 4,
 Range= 1-18

How many graduate programs were you accepted to?

Mean= 3, Median= 2, Range= 1-5

How many graduate programs were you not accepted to?

Mean= 4, Median= 2,
 Range= 0-14

How many years (if any) did you take off before applying to graduate school?

Mean= 2.6, Median= 2,
 Range= 0-8

How many semesters of research experience did you have before applying to graduate school?

Mean= 4.5, Median= 4,
 Range= 2-15

Top 4 reasons for taking time off:

1. To determine career goals
2. To gain more experience in the field
3. To travel/live/volunteer abroad
4. To discover research/clinical interests

Top 4 activities engaged in during time off:

1. Worked in lab as research assistant
2. Volunteered/Worked at a clinic/non-profit/community center
3. Traveled/Lived abroad
4. Worked or completed a masters program

Top 4 stand-out accomplishments:

1. Experience conducting research
2. Published a manuscript
3. Presented at an academic conference
4. Procured fellowship/grant

Top 4 criteria for choosing which graduate programs to apply to:

1. Advisor had similar research interests
2. Desired (clinical or community) training provided
3. Ideal Advisor (professionally and personally)
4. Geographic location

For information on Psi Chi and how to join visit
<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwpsy/3055.html>

To access previous editions of Gray Matters visit
<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwpsy/2648.html>

Lab Opportunities: Summer and Fall 2010

Faculty	Email Address	Subfield(s) of Psychology	Openings
Dominic Parrott	parrott@gsu.edu	Clinical/Cognitive	Students are first selected for volunteer research assistant positions, and are then eligible to continue work in the lab for credit.
Sarah Brosnan	sbrosnan@gsu.edu	Cognitive /Neuropsychology and Behavioral Neuroscience	Lab is currently full. There is a possibility that students will be accepted for the summer and fall of 2010.
Marise Parent	mbparent@gsu.edu	Neuropsychology and Behavioral Neuroscience	Students are first selected as research volunteers, and are then eligible to become practicum students.
Tricia King	tzking@gsu.edu	Clinical/Neuropsychology and Behavioral Neuroscience	Students are being recruited for practicum positions.
Diana Robins	drobins@gsu.edu	Clinical/ Neuropsychology and Behavioral Neuroscience	Students are being accepted for student assistant and practicum positions. Volunteer positions are rarely available, but are considered on a case-by-case basis. There is an application available on the faculty webpage.
Frank Floyd	ffloyd@gsu.edu	Clinical	Students are needed this summer to work on an intervention study with preschoolers and their parents at a local school.
Becky Williamson	rawillia@gsu.edu	Developmental/Cognitive	Students are being recruited for volunteer and practicum positions.
Tracie Stewart	stewart@gsu.edu	Cognitive	Potential openings are available for Fall 2010.
Michael Owren	owren@gsu.edu	Cognitive/ Neuropsychology and Behavioral Neuroscience	Students are being recruited for research assistant positions.
Lindsey Cohen	llcohen@gsu.edu	Clinical	Positions may be available.
Scott Weaver	srweaver@gsu.edu	Community/Developmental	Research assistant and volunteer positions may be available.