

INSIDE PSYCHOLOGY

In Celebration of John Tooby

Distinguished Professor John Tooby (1952-2023) founded and co-directed the Center for Evolutionary Psychology together with Distinguished Professor Leda Cosmides. In honor of John's long and distinguished life, Steven Pinker wrote a moving tribute in *Nautilus* (reproduced here with permission):

On November 10, 2023, my dear friend John Tooby died—or as he would have put it, finally lost his struggle with entropy.

John was a Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who together with his wife, Leda Cosmides, founded the field of evolutionary psychology. But that academic accomplishment doesn't do him justice; it's the institutional embodiment of the way his mind worked. John had insight into human nature worthy of our greatest novelists and playwrights, grounded in an understanding of the natural world worthy of our greatest scientists. Evolution for him was a link in an explanatory chain that connected human thought and feeling to the laws of the natural world.



*Distinguished Professor
John Tooby*



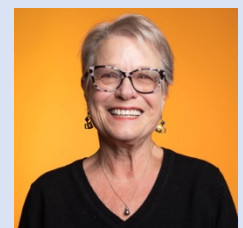
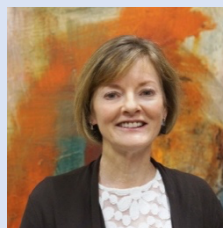
*Distinguished Professors Leda Cosmides
and John Tooby*

It was this depth of thinking that made John's company so precious. His conversations would mix sly observations of people's foibles with profound allusions to science, history, and culture. Conference audiences forgave him for his famously discursive presentations, in which he might use up his time with a digression on the Big Bang before he ever got to the data.

Belying the canard that evolutionary psychology is a bunch of post hoc just-so stories, John, together with Leda and their students, published many experimental findings that confirmed nonobvious predictions about a wide range of psychological phenomena. These included statistical thinking, the perception of race, the development of sibling feelings, and the emotion of anger.

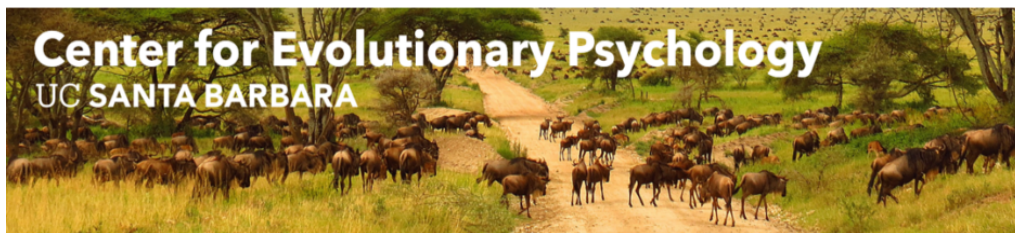
INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- P. 03 – HONORING DIANE MACKIE
- P. 04 – HONORING SCOTT GRAFTON
- P. 06 – BRENDA MAJOR ELECTED TO NAS



But John's greatest accomplishment was bringing to fruition Darwin's prediction that "psychology will be placed on a new foundation." That foundation is natural selection, since it alone can carve nooks of beneficial organization out of a universe that relentlessly slides into disorder. As he and Leda put it in a papertitle, "The Second Law of Thermodynamics Is the First Law of Psychology." The primary challenge for a science of mind is to explain how such improbable feats as perception, reasoning, and goal-seeking could have arisen in a world in which overall entropy must increase. The answer ultimately lies in the only force in nature that can temporarily shape matter into functioning organs, including the human brain.

In a set of foundational papers written when he was a postdoc around 1990, John, with Leda and his graduate advisor Irv DeVore, laid out principles for how to analyze human nature as a product of evolution. Evolution does not imply that humans are naked apes: There is a tension in evolutionary thinking between phylogeny, which left us similar to our primate ancestors, and adaptation, which fitted us to a distinctive niche. He called it the cognitive niche—not a concrete ecozone like the savannah, but an ability to use knowledge, sociality, and language in real time to outcompete species that can react only in evolutionary time. The logic of natural selection implies that humans are not "fitness-maximizers," pumping out as many babies as possible, but "ancestral-fitness-cue-maximizers," seeking satisfactions that correlated with fitness in the



environments in which we spent our evolutionary history (sweets with energy, sex with reproduction, revenge with deterrence).

John and Leda also reconciled the universality of human nature with the uniqueness of the individual by distinguishing the levels on which selection

In 1994, Distinguished Professors John Tooby and Leda Cosmides founded the Center for Evolutionary Psychology

works. In our functional design, we must be birds of a feather, because sexual recombination scrambles our blueprints every generation. But in our molecular makeup, each of us is unique, as if to change the combinations to our locks every generation so that the pathogens that constantly evolve to safecrack our tissues have to start all over with our siblings and children.

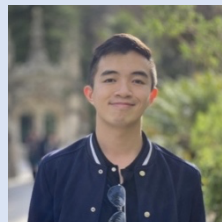
John was also famous among his friends for his *bon mots*. In an email lamenting the dogmas of his field, he wrote, "A litmus test of how attached someone is to something is what they will give up in order to keep it. To judge by recent controversies, anthropologists are willing to give up consistency, science, logic, scientific epistemology, and belief in an external world in order to keep their faith in the founding myths of cultural particularism and arbitrariness." At a dinner one night, a first-year graduate student noted how he preferred his new intellectual freedom to the pressure for immediate results he had endured in industry: "I like coming home at the end of the day not having accomplished anything." John replied, "Young man, you have a bright future in academia."

John explored the dark side of human nature unsentimentally, but also our better angels with appropriate awe. Fittingly so, because I can think of no specimen of *Homo sapiens* who better exemplifies the best of what we're capable of: astonishing erudition, speed-of-light wit, panoptic curiosity, staggering intellectual power, and saintly good nature. John was jolly, self-effacing, altruistic. He showed that at least one member of our species can confer immense benefits to others regardless of the costs to self. I experienced this during a blessed sabbatical in Santa Barbara when John took time away from his own deadlines to give transformative advice on a draft of *How the Mind Works*. His influence on me is retroviral, chimeric: so thoroughly embedded in my brain that I can barely distinguish his ways of thinking from my own. The good men do is interred with their bones, and I know that many other colleagues and students are beneficiaries of his largesse. When entropy finally overtook John, it left a huge hole in the lives of those who knew him, and another in the ecosystem of ideas.

Written by Steven Pinker. Adapted from: <https://nautil.us/psychology-lost-a-great-mind-442179/>

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

P. 18 – WELCOMING NEW FACULTY MEMBERS
P. 30 – DEMISTIFYING GRADUATE SCHOOL
P. 32 – HOBBIES OF PBS



Distinguished Professor Diane Mackie Retires

As Diane Mackie steps into retirement, it is evident that her impact extends far beyond her distinguished academic career. Her former students and colleagues have shared heartfelt tributes that paint a picture of a mentor who has profoundly shaped lives and careers.

Crystal Colter, a first-generation college student, recalls how Diane became more than just a mentor during her graduate studies at UCSB. For Crystal, graduate school was a seemingly unattainable dream, but Diane's guidance and support transformed that dream into reality. Diane was not only a mentor but also a model of strength, independence, compassion, and efficiency. She supported Crystal through personal and professional challenges, offering unwavering support and accountability. Diane's influence continued as Crystal pursued a teaching career, with Diane becoming one of her biggest lifelong supporters. Crystal reflects on Diane's ability to balance toughness and tenderness, efficiency and enjoyment of life, and expresses deep gratitude for their enduring friendship.



*Distinguished Professor
Diane Mackie*

Teresa Garcia-Marques highlights Diane's remarkable presence, initially perceived as a small, tiny woman but soon recognized as a giant, both as a person and a scholar. Teresa stood on Diane's shoulders, learning from her vast knowledge in social cognition, emotions, mood, persuasion, and social influence. Teresa also witnessed Diane's family life, characterized by love and support. Even after physical distance separated them, Diane remained a constant presence in Teresa's heart and mind as a mentor and friend.

Herbert Bless, who was guided by Diane 35 years ago, reminisces about how her mentorship played a crucial role in his academic journey. Herbert attributes much of his success to Diane's mentorship, openness, and friendliness, expressing gratitude for her support, which even extended to helping him find an apartment.

Thierry Devos reflects on his time as a postdoc in Diane's lab 25 years ago. Diane's mentoring and the stimulating intellectual environment she fostered had a profound impact on Thierry's career. He recalls lively lab meetings where Diane's ability to turn ideas into solid hypotheses and her contagious enthusiasm inspired everyone. Despite her impressive credentials, Diane made him feel valued, for which he remains deeply thankful.



Social Evaluations and Emotions Lab Happy Hour in 2012

Angela Maitner started graduate school in 2001, joining Diane's lab when Intergroup Emotions Theory was emerging. Diane pushed Angela to become a stronger student, thinker, communicator, and researcher. Diane's support extended beyond academics, providing Angela with a place to live during a housing crisis. Angela watched Diane's children grow, paralleling her own journey to becoming a full professor. Angela thanks Diane for her significant impact on her life and career and for continuing to support her unconventional career trajectory.

FACULTY TRIBUTE

Sarah Hunter expresses her gratitude for Diane's unparalleled knowledge and passion for social psychology. Diane's mentorship instilled in Sarah a commitment to elegantly crafted experimental designs and inspired her to become a more prolific writer, significantly shaping her Ph.D. journey.

Heather Claypool describes Diane as an intellectual powerhouse and a supportive mentor during her post-doc in 2002-2003. Diane's influence on Heather's professional development was profound, and their collaboration continues to this day. Heather also appreciates Diane's personal support during difficult times, including the recent deaths of both her parents. Heather feels fortunate to know Diane, work with her, and have her as a friend.

Janet Pauketat, a PhD student under Diane from 2011-2017, reflects on how Diane's rigorous training prepared her for a successful research career. Diane's foundational research made Janet's post-doc at Princeton possible. Janet credits Diane with making her fearless and confident in pursuing her ideas. She fondly remembers the warm, familial environment Diane created in her lab and is grateful for the chance Diane took on her.

Megan Reed learned much from Diane as a graduate student, particularly the importance of intentionality and attention to detail. Diane's meticulous approach to work and her commitment to excellence left a lasting impression on Megan, who continues to carry these lessons forward in her career.

Rammy Salem acknowledges Diane's prodigious research accomplishments but emphasizes her personal qualities as an advisor and mentor. Diane's commitment to her students' success and her strong moral compass have provided a solid foundation for Rammy's career, for which he is profoundly grateful.

These tributes collectively illustrate Diane Mackie's exceptional impact as a mentor, friend, and esteemed colleague. Her legacy is evident in the successful careers and enriched lives of those she has mentored, and she leaves an indelible mark on the field of social psychology and beyond.

Tributes collected by Rammy Salem.

FACULTY TRIBUTE

Distinguished Professor Scott Grafton Retires



*Distinguished Professor
Scott Grafton*

Imagine that you are a UCSB undergraduate student preparing to watch your first video lecture for your online cognitive neuroscience class. Expecting to be flooded immediately with descriptions of brain circuitry and theories of cognition, you open the video. To your surprise, your speaker emits the sounds of rolling banjo, transporting you from your Isla Vista desk to the backwoods of Appalachia.

What does the banjo have to do with cognitive neuroscience? To Dr. Scott Grafton, they are highly related. Banjo picking requires the intricate coordination of finger movements organized into repetitive motor sequences. What separates Grafton from most other banjo players is his expertise in how these motor signals originate in the brain and travel to the fingers.

Dr. Grafton, Distinguished Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences, has made significant contributions to the field of neuroscience over the course of his long career. After receiving his BA in Mathematics and Psychobiology from the University of California, Santa Cruz, he graduated from medical school at the University of Southern California (USC). He then completed 2 residencies: one in neurology at the University of Washington, and one in nuclear medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

A physician by training, Grafton complimented his clinical background with a research fellowship at UCLA. There, he began his impactful neuroscience research career, publishing seminal studies mapping the neural signatures of movement and procedural learning using positron emission tomography at a time when brain imaging was in its relative infancy. A pioneer of early brain imaging methodology, Grafton jumpstarted MRI research centers through sequential positions at USC, Emory University, and Dartmouth College before landing at the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at UC Santa Barbara, where he has remained since 2006. Grafton's career has been defined by his traveling "evangelism" for applying historically clinical brain imaging equipment to psychological research. After 18 notable years at UCSB, Grafton has announced his retirement.



Action Lab outing

Dr. Grafton has contributed to the university in a multitude of ways, serving as the Bedrosian-Coyne Presidential Chair in Neuroscience, a co-director of the Institute for Collaborative Biotechnologies (ICB), and a neurologist at the Student Health Center. One of Grafton's most valuable contributions to our department has been his role as developer and director of our brain imaging center (BIC). Never satisfied with the methodological "status quo", Grafton has worked with experienced technologist Mario Mendoza to push the boundaries of structural and functional imaging techniques. Through the years, Grafton's Action Lab has grown the BIC into a multimodal center that combines state-of-the-art brain imaging with tools to measure the body's physiological signals. Mendoza speaks highly of his time working closely with Grafton: "I have had the privilege of working with Scott for nearly 17 years. Throughout this time, he has exemplified steady and supportive leadership. He fostered an environment of trust, empowering me to work independently and confidently, which had a tremendous impact on my professional growth. I am a better MRI Tech not only because of him but also due to the relationships and collaborations he was able to foster and bring to the BIC. I will always be grateful for his guidance and his remarkable ability to explain complex concepts. He helped us see the bigger picture, ensuring that we didn't get bogged down by the enormity or novelty of the task at hand and he knew when to apply pressure when it mattered most. Scott has been a great boss and mentor. I am sincerely going to miss him."

Along with specializing in goal-oriented action organization, motor learning, clinical diffusion imaging, and conflict in decision making, Grafton's group has also been highly collaborative with other departments and research groups within our department, including those led by Professors Michael Miller, Barry Giesbrecht, Mary Hegarty, Emily Jacobs, and Regina Lapate. These valuable collaborations have led to advancements in the study of brain-body interactions under stress, spatial navigation, brain co-fluctuations with naturally cycling hormones, and emotio-motor circuitry, to name a few.

During his career, Grafton has mentored dozens of graduate students and postdoctoral trainees and authored hundreds of journal articles and book chapters. His book, titled *Physical Intelligence: The Science of How the Body and the Mind Guide Each Other Through Life*, was hailed as "an emphatic success" by *The Wall Street Journal*. In 2013, he was elected as an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) fellow. The BIC, a pillar of his legacy, will remain as a valuable departmental resource for many years to come. As a department, we wish Scott a happy retirement, which will undoubtedly be filled with plenty of banjo picking. When asked about his longtime friend, renowned cognitive neuroscientist Prof. Mike Gazzaniga replied: "If you don't want a frank and honest opinion about an idea you might have had, don't ask Grafton about it. He only knows how to shoot straight, a priceless quality in a friend and colleague."

Written by Elizabeth Rizor.

Distinguished Professor Emeritus Brenda Major elected to National Academy of Sciences, wins 2024 APS Mentor Award, and launches scholarship

For her pioneering and decades-long body of work on the psychological impacts of prejudice and discrimination, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) has elected Brenda Major, a distinguished professor emerita in UC Santa Barbara's Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences. For a scientist, NAS membership is among the highest honors worldwide.



Distinguished Professor Emeritus Brenda Major

Photo credit: Matt Perko

Established as an Act of Congress signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863, the NAS is a private nonprofit institution. Its members serve as pro bono advisors, "providing independent objective advice to the nation on matters related to science and technology [and] scientific advice whenever called upon by any government department."

"I was blown away, overjoyed, shocked and thrilled," Major said about receiving the news on a morning call from the academy. "It's a highlight of my professional life."

Major is one of the world's experts on the psychology of stigma. Her distinguished

achievements in the field include research, writing and teaching about the psychological and physical impact of being a target of prejudice and discrimination.

Traditionally, psychological research on prejudice focused on understanding its causes; why, for example, some people are disliked and discriminated against because of their race, gender or religion. Major took a different and initially unconventional approach, studying people on the receiving end of prejudice — how they perceive and cope with being a target of social stigma and discrimination and the impacts on their psychological well-being and physical health.

"That has been the focus of my work throughout my entire career," she said, adding that she has also written extensively about factors that shape perceptions of fairness more generally, as well as the psychological effects of practices to reduce discrimination, such as diversity initiatives and, more recently, anti-bias policies.

"All of us at UC Santa Barbara join in congratulating professor Major on this well-deserved honor and milestone achievement," said Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "Election to the National Academy of Sciences is a testament to Brenda's renown among her colleagues, and affirmation of her pioneering research contributions. We could not be more proud of her accomplishments and career commitment to advancing scientific knowledge, notably in the areas of the psychology of stigma and psychological resilience."

Many of Major's theoretical and empirical contributions have become seminal works in the field, noted Shelly Gable, department chair and professor. "Her work is noted equally for its intellectual rigor and societal importance. We are thrilled to have her as a colleague, and the Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences is incredibly proud to congratulate her. This prestigious honor recognizes her scientific contributions and commitment to making our society a better place."

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT



Distinguished Professor Emeritus Brenda Major during a Society for Personality and Social psychology interview ("Out of the Lab") about her career as a star in the field. The interview is available in YouTube.

"I was fortunate to have two outstanding mentors early in my career," Major said. "Both of them were absolutely crucial to my success as a scholar and professor." Major praised her PhD advisor, Kay Deaux, who mentored her through graduate school at a time when female academics were rare, and Dean Pruitt, a senior colleague at her first academic job, at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

For her lifetime achievements in teaching, advising and encouraging students and colleagues in the field of social psychology, UC Santa Barbara's Brenda Major has received the Association for Psychological Science 2024 APS Mentor Award.

"Advising and mentoring students is the part of being a professor that I have most enjoyed," Major said. "I believe that good mentorship is one of the most important assets one can have on the path to achieving one's goals."

"Most people know Brenda for her outstanding research on topics of critical societal importance," said Shelly Gable, professor and department chair. "We have also long known of her phenomenal record as a mentor to the next generation of stellar scholars in social psychology."

To honor Major's mentoring and contributions to science, along with those of her husband and colleague, Jim Blascovich, the department has established the Brenda Major and Jim Blascovich Fund for Social Psychology.

The fund will support the research, mentoring and community building missions of UCSB's Social Psychology Program, one of the world's premier training programs, known for its contributions to methodological and theoretical innovation.

The fund also honors Major and Blascovich, two of the program's most celebrated faculty members; both have made important theoretical and methodological advances across their careers while mentoring future scholars.

A distinguished professor and former department chair, Blascovich founded UCSB's Sage Center for the Study of Mind and co-founded the Center for Virtual Environments and Behavior.

Major and Blascovich are matching gifts to the fund, up to \$10,000 total.

To learn more about the fund and make a donation, please click [here](#).

Adapted from: <https://news.ucsb.edu/2024/021485/brenda-major-elected-national-academy-sciences> & <https://news.ucsb.edu/in-focus/social-psychologist-brenda-major-wins-mentor-award-launches-scholarship>



*Distinguished Professor Emeritus
Jim Blascovich*

Professor René Weber finds distinct brain patterns in moral reasoning

Every day we encounter circumstances we consider wrong: a starving child, a corrupt politician, an unfaithful partner, a fraudulent scientist. These examples highlight several moral issues, including care, fairness, and betrayal. But do they share a unifying trait?

Philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists have debated whether moral judgments share something distinctive that separates them from non-moral matters. Moral monists claim that morality is unified by a common characteristic, typically concerns about harm. In contrast, pluralists argue that moral judgments are diverse.

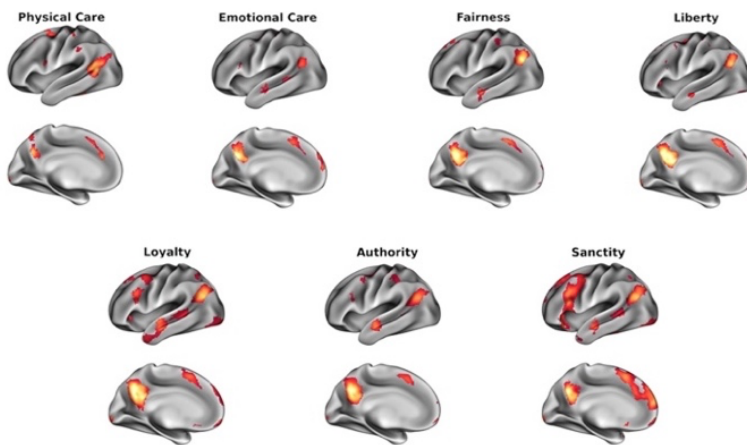
Fascinated by this debate, a team led by UC Santa Barbara's René Weber studied the nature of morality using moral psychology's prolific theories. The researchers examined 64 individuals through surveys, interviews, and brain imaging on the wrongness of various behaviors. They found that a general network of brain regions was involved in judging moral violations, like cheating on a test, contrasting with mere social norm violations, such as drinking coffee with a spoon. This network's topography overlapped with brain regions involved in theory of mind. However, distinct activity patterns emerged at finer resolutions, suggesting the brain processes different moral issues along different pathways, supporting a pluralist view of moral reasoning. The results, published in *Nature Human Behaviour*, even reveal differences between how liberals and conservatives evaluate a given moral issue.



Professor René Weber

"In many ways, our findings clarify that monism and pluralism are not necessarily mutually exclusive," said first author Frederic Hopp, who led the study as a doctoral student in UC Santa Barbara's Media Neuroscience Lab. "We show that moral judgments of a wide range of morally relevant behaviors are instantiated in shared brain regions." A machine-learning algorithm could reliably identify which moral category a person was judging based on brain activity, indicating that moral foundations elicit distinct neural activations.

The group was guided by Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), a framework explaining the origins and variation in human moral reasoning. "MFT predicts that humans possess a set of innate and universal moral foundations," Weber explained. These are generally organized into six categories: care/harm, fairness/cheating, liberty/oppression, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation. The framework arranges these foundations into two broad moral categories: individualizing foundations (care/harm and fairness/cheating) protect individual rights and freedoms, while binding foundations (loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation) operate at the group level.



Moral foundations in the brain

The researchers created a model based on MFT to test whether the framework and its nested categories were reflected in neural activity. Sixty-four participants rated short descriptions of behaviors violating particular moral foundations and behaviors that simply went against conventional social norms, which served as a control. An fMRI machine monitored brain activity as they reasoned through the vignettes.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Certain brain regions distinguished moral from non-moral judgment, such as the medial prefrontal cortex, temporoparietal junction, and posterior cingulate.

Participants also took longer to rate moral transgressions than non-moral ones, suggesting that judging moral issues may involve a deeper evaluation of actions and their relation to one's values. Moral reasoning recruited brain regions associated with mentalizing and theory of mind.

The researchers also found that transgressions of loyalty, authority, and sanctity prompted greater activity in brain regions associated with processing others' actions, as opposed to the self. "It was surprising how well the organization into 'individualizing' versus 'binding' moral foundations is reflected neurologically," Weber said.

Next, the authors developed a decoding model that accurately predicted which specific moral foundation or social norm individuals were judging based on fine-grained brain activity patterns. This would not have been possible if all moral categories were unified neurologically. "This supports MFT's prediction that each moral foundation is not encoded in a single 'moral hotspot,'" the authors write, "but instantiated via multiple brain regions distributed across the brain." This finding suggests that distinct moral categories proposed by MFT have a neurologic basis.

Moral reasoning is similar to other mental tasks: it elicits characteristic patterns across the brain, with nuances based on specifics. For instance, looking at pictures of houses and faces activates the ventral temporal cortex. "However, the activation patterns in this region distinguish whether someone is looking at a house or a face," Hopp explained. Analogously, moral reasoning activates certain brain regions, with distinct patterns for different moral behaviors, suggesting they are not unified.

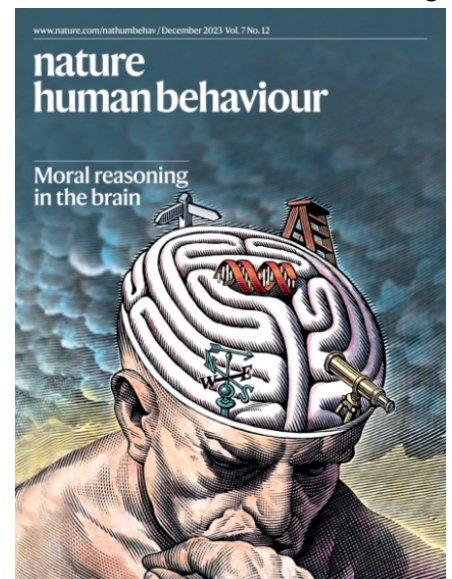
MFT provides a framework for understanding group identity and political polarization. Survey and behavioral experiments suggest that liberals (progressives) are more sensitive to care/harm and fairness/cheating categories, protecting individual rights. Conservatives emphasize loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation categories, operating at the group level.

"Our results provide neurological evidence that liberals and conservatives have complex differential neural responses when judging moral foundations," Weber explained. Individuals across the political spectrum likely emphasize different values when evaluating an issue.

This paper is part of ongoing research by the Media Neuroscience Lab, aiming to understand how humans make moral judgments across realistic scenarios. "We can reliably decode which moral violation an individual perceives, opening avenues for future research," Hopp said. "Can we decode moral violations in news stories, radio shows, or political debates?" The study's co-investigators include renowned neuroscientist and moral philosopher Walter Sinnott-Armstrong from Duke University and Scott Grafton, a professor in UC Santa Barbara's Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. Jacob Fisher and Ori Amir also contributed as co-authors, being, respectively, a Ph.D. student and postdoctoral fellow in Weber's lab during the study.

Ultimately, our ability to cooperate in groups is guided by systems of moral and social norms, and the rewards and punishments for adhering to or violating them. "Fables, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, novels, and the daily news all weave a tapestry of what counts as good or bad," Weber said. "Our results contribute to understanding moral judgments, how they are processed, and predicted across different groups."

Adapted from: <https://news.ucsb.edu/2023/021196/moral-reasoning-displays-characteristic-patterns-brain-distinctions-between-moral>



Cover of Nature Human Behavior

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Assistant Professor Regina Lapate awarded prestigious grant



*Assistant Professor
Regina Lapate*

Psychological & Brain Sciences Assistant Professor Regina Lapate was awarded a \$2.3m grant from the National Institute of Mental Health to study the organization and function of the lateral prefrontal cortex (LPFC) in emotional processing and regulation. Emotion regulation deficits are a hallmark of mood and anxiety disorders, which afflict over 20% of adults in the United States. Poor emotion regulation is often characterized by the context-inappropriate expression of emotion, including the unwarranted persistence and influence of negative states outside their temporal context.

With the support of this award, Dr. Lapate's team (the LEAP Neuro lab) will test a model of lateral prefrontal organization that postulates that affective and temporally extended information are integrated in the most anterior portion of LPFC—the lateral frontal pole—to inform context-sensitive affective responding via downstream function of a posterior LPFC region, the mid-LPFC. To that end, this work will combine advanced multivariate analysis of fMRI data and individualized (participant-tailored) causal methods (transcranial magnetic stimulation/TMS) to establish the functional and representational specificity of distinct prefrontal regions in emotion. Ultimately, this work will help advance a

theoretical model of how prefrontal function may support adaptive time-and-context appropriate responses in the face of emotional challenges.

Adapted from: <https://psych.ucsb.edu/news-events/news/2023/asst-prof-regina-lapate-awarded-prestigious-nih-grant-elucidate-prefrontal>

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Professor David Sherman named Russell Sage Foundation Visiting Scholar

The Russell Sage Foundation, based in New York City, has announced the selection of 17 visiting scholars for the 2024-2025 academic year. Professor David Sherman was named one of the visiting scholars. Visiting scholars will pursue research and writing projects that reflect the Russell Sage Foundation's commitment to strengthening the social sciences and conducting research "for the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States." Professor Sherman's research will examine the role that social psychological factors play in the climate crisis, both in terms of understanding institutional barriers to passing climate policy in the U.S. and of promoting individual adoption of behaviors that reduce carbon emissions.

"I will be interviewing climate scientists, politicians and activists to provide broader context for the empirical research in environmental, social, political and cultural psychology," Professor Sherman said, noting that he will "explore the connections and mis-connections between the public and policymakers and how activists and the media can be powerful forces to promote, or inhibit, the expression of public will into climate policy." Professor Sherman's project also builds on ongoing research conducted in the Social Climate Science Lab at UCSB, where he is a professor in the Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences.



Professor David Sherman

Adapted from: <https://psych.ucsb.edu/news-events/news/2024/david-sherman-named-2024-2025-russell-sage-foundation-visiting-scholar> and <https://news.ucsb.edu/in-focus/russell-sage-foundation-taps-ucsb-social-scientists-fellowships>.

Distinguished Professor Jonathan Schooler finds that social-behavioral findings can be highly replicable

Roughly two decades ago, a community-wide reckoning emerged concerning the credibility of published literature in the social-behavioral sciences, especially psychology. Several large-scale studies attempted to reproduce previously published findings to no avail or to a much lesser magnitude, sending the credibility of the findings — and future studies in social-behavioral sciences — into question.

A handful of top experts in the field, however, set out to show that when best practices are employed, high replicability is possible. Over six years, researchers at labs from UC Santa Barbara, UC Berkeley, Stanford University, and the University of Virginia discovered and replicated 16 novel findings with ostensibly gold standard best practices, including pre-registration, large sample sizes, and replication fidelity. Their findings, published in *Nature Human Behaviour*, indeed suggest that with best practices, high replicability is achievable.



Distinguished Professor Jonathan Schooler

“It’s an existence proof that we can set out to discover new findings and replicate them at a very high level,” said UC Santa Barbara Distinguished Professor Jonathan Schooler, director of UCSB’s META Lab and the Center for Mindfulness and Human Potential, and senior author of the paper. “The major finding is that when you follow current best practices in conducting and replicating online social-behavioral studies, you can accomplish high and generally stable replication rates.”

Their study’s replication findings were 97% the size of the original findings on average. By comparison, prior replication projects observed replication findings that were roughly 50%.

The paper’s principal investigators were John Protzko of UCSB’s META Lab and Central Connecticut State University (CCSU), Jon Krosnick of Stanford’s Political Psychology Research Group, Leif Nelson at UC Berkeley’s Haas School of Business, and Brian Nosek, who is affiliated with the University of Virginia and is the executive director of the standalone Center for Open Science.

“There have been a lot of concerns over the past few years about the replicability of many sciences, but psychology was among the first fields to start systematically investigating the issue,” said lead author Protzko, a research associate in Schooler’s lab, where he was a postdoctoral scholar during the study. He is now an assistant professor of psychological science at CCSU.

“The question was whether past replication failures and declining effect sizes are inherently built into the assorted scientific domains that have observed them. For example, some have speculated that it is an inherent aspect of the scientific enterprise that newly discovered findings can become less replicable or smaller over time.”

The group decided to perform new studies using emerging best practices in open science — and then to replicate them with an innovative design in which the researchers committed to replicating the initial confirmation studies regardless of outcome. Over the course of six years, research teams at each lab developed studies that were then replicated by all of the other labs.

In total, the coalition discovered 16 new phenomena and replicated each of them 4 times involving 120,000 participants. “If you use best practices of large samples, pre-registration, open materials in the discovery of new science, and you run replications with as best fidelity to the original process as you can, you end up with a very highly replicable science,” Protzko said of the findings.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

One key innovation the study offered was that all of the participating labs agreed to replicate the initial confirmation studies regardless of their outcome. This removed the scientific community's customary bias of only publishing and replicating positive outcomes, which may have contributed to inflated initial assessments of effect sizes in the past. Furthermore, this approach enabled the researchers to observe several cases for which study designs that failed to produce significant findings in the original confirmation later attained reliable effects when replicated at other labs.

Across the board, the project revealed extremely high replicability rates of their social-behavioral findings and no statistically significant evidence of decline over repeated replications. Given the sample sizes and effect sizes, the observed replicability rate of 86%, based on statistical significance, could not have been any higher, the researchers pointed out.

To test the novelty of their discoveries, they ran independent tests on people's predictions regarding the direction of the new findings and their likelihood of replicability. Several follow-up surveys in which naïve participants evaluated descriptions of both the new studies and those associated with previous replication projects found no differences in their respective predictability. Thus, the replication success of these studies was not due to them discovering obvious results that would necessarily be expected to replicate. Indeed, many of the newly discovered findings have already been independently published in high-quality journals.



ReproducibiliTea, A network of journal clubs for Open Science, including the journal club founded in our department

“It would not be particularly interesting to discover that it is easy to replicate completely obvious findings,” Schooler said. “But our studies were comparable in their surprise factor to studies that have been difficult to replicate in the past.

Untrained judges who were given summaries of the two conditions in each of our studies and a comparable set of two-condition studies from a prior replication effort found it similarly difficult to predict the direction of our findings relative to the earlier ones.”

Because each research lab developed its own studies, they came from a variety of social, behavioral, and psychological fields such as marketing, political psychology, prejudice, and decision-making. They all involved human subjects and adhered to certain constraints, such as not using deception. “We really built into the process that the individual labs would act independently,” Protzko said. “They would go about their sort of normal topics they were interested in and how they would run their studies.”

Collectively, their meta-scientific investigation provides evidence that low replicability and declining effects are not inevitable. Rigor-enhancing practices can lead to very high replicability rates, but exactly identifying which practices work best will take further study.

This study’s “kitchen sink” approach — using multiple rigor-enhancing practices at once — didn’t isolate any individual practice’s effect.

Adapted from: <https://news.ucsb.edu/2023/021257/social-behavioral-findings-can-be-highly-replicable-six-year-study-four-labs-suggests>

Assistant Professor Hongbo Yu finds that people in power who are guilt-prone are less likely to be corrupt

Guilt. It's a horrible feeling that causes us to question our worth as human beings. But while it's something that induces sleepless nights and stress-related physical symptoms in individuals, for society at large, the tendency toward guilt might have some benefits.

"People who are prone to feeling guilt in their everyday lives are less likely to take bribes," said UC Santa Barbara psychology professor Hongbo Yu, who specializes in how social emotions give rise to behaviors. He is a senior author of a paper that appears in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

In a study he conducted in collaboration with partners at East China Normal University and Zhejiang Normal University, Yu looked at guilt not as an episodic state — such as how we feel after specific instances in which we hurt someone — but rather as a personality trait, in which people tend to worry about the potential harm their actions cause.

"So I could be a person for whom it is really easy to feel guilt in my everyday life," he explained, "while others might be less likely to feel guilt, or have a higher bar for feeling that emotion."

We all can probably intuit that anticipatory guilt might make us think twice before undertaking an action with potentially bad consequences for others. But what has been less clear is how this crucial morality-related personality trait affects decision makers in situations involving temptation and incentives, balanced against potential harm to others.

"The question was whether the trait of guilt is associated with a lower probability of engaging in corrupt behavior," Yu said.

In their study, the researchers concentrated on bribery, an act in which a person that typically has some level of power and influence is tempted to act illegally or unethically in exchange for favors or gifts from someone who wishes to use that influence unfairly for their gain.



Assistant Professor Hongbo Yu

In one of the researchers' online experiments, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire to record both demographic and personality information, and also their fairness concerns. They also participated in one of two scenarios. The first one put them into the role of an arbitrator with the power to assign students grades. They were each paired with a "co-player," who, unbeknown to them, was fictitious. The co-players (in this case the fictitious students who had been graded) would attempt to bribe the participants to change their grades in exchange for a portion of the reward the co-players would receive for passing the test above a certain threshold.

The second scenario gave each participant 100 tokens, ostensibly to donate to a children's charity, such as UNICEF. Then co-players attempted to bribe the participants to give them the money, in exchange for keeping a certain portion for themselves.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT



“So the structure of the two scenarios is similar, but the critical difference is that in the charitable donation scenario, the victim is obvious,” Yu said. “The first scenario is more of just a violation of moral principle.”

As would be expected, participants who scored high in guilt-proneness (from the questionnaire) were less likely to accept a bribe in either of the two scenarios. The effect was more pronounced in the charitable donation scenario.

“You know someone’s going to get hurt,” Yu said. “In the paper we argue that when

the victim is more salient, the association between the guilt trait and corrupt behavior becomes stronger.” Concern for others’ suffering, they said, might play a significant role in how guilt-proneness influences bribe-taking behaviors.

This study joins a growing body of work that associates guilt-proneness with fewer unethical decisions, such as cheating for personal gain and counterproductive work behaviors. But it’s important to note that this study is correlational, Yu said.

“We can’t make a causal claim that if we make people more guilt-prone, we will necessarily see less corruption. That needs more research.”

Indeed, the researchers say, guilt proneness is not the only trait that might predict corrupt behaviors (or lack of them), and it’s worth studying how this trait, along with other personality traits, might “serve as a reliable anti-corruption predictor in personnel selection,” such as when choosing people for leadership positions or for high-stakes jobs.

“We can’t claim causality, but we can leverage the association between the guilt trait and the lower likelihood of corruption to make us more confident about their integrity,” Yu said. “Maybe that’s something we can apply to the real world.”

Adapted from: <https://news.ucsb.edu/2023/021101/people-power-who-are-guilt-prone-are-less-likely-be-corrupt>

BOOK SPOTLIGHT

Academic Affiliate Bella DePaulo publishes book "Single at Heart: The Power, Freedom, and Heart-Filling Joy of Single Life"

She’s 70 and has lived alone her entire adult life. But when she told the world that this was by choice — and that she was happy and fulfilled — the response was overwhelming. Her personal story, and more than three decades of research on single people around the world, had struck a chord.

“I’ve written lots and lots of things, both academic and more popular, and nothing has gotten the reaction of that essay,” said social scientist Bella DePaulo, a foremost scholar on single life and academic affiliate of the Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences at UC Santa Barbara.

Her article published in HuffPost ahead of the release of her new book “Single at Heart: The Power, Freedom, and Heart-Filling Joy of Single Life” (Apollo, 2023) garnered a firestorm of responses. More than a hundred people wrote her personal emails describing how they had never felt so validated. The impact of her research is also seen in the 1.7 million views of her 2017 TedX talk, where she debunked the idea that marriage leads to happiness.

DePaulo describes herself as “single at heart,” a term she coined to challenge the notion that single life is something people settle for. Rather, she has shown through her research that for the single at heart, “being unpartnered is key to their most joyful, fulfilling, authentic and psychologically rich life.”



Academic Affiliate Bella DePaulo

Using survey data from more than 20,000 people from over 100 countries, and drawing from research by other social scientists, DePaulo shows that contrary to conventional wisdom, those who embrace single life grow happier over time and are better situated to navigate old age than those who built their lives around romantic relationships.

“The research shatters the stereotype that single people are all sad and lonely and that as they get older, they get even more lonely, sad and isolated,” she said. “For people who love being single, who are embracing single life and investing in it, there are all sorts of rewards.”

One critical advantage to embracing single life she noted is that the single at heart have the freedom to travel and live how and where they want. They also typically experience stronger friendships that have been prioritized over the years, report lower rates of loneliness at all ages, and more often commit to their communities and causes. Intimacy as well may look different for single people because they define it on their own terms and embrace concepts of love that encompass more than just romantic relationships.

People who want to be single, DePaulo emphasized, will often invest in their friends and the people who mean a lot to them. “They end up having what I call ‘the ones’ instead of ‘the one,’” she said.

DePaulo points to research that shows that on average when couples move in together and when they marry, they become more insular. They become more focused on each other and they see their friends and family less often. “People who are coupled, especially in committed couples or marriages, are really focused on each other, and that may seem romantic, and it can be,” she added.

“But they are also losing out on bigger, broader notions of love, intimacy and family. People who are single at heart understand that love encompasses far more than just romantic love. They understand that intimacy can include sexual intimacy, but it also includes emotional intimacy. They understand that family can be the people we typically think of as family, but it also can include the people we choose to treat as family, the people who are most meaningful to us.

“I think of it not as a lesser life or a more limiting life, but a more expansive life.”

There is, however, one element of being single that DePaulo decries: the stigma around it, the strong social pressure against it and the tax privileges denied to it. Part of her project extends beyond research and into social change as calls into question these social inequities and exclusions. As she tries to move the dial on perceptions and protections for single people, she sees it as part of the same movement as feminism, gay marriage and LGBTQ rights.

“It’s part of this bigger project of people getting to be who they really are and live their best, most fulfilling lives,” she added.

Adapted from: <https://news.ucsb.edu/2024/021352/embracing-single-life-love-intimacy-and-family-beyond-couple>

Famed Neuroscientist Christof Koch Speaks on Consciousness

Christof Koch is a leading neuroscientist in the field of consciousness. Koch is the president and chief scientist of the Allen Institute for Brain Science, founded by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen and dedicated to accelerating our understanding of how the human brain works.



Dr. Christof Koch

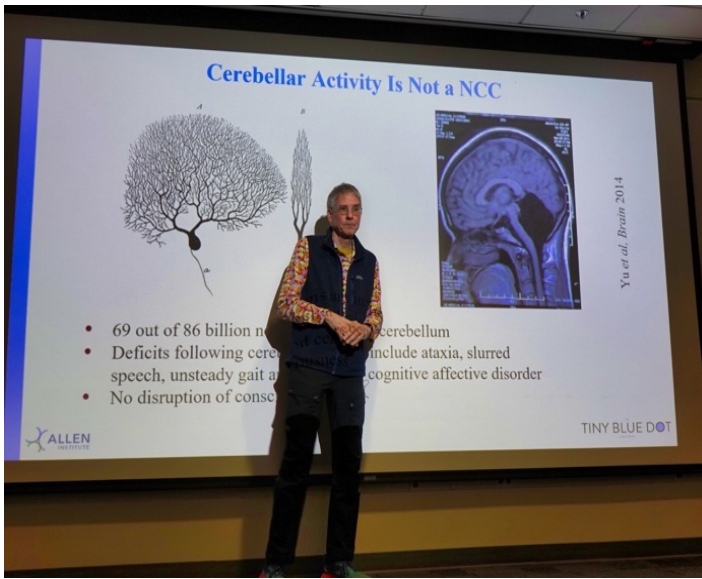
Koch began his recent SAGE talk by noting that consciousness is the only way he knows anything exists. It would be absurd for this central aspect of life to be off-limits for study. As a result, he titled his talk “The Elephant in the Room – Integrated Information Theory and Consciousness.” He started by describing two conscious experiences: the extraordinary near-death experience (NDE) and the more ordinary experience of running through a forest, taking in the visual beauty and sounds around him. Koch pointed out that you can know someone your whole life but never directly experience what they do. Studying consciousness is harder than studying black holes, electrons, or viruses because those are third-person perspectives. Descartes wrote that consciousness is the only thing he is utterly certain of, and any ontology must start from this unassailable observation. While we think the world is made of atoms, we have no direct knowledge of atoms—only of our conscious experiences.

Philosopher David Chalmers famously coined the term “The Hard Problem of Consciousness,” imagining a world just like ours where everyone is a zombie with no actual conscious experiences. We not only have to explain that we have feelings but also why they are as they are. Space is extended, time flows, colors are certain ways, and smells are distinct. Being in love is a special feeling that science must explain. Historically, people thought the heart was the center of consciousness because it visibly moved. Koch noted that the brain of a mouse is indistinguishable from a human brain at the level of neurons. Francis Crick, who won the Nobel Prize for discovering the structure of DNA, later worked on understanding consciousness, collaborating with Koch on the “neural correlates of consciousness” (NCC)—the minimal neural mechanisms necessary and sufficient for experiencing any conscious percept.

Koch and Crick explored whether the NCC would be the same when seeing a German Shepherd dog as when imagining one. They sought to identify biological systems key to consciousness. The Ascending Reticular Formation of the brain seems crucial, based on evidence from lesions, loss of function, brain stimulation, direct recording of brain signals, and neuroimaging.

In the 1850s, Broca’s Area of the brain was identified through observations of someone who lost the ability to speak. The brain’s frontal areas are key to creative thought and planning but losing these areas has no effect on consciousness. Surgeons map brain function by stimulating brain areas while patients are awake and aware, which helps avoid damaging critical regions during surgery.

Koch emphasized distinguishing the NCC from events preceding or following a conscious experience, like selective attention and performing tasks. He highlighted the cerebellum, a huge brain part containing most of its neurons. Despite its importance for smooth movement, damage to the cerebellum causes no disruption of consciousness. Koch showed an image of a person’s brain entirely lacking a cerebellum, explaining that the cerebellum’s “feed forward” wiring is key to understanding consciousness.



Koch noted that direct brain stimulation can alter the sense of self. The mouse brain has 5,000 cell types, and we have much to learn. For practical reasons, we need a consciousness detector. In cases of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), patients might open their eyes but not respond. After 3-5 days, families might be advised to withdraw life support. However, 20% of these patients are covertly conscious.

A new technique measures the complexity of EEG signals using compression algorithms, which indicate the complexity and thus the presence of consciousness. Koch acknowledged the limitations of NCC, noting it remains an empirical, third-person study and doesn't directly address first-person experience. In 1998, Koch bet David Chalmers that the brain's mechanism for producing consciousness would be discovered by 2023. Koch paid the bet last year at the ASSC Conference in New York.

We don't just want correlates; we want a testable theory. Koch suggests examining engineered systems, large language models, and cerebral organoids. He contrasts this with Functionalism, which views mental states as nothing but their functional roles and causal relations. Philosopher Daniel Dennett, an advocate of this view, denies consciousness in any meaningful sense. He denies "qualia"—the subjective experiences of sensations. Koch exclaimed that Dennett is "confused about pain!" Koch's favored theory is Integrated Information Theory (IIT), developed by neuroscientist Giulio Tononi. IIT starts with axioms similar to geometry, proposing that consciousness is real, has composition and information, is integrated, and has the property of exclusion. Koch argues IIT has causal power and measures consciousness with "phi," indicating a system's complexity. IIT differs from traditional brain models by considering possible connections, not just active ones.

Koch explained that consciousness isn't about intelligence. Powerful programs like AlphaGo and ChatGPT have zero phi and consciousness, but a brain organoid in a Petri dish can have high phi with no intelligence. To study consciousness, Koch asserts we must start with consciousness and expand outward, not the reverse.

In a separate meeting, Koch discussed IIT's implications for free will and his research with psychedelics. Psychedelics, he noted, have therapeutic value, can rapidly change conscious experience, and may teach us about what truly exists. Koch is still integrating his direct experiences with a theory of consciousness and reality, emphasizing his empirical approach. Ultimately, Koch's work underscores the complexity and centrality of consciousness in understanding reality, leaving a lasting impact on all who engage with his ideas.



Distinguished Professor Jonathan Schooler (left) and Visiting Scholar Robert Bernstein (right), with Dr. Christof Koch

Original written by Robert Bernstein. Adapted from: <https://www.edhat.com/news/famed-neuroscientist-christof-koch-speaks-on-consciousness/>

Brandon Woo

Brandon Woo is a new Assistant Professor in Psychological & Brain Sciences. Brandon received his Ph.D. in Psychology (2023) from Harvard University.

(IP) Brandon, tell us about yourself. Where were you born, educated, and what is a key moment or moments that led you to become a developmental psychologist who studies how humans come to understand others' actions and minds?

I grew up on the West Coast, but further north in Canada. I earned a BSc at the University of British Columbia (UBC), and then I moved across the continent to pursue a PhD at Harvard.

When I was younger, I tried doing a lot of things (e.g., journalism, photography, English literature). At some point, I realized that throughout these experiences, I was often trying to make sense of the human mind. What motivates people? What brings people together vs. divides them? What leads people to care (or not care) about another person's wellbeing? These are questions that I was interested in then, and that I remain interested in.

After coming to this realization, I decided to try working in a psychology lab. I found myself in the lab of Dr. Kiley Hamlin at UBC. My research there focused on infants' understanding of social actions. I found research on social cognitive development fascinating: that by studying infants and children, we could shed light on the origins of human social life. My experiences in the lab inspired me to attempt a career in psychology.

I'm a first-generation college graduate. When I started college, I didn't really know what a research career could look like. I'm very grateful for the mentors and peers who've supported me along the way, and I'm excited to pay it forward to future generations.

(IP) Tell us about your research. Please describe one project or set of findings that you have worked on thus far that exemplifies your approach to science and the questions you ask. And what's one goal you have for your research here at UCSB?

Humans are one of the most social and cooperative species on Earth. My research program asks how humans come to make sense of others' actions and minds, particularly in social contexts. Through studies of infants and children, my team's research aims to reveal the developmental foundations of human learning and cooperation.

In an ongoing line of studies, I'm asking whether babies might be better able to reason about the goals of people that they care about: their own caregivers. Imagine a person who reaches, again and again, for a teddy bear over a ball. As adults, we might understand that the person has a goal to act on the teddy bear. Classic research in infants, however, suggests that younger babies don't understand that. The field has largely interpreted such findings as evidence that younger babies lack the ability to represent others' goals. In my work, I've identified a limitation of this past work: that the person acting on objects has always been a stranger. It may be, then, that younger babies can represent others' goals, but that they aren't sufficiently motivated to track the goals of a stranger. I have preliminary evidence that supports this hypothesis: Infants appear to better represent the goals of their parents and guardians, relative to those of strangers (see Fig. 1). Moving forward, my lab will continue exploring the contexts in which children reason about others' actions and minds.



Assistant Professor Brandon Woo

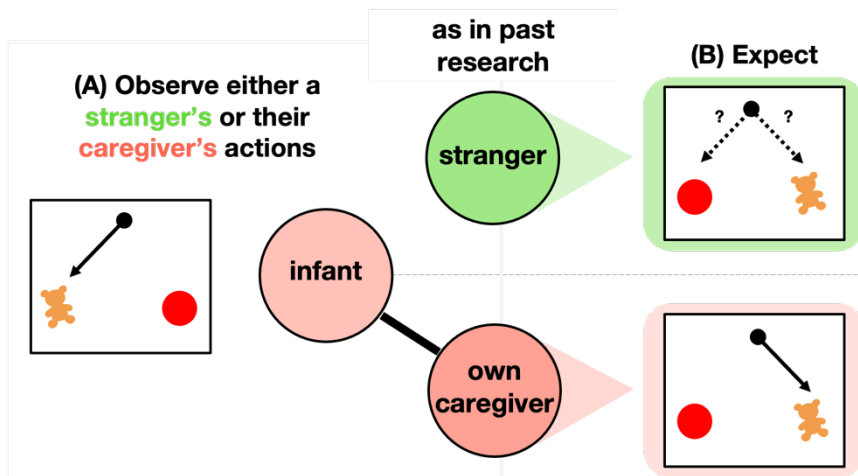


Figure 1. A conceptual schematic for an ongoing research project.

(IP) You serve on the Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging committee at Harvard's psychology department. How has this role influenced your research or your approach to academia more broadly?

I began serving on this committee as a grad student at Harvard, and I'll continue serving on the committee until I start at UCSB in July 2024. Earlier in my career, my colleagues and I didn't often discuss issues of diversity, inclusion or be-

longing. There wasn't an obvious space for that kind of discussion in the department. A lot has happened over the past decade or so: #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, a pandemic, Stop Asian Hate, incredibly impactful Supreme Court decisions, wars, etc. I think that these events inspired people in my department to more openly discuss the challenges that they (and the country and/or world) are facing.

As a member of Harvard's Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DIB) committee, I get to hear about these challenges regularly. A lot of these interactions can be heavy, and there aren't often clear or immediate solutions. But we've been able to take some actions to better support the members of our community. For example, there was an individual whose actions were making several junior members of the community feel disrespected. After speaking with these junior members of the community, I brought this issue to the greater DIB committee, and we brainstormed concrete actions that we could take. We have since implemented these plans and involved department leadership, and the situation has improved.

My experiences on the committee have helped me to understand the importance of community within science: that we may do our best science with the support of our community. As I build my lab community, I'll be sure to keep this lesson in mind.

(IP) What experiences outside of academic research have shaped your research most and how?

Perhaps because I study the social mind, I often find myself drawing connections between my research and a lot of different parts of everyday life: the news, fiction (film, TV, novels, etc.), interactions with friends and family, people-watching, etc.

Have you ever gone to a restaurant, looked at another table, and thought about how two people might know each other? Are they siblings, dating, a PhD advisor and their student, etc.? If it's a date, is it a first date, a third date, or a long-term relationship? In some of my research, I examine the inferences that babies and children make about others' relationships from their social interactions.

(IP) What are some of your non-academic hobbies, interests, or pursuits?

I'm a huge foodie. I love that food can bring people together, and if people cook or do potlucks, then they can share their cultures with each other. When I wasn't able to go home and see family during the worst parts of the pandemic, I found myself cooking more often to try to recreate dishes that I might eat with family. I'm looking forward to exploring the SoCal food scene! Please let me know if you have any suggestions.

NEW FACULTY PROFILE

Samantha Scudder

Samantha Scudder is a new Assistant Teaching Professor in Psychological & Brain Sciences. Samantha received her Ph.D. in Neurosciences (2016) from UC San Diego.

(IP) Samantha, tell us about yourself. Where were you born, educated, and what is a key moment or moments that led you to become a neuroscientist who studies synaptic plasticity?

I grew up bouncing between Long Island (NY) and the Chicago suburbs. I became obsessed with biology and health in high school and was such a big nerd that I opted to attend a residential math and science school for three years. I then went off to Brown University with the intention of preparing for a career in human or veterinary medicine. I was a first-generation student from a low-income background; my parents had impressed upon me that I needed to use my time in college to prepare for a respectable occupation like “doctor” or “lawyer”. I fell in love with the brain very quickly at Brown and soon



*Assistant Teaching Professor
Samantha Scudder*

became fascinated with the mysteries of the nervous system. I began to realize that I was more interested in understanding the brain than I was in treating or fixing it, so I set my medical aspirations aside and began conducting research. Playing with rats alone in a windowless room suited me, so I decided to pursue a PhD in neuroscience.

After a fun gap year where I conducted research at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, I joined the Neurosciences PhD program at UC San Diego. My work pivoted away from my undergraduate behavioral neuroscience research, instead focusing on the molecular mechanisms that enable changes in the brain. Neurons and synapses became my new obsession; excitingly, some of the fluorescent microscopy pictures I took ended up on the cover of journals and won some scientific image contests.

While in graduate school, I met my now-husband, Tommy Sprague (another PBS faculty member). Together, we obtained our PhDs in 2016 and moved to Manhattan to conduct postdoctoral research at New York University. After a few years there, we moved back to sunny California, where he began his position as Assistant Professor in the PBS department at UCSB and I continued working as a postdoc, supported by an NIH postdoctoral fellowship. Years later, I’ve now largely left the lab behind and now spend most of my time and effort on teaching and teaching-related research. I do miss neurons sometimes,

which is why you’ll frequently find me sporting a neuron necklace. I’ve also been planning on getting a neuron tattoo for like three years now - maybe having this statement in print will force me to actually go ahead with this plan!

(IP) Tell us about your research. Please describe one project or set of findings that you have worked on thus far that exemplifies your approach to science and the questions you ask. And what’s one goal you have for your research here at UCSB?

While my focus is completely different now, my research up until this point has been focused on synaptic plasticity and the molecular mechanisms enabling change. I think I’m most proud of my very first project in graduate school, completed over a decade ago. I became curious about a specific enzyme that manipulated neurotransmitter receptors at excitatory synapses.

Using genetic and pharmacological tools, I was able to characterize the movement of this enzyme into and out of synaptic compartments, highlighting its dynamic recruitment to places it is needed. This project allowed me to develop my imaging skills but also provided me with my first experience with whole-cell electrophysiology. I became adept at locating and latching onto individual neurons in a dish and used this technique to identify the functional role of the enzyme I was studying. The ability to “listen in” on individual conversations between neurons was fascinating to me, and I continued honing those skills during my time as a postdoc as well.

NEW FACULTY PROFILE

My goal now is to characterize the impact of specific course-based practices in undergraduate education. Specifically, I am running an ongoing study to evaluate the impact of near-peer tutoring programs in high-enrollment STEM courses. The Undergraduate Learning Assistant program that I run for PSY106 (Biopsychology) has provided the first dataset for this, but I plan on scaling the program up to cover additional courses in our majors. I hope to collaborate with other teaching researchers at UCSB and at other UCs to provide a comprehensive look at the impact of near-peer support programs.

(IP) You were hired as an Assistant Teaching Professor - what experience or experiences ignited your passion for teaching? What is your approach to mentoring students interested in neuroscience?

I first got a taste of teaching back in college – I served as an undergraduate TA for a biology lab course and loved the experience! My experience TAing as a graduate student was also highly rewarding and led me to enroll in a training course focused on basic college teaching practices. I also had the chance to develop and teach a summer neuroscience course for low-income, potential first-generation students through the TRiO Upward Bound program. Putting together lesson plans and activities was incredibly fun, and I realized that I didn't miss the lab much while I was working on the program that summer. I continued to gain teaching experience as a post-doc and project scientist and had the opportunity to develop my skills through a number of teaching-oriented classes and workshops.

Teaching my first 350+ student class was intimidating, but I found that I still loved it and wanted to keep doing it. I was lucky enough to land this gig, where I get to interact with about a thousand talented undergraduates every year! The main course that I focus on is Biopsychology (PSY106). It's required for both Psych & Brain Sciences and Biopsychology, and PBS students aren't always thrilled to be taking such a bio-heavy course. I sort of see myself as an ambassador for the field of biology, though – I think neuroscience is a great “gateway drug” for biology, as it feels so tangible and important to understand the way your own brain enables your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. I try to get my students considering the ways that the course material applies to their own lives. I think I've been successful: I've had many past students tell me that they can't stop thinking about what their neurons are doing as they go about mundane tasks. I try to incorporate hands-on activities whenever possible. I give all of my Biopsychology students the chance to do a hands-on sheep brain dissection lab, which I think helps to make the content more exciting for them (or at the very least, makes for a good Instagram post).

(IP) What experiences outside of academic research have shaped your approach to research or teaching most and how?

Having parents who didn't go to college provided me with ample opportunities to practice explaining tricky concepts. My parents attended my PhD defense, which was focused on a very niche molecular neurobiology topic. I challenged myself to create an introduction that would give all audience members an entry into basic neuroscience before getting into the specifics. That experience was so much fun, and I still use some of my drawings from that talk in my current biopsychology class! My experience as a first-generation college student has also shaped my teaching-related research questions: I am very curious about factors that influence the success of first-generation students in college, and this is a component of my current study.

(IP) What are some of your non-academic hobbies, interests, or pursuits?

Video games have always had a prominent place in my life – I was actually a competitive Starcraft 2 player and Twitch streamer for part of graduate school! Traveling has also been a passion of mine; I hadn't ventured outside America until I graduated from college, and at that point I wanted to see as many parts of the world as possible. Getting to travel to conferences around the world has been a great way to do that! Now, I have a 4-year-old son, so time for hobbies and travel has been limited. Lately, I have really enjoyed getting to play video games with my son. I grew up playing Zelda and Mario with my family, so it's amazing to be on the other side of it now. We also love going on walks in our neighborhood and cooking together.

NEW FACULTY PROFILE

David Pietraszewski

David Pietraszewski is a new Assistant Professor in Psychological & Brain Sciences. David received his Ph.D. in Psychological and Brain Sciences (2009) here at UC Santa Barbara.

(IP) David, tell us about yourself. Where were you born, educated, and what is a key moment or moments that led you to become an evolutionary psychologist who studies the nature of cognitive mechanisms?

I was born in a working-class suburb of Buffalo, NY. Buffalo's reputation for bad weather is well-deserved—I have many childhood photos of me standing on snowbanks taller than myself—but it was a great place to grow up. The local ethos was to be kind, humble, and hard-working. The public schools were excellent. And I had that increasingly rare 1980s existence of running around with the kids from the neighborhood without much, if any, parental supervision.

Although my family didn't have much money, I did well in school and was offered several full scholarships. I chose Ithaca College, a small liberal arts college next to Cornell in Ithaca, NY. Initially, I planned to major in pre-med and become a doctor, but I quickly realized that I was more interested in thinking about humans at a higher, more psychological level. I started taking psychology and anthropology courses, and it was then that I discovered and fell in love with evolutionary psychology.

The pivotal moment came one day in the library. This was when the internet was not a great resource, so I often walked through the shelves in person to see what books were available. At the time, my anthropology courses argued that human experience is entirely culturally determined.

While intriguing, this idea didn't match my experience of being human: I couldn't just decide what would make me happy or sad or fulfilled. Then, I found Don Brown's "Human Universals." It argued that beneath cultural variation, there were deep universals to human experience. I devoured it and all the work cited in it, which led me to evolutionary psychology.



Assistant Professor David Pietraszewski

The work of Leda Cosmides and John Tooby resonated with me. Their research aligned with my thoughts and inspired me to apply to UCSB for graduate school, where I studied from 2002 to 2009. I then took a postdoc at Yale with Karen Wynn and Paul Bloom until 2014, training in developmental methods. From 2014 until February 2024, I was a research scientist at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin, focusing on judgment and decision-making and cognitive modeling. Now, I'm thrilled to be back at UCSB, ready to build a team of researchers interested in social, developmental, and neurocognitive questions from an evolutionary perspective.

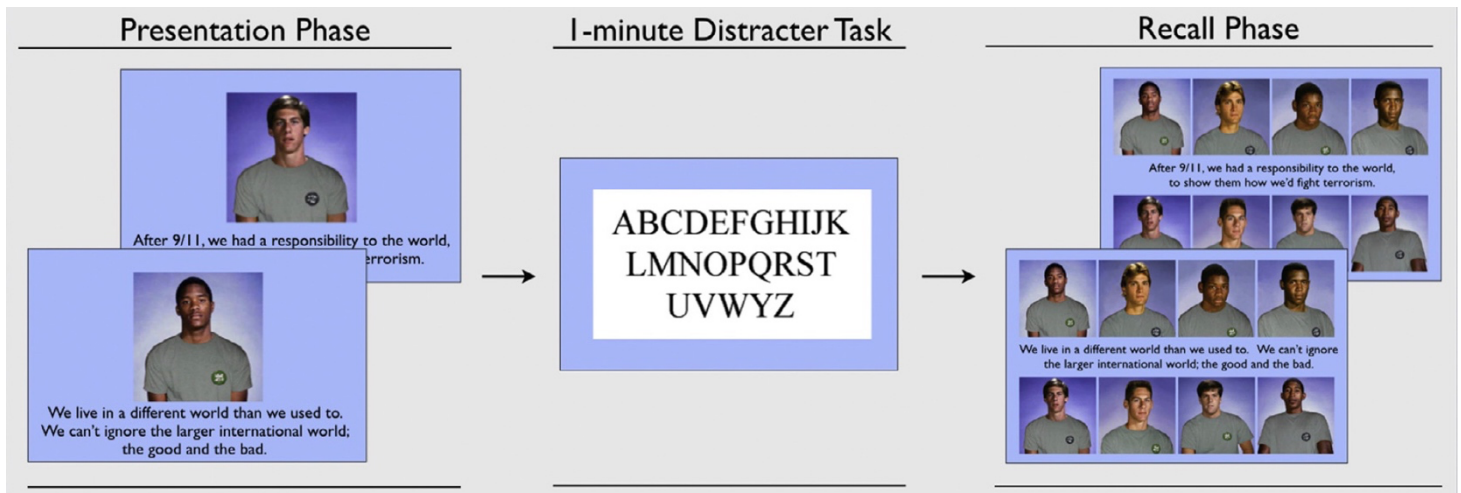
(IP) Tell us about your research. Please describe one project or set of findings that you have worked on thus far that exemplifies your approach to science and the questions you ask. And what's one goal you have for your research here at UCSB?

One of my significant projects focuses on understanding the cognitive mechanisms that cause humans to categorize by race. This project exemplifies my approach, combining explicit claims about cognitive mechanisms' functions, an evolutionary approach, and exhaustive empirical studies to eliminate counterhypotheses. The central idea is that people did not evolve to categorize by race; instead, racial categorization is a byproduct of cognitive mechanisms for tracking alliances.

NEW FACULTY PROFILE

Past work showed that people categorize others by race, sex, and age, leading to claims that these might be built-in functions of the mind. However, from an evolutionary perspective, it is unlikely that the mind evolved to categorize by race since race is a cultural construct that varies over time and place. We hypothesized that racial categorization might be a byproduct of cognitive mechanisms for tracking alliances. Tracking who is allied with whom has been crucial throughout our species' history, unlike race. Our hypothesis suggests that what we perceive as "race" involves physical features the mind uses to track alliances. These features help predict social relationships—who associates with whom, who supports whom. We tested this idea experimentally: when participants saw that race was uncorrelated with alliances, they abandoned racial categorization.

This reduction didn't occur for other categories like sex or age, indicating a specific relationship between race and alliance in the mind. This project is significant because it explains why racial categorization occurs and what can reduce or eliminate it. It highlights an interaction between individual psychologies and social dynamics. The project focuses on the functional level, informed by an evolutionary perspective. From this view, race tracking is fundamentally about alliance tracking.



Example trial of the "Who Said What?" memory confusion paradigm (extracted from Pietraszewski et al., 2015) to study social categorization

One goal for my research at UCSB is to maintain this functional, software-level focus. Evolutionary approaches help identify deeper principles and functions, encouraging students to speculate about and test new functions. As AI pioneer Marvin Minsky said, "You can't look for something until you have the idea of it." We still know very little about how the mind works, making this field incredibly exciting with much more to discover.

(IP) You are interested in the cognitive mechanisms psychologists and philosophers use to study the mind. How do you think this understanding could influence the future directions of psychological research and its methodologies?

I am excited to explore what I call the evolutionary psychology of psychology—the science of understanding the cognitive mechanisms that researchers use to study the mind.

To grasp its importance, consider the evolution of sciences. All sciences go through phases: one before and one after recognizing the perspective-dependence of observations. In astronomy, for instance, the Copernican revolution uncoupled the expectation that our sky's appearance had to match our universe model. Copernicus realized that what we see is one narrow perspective in a vast universe. Psychology is in a similar transition. Our science's perspective-dependence stems from our evolved psychology for reasoning about psychology—our intuitive Theory of Mind system, which delivers intuitions that we are agents with beliefs, desires, and goals. Confusing these intuitions with a model of how the mind works is psychology's equivalent of geocentrism. Despite moving beyond intuitive psychology, our Theory of Mind system still influences our models, often subtly and detrimentally.

NEW FACULTY PROFILE

For instance, Annie Wertz and I argued that the Theory of Mind system's dualistic intuition—that mental life divides into regions under our control and regions outside our control—caused a decades-long debate over massive modularity in the mind. This intuition, while not wrong, is an incorrect mechanistic model of the mind. Another example is the problem of free will, which arises because of our Theory of Mind system's structure. This insight suggests we need to ask different questions to understand free will's neurocognitive reality.

Understanding the evolved systems we use in science and philosophy is crucial to progress. Our intuitive theory of mind suggests mental processes are separate from their content, an idea continually proven wrong yet recurring. Recognizing this bias helps avoid repeating past mistakes. Future psychology training should include recognizing outputs of our intuitive theory of mind, which can mislead scientific models.

Advancing sciences become less intuitive because our minds didn't evolve to do science. Understanding our intuitions is vital to moving beyond them. This approach helps us be more skeptical of our questions and topics, fostering scientific progress by overcoming inherent biases.

(IP) What experiences outside of academic research have shaped your research most and how?

Many experiences outside academic research have influenced my work. One formative experience was my exposure to basement Pentecostal religious services bordering on scams. One pastor my mother took us to was later imprisoned for selling bogus cancer cures. Although I was young, this experience honed my critical thinking skills. It also made me realize that people's behaviors often stem from causes unrelated to what they explicitly talk about or experience, evident in the adults at those services.

Another significant experience was my time in Berlin, Germany. Berlin is now peaceful and idyllic; my son spent his first four years there, enjoying amazing playgrounds and biking to preschool. However, Berlin has a turbulent history. In our quiet neighborhood, bronze plaques on sidewalks commemorate those who lived there and were murdered during the Nazi regime. Along our bike route is the building that housed the eugenics institute, where the science "justifying" the final solution was conducted. This juxtaposition of tranquility and horrific history constantly reminds me of the importance of studying group psychology.

When I visited Auschwitz, I was struck by how ideas and words can have profound consequences. The vast fields cleared because of Nazi ideas and pseudo-science underscore the significance of our work as scientists. What we do and say matters immensely. These experiences reinforce my commitment to understanding the deeper principles of human behavior and the potential consequences of our scientific endeavors.

(IP) What are some of your non-academic hobbies, interests, or pursuits?

Balancing parenthood and an international move leaves little time for hobbies, but I enjoy running in the mountains whenever possible. Santa Barbara offers some of the best trails for running and biking, and I'm eager to get back into that. The perfect combination of great weather and rugged terrain makes it ideal.

I'm also looking forward to exploring the backcountry. It's amazing to see the vast Los Padres Forest from the mountain crest, knowing there are few people around. True wilderness, something I missed in Europe, is deeply grounding and edifying.

I also love learning about Santa Barbara's history. Running past Chumash mortar stones in Steven's Park or on old stage-coach routes into the mountains is fascinating. Returning to California feels like coming home. There's a quote by Berkeley neobehaviorist Edward Tolman, who grew up on the East Coast: "there are features about the climate and the landscape which seem to me better as a steady diet than those provided by any other place in the world." I couldn't agree more. We're incredibly lucky to be here, and I'm thrilled to be back in such a wonderful place.

NEW FACULTY PROFILE

Annie Wertz

Annie Wertz is a new Assistant Professor in Psychological & Brain Sciences. Annie received her Ph.D. in Psychological and Brain Sciences (2009) here at UC Santa Barbara.

(IP) Annie, tell us about yourself. Where were you born, educated, and what is a key moment or moments that led you to become a developmental and evolutionary psychologist who studies children's cognitive systems for learning?

I was born in Berks County, Pennsylvania. I grew up there in a small town with one traffic light and lived in a farmhouse that had been in my family for six generations. Although I can appreciate the positive sides of living in a small town now, it didn't agree with me as an adolescent, so I was highly motivated to go to college in a city. I went to Boston University where I majored in Psychology and minored in Art History. While at BU, I worked as an RA in a behavioral genetics lab with Kimberly Saudino and a cognitive development lab with Deb Kelemen.



*Assistant Professor
Annie Wertz*

My experiences in both of these labs sparked my interest in researching how young children think about the world and set me on my path of becoming a developmental psychologist. My next step was starting graduate school at UCSB in 2003. I was a student of Tamsin German's and my research focused on theory of mind in preschool-aged children and adults. During my time with Tamsin and as a DEVO grad student, I learned the ins and outs of conducting careful, theoretically-grounded research, and I was steeped in evolutionary psychology.

I was painfully shy back in those days and tended not to say much out loud, but I was always thinking. In fact, it was during this time that I started to think about the problems humans faced when learning about plants and what kind of psychological mechanisms might be necessary to help solve those problems. True to form, I didn't say much about it and instead focused on finishing my dissertation on theory of mind, which I successfully defended in 2009. I then moved on to a postdoc position in the Infant Cognition Center at Yale University working with Karen Wynn. It was there that I learned how to study babies and finally began articulating my research program investigating how infants learn about plants. Somewhere along the way, I got over my shyness too. I secured my first faculty position in 2014 as a Research Group Leader (equivalent to Assistant Professor) at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin, Germany. For al-

most a decade, my students and I investigated the psychological mechanisms that infants and young children use to learn about plants. Our work grew over time to become a new research area within the field of cognitive development. I am beyond excited to be returning to Santa Barbara after nearly 15 years to continue this research program as a member of the PBS faculty at UCSB.

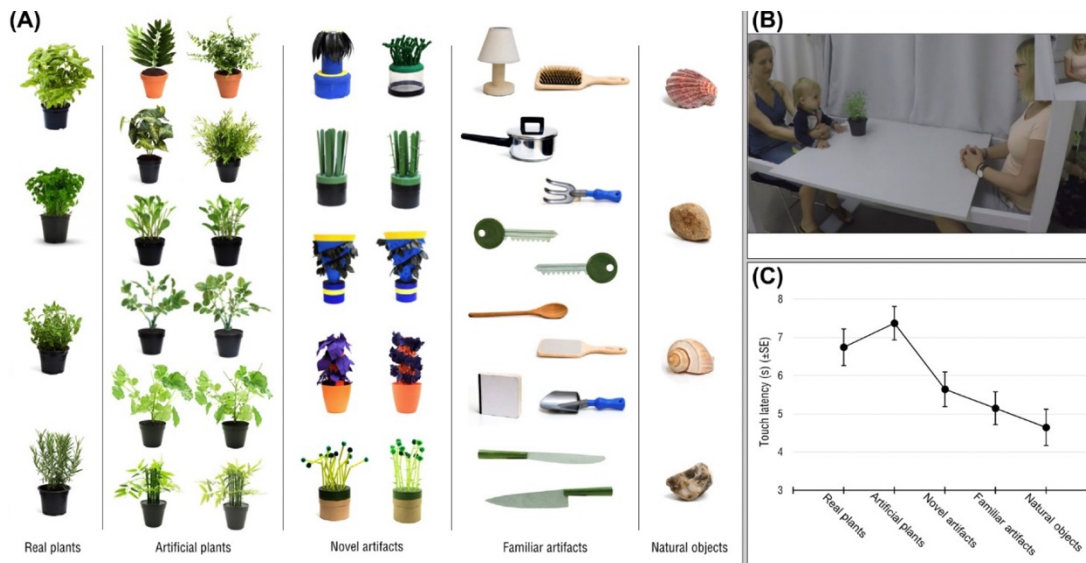
(IP) Tell us about your research. Please describe one project or set of findings that you have worked on thus far that exemplifies your approach to science and the questions you ask. And what's one goal you have for your research here at UCSB?

My research investigates how infants and young children learn about the natural world, with a focus on how infants learn about plants. It turns out that plants pose a difficult learning problem for humans (and other animals too). Plants are a foundational part of our diets, but all plants produce toxins to protect themselves from herbivores and some of those toxins can be very harmful or even deadly for humans. This means that learning about which plants you can eat by trying each one and seeing what happens (i.e., trial-and-error individual learning) is, to put it mildly, not a viable strategy. At best, you waste a lot of time, and at worst, you die. Instead, I argue that humans primarily rely on social learning mechanisms to learn about the different plants in their local environment and possess strategies for avoiding plant dangers like poisoning. I call this collection of cognitive systems Plant Learning and Avoiding Natural Toxins, or PLANT.

NEW FACULTY PROFILE

My work examines many different aspects of PLANT systems in infants and young children. One ongoing project investigates how infants cope with plant dangers (e.g., poisoning, injury from thorns, etc.). Plants can be deadly, but the threat they pose is fundamentally different than other dangers in the natural world like snakes, spiders, or large predators. Unlike those animate dangers, plants are quite literally rooted to the spot, so if you're going to be injured by a plant, it will be because you ran into it, not because it came running after you. This simple fact means that there is an effective way for infants to avoid potential harm from plants: If there is no clear information about whether a plant is safe or dangerous, minimize physical contact with it. It can't hurt you if you don't touch it.

My students and I tested whether infants avoid touching plants by presenting them with plants and a series of control objects: novel artifacts matched to shape and color features of the plants, familiar artifacts, and other inanimate natural kinds (e.g., shells, stones). We put these stimuli down in front of the infants one at a time and measured how long it took for infants to reach out and touch each object. We found that, consistent with a behavioral strategy to avoid contact with potentially dangerous plants, infants took longer to touch the plants than all of the other control objects. We have now replicated this finding in across seven different studies. Our results also showed that infants tend to look more often to adults before they touch plants, but not before they touch the other object types. This would allow them to glean important information before making contact with potentially dangerous plants, and suggests that the behavioral avoidance strategy works in concert with social learning processes.



Example plants and control objects used to test infants' touching behavior

(IP) You engage in comparative studies across different cultures. What are some of the interesting variations you have observed in how children from diverse backgrounds learn about plants?

To date, I have been able to test infants and young children in four different cultures: the U.S., Germany, Indigenous Shuar in the Ecuadorian Amazon, and Indigenous iTaukei Fijians. The latter two projects were done in collaboration with Clark Barrett at UCLA and

Rita McNamara at Victoria University Wellington. We tested infants and young children in all of these cultures with variations of the task designed to assess whether infants avoid touching plants. The main goal was to investigate whether infants and young children growing up immersed in the natural world (Indigenous Shuar and Indigenous iTaukei Fijian) would respond to plants differently than infants growing up in urban and suburban environments (U.S. and German).

We found that infants in all of the cultures we tested exhibit some plant avoidance behaviors, but there were some notable differences. For example, we found that Indigenous Shuar infants, like German and U.S. infants, take longer to touch all types of plants than familiar artifacts or other natural kinds. However, Indigenous iTaukei Fijian infants are only avoidant of plants that are unfamiliar to them. Clearly, the experience of being immersed in the natural world does not have a uniform effect on behaviors towards plants in infancy and early childhood. Instead, the source of these intriguing patterns of cross-cultural similarities and differences remains to be investigated, and I very much look forward to doing this in future work. Nevertheless, these findings show, for the first time, that cultural context impacts the development of PLANT systems.

(IP) What experiences outside of academic research have shaped your research most and how?

Two things come to mind. The first is trail running. I started trail running when I was a grad student at UCSB, which meant I spent a lot of time in the Santa Ynez Mountains immersed in the natural world. Trail runs are a great time to think and I did a lot of the initial thinking about cognitive mechanisms for learning about plants while I was out on the trails. It started with a recurrent thought I had on particularly long runs, or runs in the less populated parts of the backcountry: “If I got stuck out here, I would die.”

Luckily, I didn’t get stuck, so I had time to think deeply about how humans survive. I would die if I got stuck out on a run, but the Chumash people have been living in this area for many thousands of years. How did they do that? What plants did they eat? How did they learn about foraging and food preparation in one lifetime? And what kind of evolved cognitive systems would enable that kind of learning?

It was easier to think about these things surrounded by nature, and it helped to pull my focus to thinking about how humans have depended plants, especially plants in wild environments. At the same time, I was a DEVO grad student and sitting in CEP meetings, learning how to study human cognition through the lens of evolution and absorbing tons of relevant research from psychologists, anthropologists, and primatologists. All of this came together on these long runs and formed the foundation for my current research program.

The second is living in Germany. Living outside of my home country for nearly a decade shaped my research in many ways, but one of the most impactful was directly observing the effect of culture on infants. This was especially striking because Germany and the U.S. are culturally “close” to one another. They certainly both fit under the umbrella of what are sometimes called Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic, or WEIRD cultures (Henrich et al., 2005).

Even so, the social interaction norms are markedly different, especially for interactions with strangers. In the US, when you bring babies and their parents into the lab to do a study, you make sure to be very smiley, informal, expressive, and fairly loud. I quickly learned—through the politely shocked looks of my first group of German students—that these social interaction norms do not work for German infants and their parents. Instead, the interaction is much calmer, more formal, and neutral. We adjusted our lab procedures to fit these expectations and were able to successfully replicate and extend the experiments I had originally conducted in the US. These kinds of experiences underscored the important role culture plays in children’s development, beginning in the first months of life.

(IP) What are some of your non-academic hobbies, interests, or pursuits?

In addition to running, I have always loved music. I played several instruments growing up, including flute, tenor saxophone, and guitar. I was part of a number of different musical ensembles and sang in various choirs from elementary school through college. Music has taken me a lot of places. One memorable experience was during the summer before my senior year of high school. I played flute in a concert band that toured Europe for a couple weeks, giving concerts in music halls and town squares across five countries. That was the only time I was in Europe before I took a job there 15 years later, and memories from that trip provided some welcome touchstones while I settled into life abroad. There was a period of time after college

when music took a back seat while I focused on my research career, but it came to the fore again while I was working at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin. I sang in the Institute’s choir for several years and played guitar regularly with a friend. Berlin was also a great place to go see live music. I am very much looking forward to (re)discovering the places to see (and maybe even play) music in Santa Barbara and LA. Luckily, my 4-year-old son loves music even more than I do and is much more talented than me. He already plays ukulele and guitar and is working on several other instruments. He is, without a doubt, my favorite person to play music with and he fills my life with music and joy.

Shannon Rivard

Shannon Rivard is the new Business Officer at the Psychological & Brain Sciences Department.

(IP) A lot of people might not appreciate how important a Business Officer is for the day-to-day operations of a department. Can you describe your role?

I see my role as a Business Officer as an opportunity to make things as productive and efficient as possible for the students, faculty, and staff in the department. I try to learn as much as I can about every position in the department so I can provide support in challenging times. I find it rewarding to learn about a problem and work with everyone involved to find a solution that works for everyone. This position provides an opportunity to build a bridge between everyone in PBS.

(IP) What are some of the challenges and opportunities of being a steward of the department?

The greatest challenge of this role is coming up with great ideas or hearing others great ideas but not having the resources to implement the changes in the department. This does provide an opportunity to think creatively to determine what is feasible with the limited resources we have at hand.

(IP) What drew you in to UCSB?

From the time I was an undergraduate student at Penn State University, I knew I was going to work in higher education. My experience as an undergraduate student had a profound impact on my life. I knew at that time that I wanted to give back by working at a university and contributing in some way to future generations. I have worked in higher education since 2013 in numerous roles, and when I moved to Santa Barbara in 2017, my goal was to continue my journey in higher education and that drew me to UCSB.

(IP) What are your hobbies and favorite things to do?

My wife and I love to go “camping”. I put camping in quotes because we have a travel trailer, so we are not true campers in the sense of pitching a tent in the woods and pulling water from a creek, ha-ha. Our 2 dogs and cat love camping as much as we do, yes, our cat goes camping with us. We enjoy spending time in nature (hiking, riding bikes, taking long walks etc.). We take advantage of every opportunity we can to travel. We have been on a 2-week cross country road trip, visited Kauai, Mexico, parts of the Caribbean, and hope to one day travel internationally. For now, we are excited to spend 2 weeks exploring Alaska in summer 2025.



Shannon Rivard

CONTRIBUTE TO INSIDE PSYCHOLOGY



Inside Psychology is the official departmental newsletter of the Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences at UCSB. It features articles written by professors, graduate students, alumni, community members, as well as science journalists covering the research produced by the department. The first edition was published in 2005 and all volumes can be downloaded for free here:

<https://psych.ucsb.edu/alumni/inside-psychology-newsletter>

If you would like to contribute to Inside Psychology by either writing an article, highlighting relevant research, making a financial donation to the department, or contributing Class Notes, please contact us at: pbsalumni@psych.ucsb.edu



AWARD-WINNING PBS BUILDING

ILP wins US building of the year award by World Architects

The Interactive Learning Pavilion (ILP) at UC Santa Barbara has significantly enhanced the undergraduate experience less than a year after its opening, earning the U.S. Building of the Year award from World-Architects.

This award was determined through a January poll, where the ILP garnered about 42% of the roughly 5,000 votes, likely supported by UC Santa Barbara's community and social media followers.

Chancellor Henry T. Yang expressed pride in the ILP, calling it a central gem of the campus and a model of innovation in both architectural design and interactive learning. "Our campus vision has been to create infrastructure that matches and



Photo credit: Matt Perko

enhances the stature and reputation of our university," he said, "and this building is a shining example of our collaborative efforts to make that vision a reality."

The ILP, the first new classroom building since 1967, has increased the university's classroom capacity by 35%. In its first academic quarter, 15,997 students had at least one class in the ILP, and by winter 2024, it had hosted about 2,100 courses, discussion sections, and labs.

Executive Vice Chancellor Emeritus Gene Lucas highlighted the building's

design, which allows efficient movement of 2,000 students in and out every 50 minutes, revitalizing that part of the campus. Associate Professor Ranjit Deshmukh appreciated the ILP's large lecture rooms' design, enabling connection and engagement despite their size.

Assistant Professor Holly Moeller praised the pivoting chairs for facilitating group work, making it easy to integrate discussions with lectures. Associate Professor Debra Perrone highlighted the technology, such as small screens and adjustable lighting, which enhances student engagement. The ILP also features flexible study spaces, both indoors and outdoors. Third-year student Alli Spiegel enjoys studying on the third floor, which overlooks the main walkway.

John Hill of World-Architects noted how LMN Architects used Santa Barbara's climate to create outdoor circulation spaces, enhancing campus connectivity. Stephen Van Dyck, a partner at LMN Architects, expressed pride in the award, crediting the collaborative efforts of the design team and UC Santa Barbara's leadership vision.

Adapted from: <https://news.ucsb.edu/2024/021366/award-winning-architecture-campus>

Mentorship and Inclusion: The Impact of Access Grads on students

Access Grads is a mentorship program for undergraduate psychology students at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The program is especially focused on supporting students from populations traditionally underrepresented in science, first generation students, and students planning to pursue graduate school in psychology.

(IP) What inspired the founding of Access Grads, and how does the program specifically aim to address the issue of diversity within the field of psychological and brain sciences?



Access Grads leadership

Access Grads was founded in the spring of 2017 by graduate students (now Drs.!) Lauren Ortosky and Payton Small, who identified the need for undergraduate students to have one-on-one interactions with graduate students for better preparation in applying to graduate programs. Recognizing that many undergraduates, especially those from underrepresented populations (URM, first-gen, transfer students), lack direct access to resources that make them competitive candidates, Lauren and Payton developed a program providing direct mentorship. This mentorship offers insights into the "hidden curriculum" of graduate applications, prioritizing students from underrepresented backgrounds to bridge the knowledge gap and demystify the application process. By increasing the number of diverse applicants, Access Grads enhances equity and the quality of science through diverse perspectives.

(IP) Could you describe how the mentorship program is structured throughout the academic year? How are mentees and mentors paired, and what factors are considered in the matching process?

At the beginning of each fall quarter, the Access Grads leadership team matches PBS graduate student volunteers with mentees. With more applicants than available spots, the program prioritizes underrepresented minorities, first-generation, and transfer students. Undergraduates indicate their research interests, and the team pairs them with graduate mentors in similar fields. Mentors are expected to meet with their mentees at least once a quarter, with Access Grads collecting feedback and tracking engagement. Pre and post-program surveys assess mentees' knowledge, confidence in applying to graduate school, sense of community, and access to resources.

(IP) Can you share some success stories or significant impacts that the Access Grads program has had on its participants, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds?

AG Mentee 1: "I became a mentee in my second year and was paired with a fantastic mentor. Access Grads made my research journey smooth and helped me solidify my interests and prepare for grad school. My mentor's support was crucial, and now, as a mentor myself, I strive to help others similarly."

AG Mentee 2: "My academic journey was rocky, but Access Grads gave me a mentor who provided research experience, application guidance, and support. I went from academic probation to earning awards and getting into a PhD program. Access Grads has been pivotal, and now, as a mentor, I help others facing similar challenges."

PBS GRADUATE STUDENTS

(IP) What are some of the common challenges that undergraduates face when preparing for graduate studies, and how does Access Grads prepare them to overcome these challenges?

Undergraduates often find the application and research involvement processes opaque, particularly those from underrepresented groups. Access Grads addresses this by providing one-on-one mentorship, transparency about PhD programs, and constructive feedback on applications. The "Applying to Graduate School" series offers step-by-step guidance, and new events like "To Gap Year or Not?" address specific questions about taking time off between undergraduate and graduate school.

(IP) How does Access Grads plan to evolve or expand in the coming years? Are there new initiatives or program enhancements that you're currently considering?

Access Grads aims to expand to other universities, with potential chapters at UC Davis and other UC campuses. There's also interest in creating chapters for different departments at UCSB. To support these efforts, the program is standardizing assessments and recruitment methods.

Recent expansions include the development of the "Applying to Graduate School" series, now open to all students, not just mentees. This series has run for three years and includes events on application materials, interview tips, and admissions Q&A. This year, a new event, "To Gap Year or Not?" was added, featuring a graduate student panel that was well-received by undergraduates.

To enhance the program's structure, Access Grads has implemented a "No Ghosting" contract and an automated alert system to track mentor-mentee engagement. Feedback from mentors is collected annually to continually improve the program.

(IP) For students and graduate mentors interested in joining Access Grads, what advice would you give them, and what can they expect from their participation in the program?

Apply! The time commitment is relatively low—just a few hours per quarter per mentee. More mentor participation allows more mentees to join the program. Mentors are expected to meet with their mentees for an hour, 1-2 times per quarter, either over Zoom or in person. Initial meetings should establish the undergraduate student's goals and the type of mentorship they seek, whether it's advice about courses, graduate programs, or research experience.

The mentor-mentee relationship varies, but the minimum expectation is to establish a one-on-one connection with students interested in psychology. Mentors can expect to be a general point of contact for undergraduates based on their needs. Many mentees join their mentor's lab as undergraduate research assistants, and mentors often witness their mentees' successes, such as getting accepted into graduate programs. Access Grads also hosts events like "Meet the Labs" at the beginning of the year, Trivia Night, and end-of-year celebrations for mentees and mentors, fostering community and engagement.



Access Grads mentors

Access Grads website: <https://accessgrads.wixsite.com/psychology>

Hobbies of PBS

We are excited to introduce a new section dedicated to showcasing the diverse hobbies and interests of our PBS community outside of work, to celebrate the varied interests that enrich our community!

Bailey: I volunteer with the Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network! The center takes care of a lot of different types



*Bailey Immel,
graduate student*

of animals but I work with mammals that have been injured, orphaned, or in other ways need help so that they can be rereleased into the wild. I've always loved animals and wanted to find a way to volunteer and give my time to the community. This seemed like such a unique way of doing that which is why I got started. Now, I do it because it brings me so much joy to help

animals that are so often overlooked. My favorite animals to work with are the opossums but the raccoons are so mischievous and playful as well!



Craig: My hobby is paddling an inflatable kayak (IK) on whitewater rivers. River running in an IK allows one to travel through beautiful river canyons that may be almost totally inaccessible otherwise, and the rapids provide excitement and challenge. I'm attaching a picture from a 3-day trip last week on the Bruneau River in southwestern Idaho. The rapids in this picture are pretty tame, but it gives the general idea.



Dr. Craig Abbey, Researcher, on the Bruneau River

Diego: Just like science, jiu-jitsu is a never-ending journey of learning and discovery. Seeing the improvement in your technique along the way is exciting, and rolling with others is a great way to make friends!



Diego González, graduate student, in the thick of a fight



Rammy: On weekends, I like to ride on my camel with Layla.

*Rammy Salem, graduate student,
his daughter, Layla, and their
camel*

Tamsin: My hobby is playing bass guitar. I have played in a rock / pop band locally in LA called Alright Alright since 2008. This picture is from our most recent show last December at a small bar / club in Hollywood called Molly Malone's. I've always been a fan of live music, but never considered it something I could do myself, so I taught myself to play from internet tabs and videos in the middle of 2006 to challenge myself to do something different. We've released a bunch of EPs and a full length record over the years, and are working on a new EP this year. Our stuff can be found on [spotify](#) and other platforms.



Professor Tamsin German, playing at Molly Malone's

Jessica: My favorite hobby is aerial silks! I like to practice and perform aerial silks because it (literally) forces me into a new perspective and nothing beats the adrenaline rush of being in the air. There is also a phenomenal aerial community in Santa Barbara that is always extremely warm and welcoming.



Jessica Simonson, Lab Manager, performing in the air

Henri: My hobby is singing at open mics with my ukulele! I love open mics because they foster a community of people to share their current creative endeavors. It also encourages me to set aside time each week for working on my creative skills.



Henri Ettel Skinner, graduate student, performing at The Blue Owl

Robert: I have many hobbies. But if you have room for a photo, my hobby of unicycling may be a good pick for the newsletter! Attached is a photo of me unicycling in the Solstice Parade. Photo is courtesy of Ron Williams.



Robert Bernstein, Visiting Scholar, riding his unicycle during the Solstice Parade

Dan: I've always been interested in wildlife and got into birds in particular because of my research. Birds turn out to be great model organisms for all kinds of things, but especially the evolution of mating behavior. Because of that, they're also just pretty to look at and entertaining to watch. Birdwatching forces you to get outside, take a walk, explore places you might otherwise overlook, and learn about the world around you. Personally, I've always



Dan Conroy-Beam, Associate Professor, taking a picture of an Atlantic puffin in Iceland



The Atlantic puffin in question

found birding therapeutically humbling: it's nice to be reminded that there are whole worlds out there that have nothing to do or your troubles. Nothing else makes my problems feel smaller.

Bird photography has been a somewhat recent addition to the hobby for me. It adds a creative outlet and gives me little souvenirs of my travels/experiences. Attached here is a photo my wife took while I was photographing an Atlantic puffin in Iceland (I genuinely didn't know she was doing this--good timing!).

Shane: I enjoy creating pyrography art pieces.



Shane Zheng, Desktop Support



Imaging my daughter was a cat, playing the guitar



An ancient Chinese Poetry, from the book "Tending the Roots of Wisdom"

PBS COMMUNITY



David: When I can, I try to get a run up into the mountains. Santa Barbara has some of the best trails in the world for running and biking, and I'm looking forward to getting back into that. I love that the weather is great and the terrain rugged; in my mind, it's the perfect combination.

David Pietraszewski, Assistant Professor

GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Hannah Grotzinger studies changes in the brain related to parenthood



Hannah Grotzinger, graduate student in Emily Jacobs' lab

During pregnancy, women undergo pronounced physiological changes, initiated in part by a rapid increase in gonadal hormone concentrations that reach a lifetime peak during gestation and plummet just after parturition.

Emerging research in rodents and humans suggests extensive structural and functional changes in the brain following pregnancy, which is not surprising given that the brain is densely packed with hormone receptors and is sensitive to fluctuations in hormone concentrations. However, we know little of how the human brain adapts to this massive change in endocrine status, and how these alterations may be adaptive for parenting.

My dissertation work utilizes precision neuroimaging to study first-time mothers with high temporal frequency starting pre-conception through the postpartum period and beyond, with scanning sessions every ~2 weeks across gestation. At each session, participants complete an MRI scan including structural and functional sequences, a blood draw to obtain hormone concentrations and immune biomarkers, and surveys to assess health, mood, sleep quality, and parent-infant relationships.

We are also scanning the non-pregnant partners of the women in the study with the same temporal frequency to examine the transition to parenthood through a broader lens. I hope that this research will provide us with insight into how the brain changes in preparation for parenthood and the endocrine drivers therein. Further, this study

will lay the groundwork for future studies to identify neural or blood-based biomarkers of postpartum depression. Doing so could open up new approaches for early intervention, prior to symptom onset.

Mengsi Li investigates neural mechanisms of emotion regulation

Emotion-regulatory deficits in mood and anxiety disorders are characterized by context-inappropriate expressions of emotion, including overly persistent emotional responses. Responding to dynamic emotional events in a time- and context-sensitive manner is therefore paramount to mental health and well-being, yet its underlying mechanisms are unclear.

My current research examines whether such adaptive emotional responding hinges upon high-fidelity temporal coding and integrated time-emotion representations of dynamic emotional experiences. I have designed innovative experimental paradigms that permit simultaneous tracking of emotional and temporal processing during dynamic emotional experiences, coupled with electroencephalography (EEG) and functional neuroimaging (fMRI) recordings, as well as transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS).

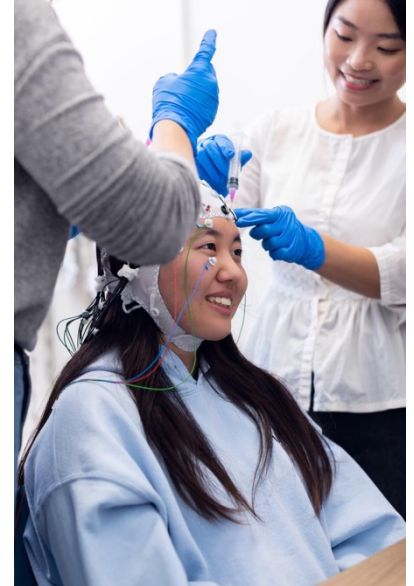
In a behavioral study, I examined whether temporal memory for dynamic emotional events was associated with emotional biases when retrospectively evaluating the events, and whether variations in temporal memory account for individual differences in emotional well-being.

We found that memory bias indicative of poor temporal coding and time-emotion integration (i.e., temporal dilation of remembered negative vs. positive event durations) is associated with emotional bias reflecting temporal neglect and a higher risk for mood and anxiety disorders (Li & Lapate, 2024, Emotion).

My current ongoing fMRI/TMS study investigates the function of the lateral prefrontal cortex (LPFC), a brain region essential for cognitive control, in time-emotion integrated control of behavior. Specifically, using a novel task that requires accurate tracking of temporally extended emotional signals, coupled with multivariate fMRI analysis and information-guided TMS, I aim to test the central hypothesis that the anterior LPFC (frontal pole, FP) integrates emotional and temporal control signals during dynamic emotional processing to inform mid-LPFC action-goal representations.

Preliminary multivariate classification results demonstrate that emotion and time signals are linearly decodable from FP, and action-goal signals are linearly decodable from mid-LPFC. Moving forward, I plan to use representational similarity analysis (RSA) to explore whether FP forms time-and-emotion integrated control representations, and use TMS to draw causal inference about the functional differentiation between FP and mid-LPFC.

In addition, I conduct laboratory EEG studies and real-life experience sampling studies to examine whether temporal memory coding during dynamic emotional experiences predicts time-context sensitive emotional responding (i.e., faster emotion recovery). Together, I hope my research will elucidate the cognitive and neural mechanisms that facilitate adaptive emotional responses and emotional well-being.



Mengsi Li, graduate student in Regina Lapate's lab

Celebrating Achievements and Building Connections

A word from Deborah Bettencourt, Chair of the Alumni Council:



*Deborah Bettencourt at the
ENGAGE events*

As the Chair of the UCSB Psychological and Brain Sciences (PBS) Alumni Council, it is my honor to extend heartfelt congratulations to the Class of 2024 on their remarkable achievement. Their hard work, dedication, and resilience have culminated in this significant milestone, and we are immensely proud of them. We welcome them to the PBS alumni family!

We are equally excited to welcome the incoming Class of 2028 to our vibrant community. Their journey is just beginning, and we look forward to supporting and celebrating their successes over the next four years and beyond.

This year has been an eventful one for the Alumni Council, filled with opportunities for connection, learning, and growth. I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to the Alumni Council, Friends of the Alumni Council, and the PBS faculty. A huge shoutout to Professor Kyle Ratner for his exceptional coordination efforts in bringing our ENGAGE events together this past year and many thanks to Conor Abernethy, our PBS Alumni Relations Intern.

Our year got off to a great start with the Fall ENGAGE held on October 27, 2023 as a Zoom event with breakout rooms for mock interviews. Alumni interviewees paired with one or two undergraduates for 30 minute mock interviews followed by a resume and interview tip session. This event was invaluable in fostering professional development and networking for PBS students.

Winter ENGAGE, traditionally held in the spring, was moved to February 23, 2024. We were honored to have keynote speaker and esteemed alum Vijay Mittal (Chair, Northwestern University Psychology Department), whose research and insights inspired all in attendance. The event featured engaging panels, informative tabling sessions, and a lively mixer, offering a perfect blend of learning and community building. Having the event earlier in the year provided students with more time to reach out to alumni as follow up prior to graduating - and they did. What a pleasure to meet some of these PBS students in IV for coffee and chat.



Picture of the latest ENGAGE event

In March, Professor Vanessa Woods invited PBS alumni to Psych 509B, a graduate class, to share our expertise with some of the students who were considering an industry path rather than academia. It was a wonderful chance to meet with these students and learn about their impressive research and talk about their promising futures. Thank you to Amy Meyer for joining me as this was our first event focused on graduate students.

There were many more ways for the alumni and the community to experience the happenings of PBS this year. Highlights included [Minicon 2024](#), the [SAGE Lectures](#), and the undergraduate awards ceremony held in the new Interactive Learning Pavilion. It was truly a treat to celebrate their achievements in such a stunning lecture hall!

As we enjoy the days of summer, I encourage our alumni to stay connected with the PBS community. Join our [LinkedIn page](#), share their experiences, and let us know about their achievements. Their involvement enriches our community and helps us continue to grow and thrive. Wishing our PBS community a wonderful summer. We look forward to hearing from alumni and continuing to build strong, lasting connections.

Meet the new member of Alumni Council, Kyle P. Jones

(IP) How did you come to be a UCSB Psychology major? What drove you to the topic of psychology, and eventually, to clinical psychology?



Dr. Kyle Jones

I'm very grateful for my time at UCSB and my undergraduate studies in the department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. I transferred to UCSB as a psychology major and my interest in the field only continued to grow thereafter. Once I graduated, I wanted to stay in Santa Barbara (I mean who ever really wants to leave?) and my degree helped me land a position working for two local physicians, Dr. Sherif El-Asyouty and Dr. P. Joseph Frawley, in their intensive outpatient program where they helped folks struggling with mental health, chronic pain and substance use disorders. Aside from the psychopathology class I took at UCSB, that was my first more practical introduction to the clinical side of psychology, and I loved it. While I had a mostly administrative role, advocating for patients to get their care covered by insurance, I knew I eventually wanted to pursue a graduate degree. I saw how people could change and recover, and I wanted to have more of an impact. From there I found myself at Palo Alto University in their clinical psychology PhD program, which had a good balance of research and practice that was an excellent fit for me.

(IP) Are there any classes or professors in particular from Psych that you remember, and why?

Taking psychological science and applying it to mental health care was something the PBS department prepared me well for. My undergraduate education laid a great foundation for me to go on to be a clinical psychologist. Many classes and professors still stand out to me. I remember how kind and engaging Dr. Richard Mayer was in his educational psychology class. Years later when I attended an evidence-based teaching conference I noticed that more than half the studies cited during a talk were by Dr. Mayer. I remember gently nudging a colleague next to me and whispering "I took a class from him in undergrad!" I still recall Dr. Russ Revlin talking about concepts like the phonological loop and the visuospatial sketchpad in his cognitive psychology class. Learning about these components to working memory and other elements of cognition would go on to be relevant to my clinical training and current practice as I work with patients struggling with Anxiety Disorders, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. While my performance in Dr. Heejung Kim's cultural psychology class was probably less than stellar (unfortunately, I took it in my last quarter and couldn't help but have graduation on my mind...) it sparked my interest in the intersection of culture and psychology. Her course would be relevant to my development in the areas of cultural competence, cultural humility and practicing and teaching with a multicultural orientation that acknowledges the diverse identities of the people I work and interact with.

(IP) What are your goals in joining the PBS Alumni Council? What do you see as the role that alumni can play in the department, and with students?

It's been a joy for me to engage with current and graduating PBS students who have an interest in clinical psychology and related careers. Throughout my life I've benefited from excellent mentorship, and I find myself in a position now to be on the other end of things - perhaps offering a little guidance, lessons learned from experience, or even just a caring ear that could be helpful and supportive. My main goal in joining the PBS alumni council is to be a resource for students. I will always make time to chat with any PBS student who wants to connect!

(IP) Tell us about your work as a Researcher, Teacher, and Practitioner. What are the projects that excite you the most right now, and can you trace the trajectory from UCSB to now?

These days I spend most of my time doing therapy, while also teaching a few classes as a part of the adjunct faculty at Palo Alto University. Another psychologist, Dr. Magdalene Holtam, and I also co-lead a consultation group for clinicians who want to gain more experience with psychological interventions for OCD treatment. We're also working on a new continuing education course on this topic, that's probably the project I'm working on that has me the most excited. My professors in the PBS department modeled great instruction, and I so looked up to them as researchers and educators. I can't help but chuckle as I find myself in a somewhat similar position now, nowhere near as esteemed but doing my best to carry on some of that legacy.

I'm also looking forward to getting back to in-person clinical work. A Santa Barbara local, one-time UCSB adjunct faculty member, good friend and mentor of mine, David Raney, used to wax poetic about how great it would be for me to one day "hang out a shingle." Since the pandemic I've mostly worked via telehealth, so opening an office where I'm settling down in Orange County will be exciting too.

(IP) Any advice for Gaucho psych majors and recent graduates?

If I had any advice for psych majors and recent graduates it would be to not limit your scope! Your education in the PBS department has likely given you a diverse array of skills that apply broadly to many careers and jobs. You gained a crucial understanding of human thinking and behavior, you developed a scientific mindedness that lends itself well to problem solving, critical thinking, experimentation and statistical analysis, and you can apply your knowledge while considering different social and cultural contexts. I taught a class last quarter, Supervision, Administration and Management in Behavioral Health that covered some of the business elements in the field of psychology and I can't help but think the future is bright for PBS students. Don't be afraid to ask for help and nurture and grow your network of colleagues, friends and family, chosen or otherwise. My younger brother also attended UCSB, so I'm lucky to have a Gaucho in my immediate family in addition to that inherent connection I feel to any other UCSB alumni. We not-so-secretly hope that my two young nephews might find their way to becoming Gaucho's one day, too.



Dr. Kyle Jones with his brother at graduation

To wrap up I'll end with a cheeky, but all to true, quote from Leslie Knope: "No one accomplishes anything alone." That sure has been true for me. If it weren't for my moving to Santa Barbara to attend UCSB and graduating with my degree from the department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, I don't think I would have made the connections I did or have the career I do now. I was set on a great path and I'm so glad it's come full circle, getting to be on the alumni council. I look forward to any and all of my future involvement with this department that helped me launch.

Meet the latest ENGAGE Event's Keynote Speaker, Professor Vijay Mittal

(IP) How would you characterize your path from UCSB to where you are now?



Professor Vijay Mittal during his visit

I have been able to use a lot of the practical research skills and broad understanding of psychology I gained from my time at UCSB in my path after graduation. Even today, I remember back to examples from some memorable developmental, social and cognitive psychology classes, and use these as a basis for teaching as well as thinking. UCSB gave me an excellent foundation in Psychology and I am incredibly grateful. I also learned about how to be a member of a research team, and this was due to patient mentors and rich training opportunities. After graduating I went on to volunteer as a research assistant at UCLA (in a lab working in first-episode schizophrenia), and then built on both experiences (UCSB and UCLA) to gain entry into a competitive graduate program at Emory where I continued to build on my work and interest in development and psychosis. I returned to UCLA to complete postdoctoral training and took a job as an assistant professor at CU Boulder. Later I moved my lab to Northwestern, where I have very much enjoyed teaching, research, and doing clinical work ever since!

(IP) How did you come to be a UCSB Psychology major? What drove you to the topic of psychology, and eventually, to clinical psychology?

I have always been interested in understanding why people are different. In particular, I wanted to know about why similar experiences with stress can lead one person to have trouble, and another to thrive. These questions led me into different domains of psychology (e.g., clinical psychology, human development, cognitive-affective neuroscience), and I have found that the more I learn, and more I get excited about learning something else. I grew up in Southern California and was well-aware of the reputation that UCSB holds for excellence, and so it was an obvious choice!



Professor Vijay Mittal with his family

(IP) Are there any classes or professors in particular that you remember, and why?

I had so many experiences at UCSB that have left an indelible mark on the way I have interacted with the field (it would be difficult to name just a few).

(IP) Any advice for Gaucho psychology majors and recent graduates?

Appreciate your time at UCSB, it is a very special place, and a very important time in your life. If you haven't already, become actively involved with research (it can help you later with many career choices, and it will help you to more fully benefit from the amazing resources the University has to offer). Make sure to stay in touch with friends and mentors.

To find more about Prof. Vijay Mittal's work, please visit his [lab's website](#).

FACULTY AWARDS



Brenda Major was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, and received the Mentor Award from the Association for Psychological Science

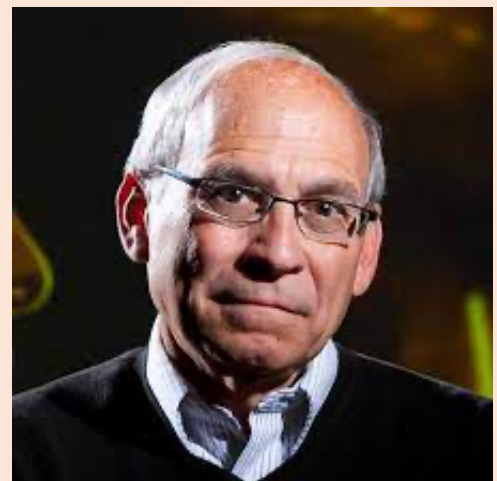


Nicole Albada received the Academic Senate Distinguished Teaching Award, and won the Professor Slam

Regina Lapate awarded grant from the National Institute of Health



Richard Mayer named Highly Ranked Scholar by Scholar GPS



UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

Distinguished Graduating Senior

The award for distinguished graduating senior is awarded in recognition of academic and research excellence, and service to the department, the university, and the community



Emily Yi, Teagan McCune, Antoinette Obiefuna

The Morgan Award for Research Promise in Psychology

The award for research promise in Psychology is for graduating seniors who demonstrate the most promise in the area of experimental research in psychology, as selected by the department faculty

Tori Levier, Ansh Soni, Edward (Ted) Lee

The Morgan Award for Academic Excellence in Psychology

The award for academic excellence in Psychology is given to graduating seniors in recognition of outstanding scholarship, as selected by the department faculty

Asha Jotwani, Jeanette Sullivan, Lexsi Johnson



Phillip S. Rethis Memorial Award

The Philip S. Rethis Memorial Award is given to a graduating senior in recognition of outstanding “character”, “determination”, and “scholarship”

Jasmin Gonzalez Escobar

Diversity and Inclusion Award

The Diversity and Inclusion Award is given to a graduating senior that demonstrated through their actions, leadership, and/or innovation, and understanding of, appreciation for, and/or advocacy of diversity issues and inclusive practices

Jasmin Gonzalez Escobar

Distinction in the Major

Distinction in the major recognizes the completion of a senior honors project or thesis with distinction

Sonya Adler, Yusra Al-Alawi, Geetanjali Balaguru, Olivia Bolton, Juliana Chou, Baris Delibasi, Jasmine Diaz, Elwin (Di) Feng, Audrey Gaceta, Jessica Harris, Crystal Holland, Daniel Jin, Alexsia Johnson, Asha Jotwani, Lauren Lee, Ted Lee, Luke Leiden, Tori LeVier, Grace Liu, Dasha Lobko, Teagan McCune, Maya Montez, Amelia Moore, Mikah Nelson, Tricia Pang, Tvisha Patel, Jonathan Roberts, Amisha Sharma, Kierra Smith, Ansh Soni, Jeanette Sullivan, Chloe Swoiskin, Chiamaka Utom, Anh-Thu Van, Emily Yi, Amanda Zeitawi, Ellie Zhu

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

Exceptional Academic Performance

The award for exceptional academic performance is given to graduating seniors who have achieved a 3.9 or higher GPA in their upper division coursework of at least 36 units

Jeevika Adda, Maulik Ahuja, Lucia Alem, Gisele Anderson, Clare Andriola, Maya Ayres, Bannie Bajwa, Prisha Balaguru, Analiese Baldwin, Gaby Bank, Ava Belzer, Allison Bourd, Lucy Bresler, Sydney Chung, Caelan Coffey, Paige Coray, Abigail Ebroon, Leah Edmonds, Catie Gallo, Alexis Glienke, Sophia Glover, Shereen Golkar, Isabella Gonzalez, Olivia Hahn, Teagan Hart, Simiao He, Selah Henkaus, Dillan Hickey, Cambell Ingram, Ethan Jenkins, Daniel Jin, Lexsi Johnson, Hannah Jolley, Asha Jotwani, Kian Kalantar, Jian Kanesheiro, Shreya Katkere, Katelynd Kramer, Shawna Larsen, Michelle Le, Tori Levier, Dharma Lewis, Grace Liu, Dasha Lobko, Tina Lykos, Hadley Mahoney, Teagan McCune, Sarah McGowan, Lila Metherate, Gabriel Miller, Delaney Milligan, Talia Nakata, Ronnie Netz, Kara Nguyen, Hannah O'Connell, Antoinette Obiefuna, Tvisha Patel, Ashley Pham, Mackenzie Pippins, Cameron Ritchie, Jonathan Roberts, Seth Ruiz, Kamron Safarnejad, Maya Schiffer, Bryn Severson, Kioto Shimamura, Lily Silver, Sonoko Silvers, Jocelyn Tao, Isabella Teets, Anh-Tram Tran, Kayla Trieu, Lauren Turco, Lucy Webb, Jin Hee Yang, Kinsey Ybarra, Emily Yi

GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

Richard E. Mayer Award for Outstanding Research Contribution in Psychology

The Richard E. Mayer Award recognizes the second-year psychology graduate student who presents the best research paper at the Psychological & Brain Sciences Mini-Convention. The Graduate Affairs Committee receives nominations from all four areas and selects one student from the department whose research paper demonstrates outstanding contributions to the field.

Amelia Harrison



Harry J. Carlisle Award

The Harry J. Carlisle Award was established to recognize the important contributions of Professor Harry Carlisle, a long-time faculty member in Psychology. This award recognizes an advanced graduate student in the Neuroscience and Behavior (N&B) Area for their sound scholarship, strong research record, and a concern for others and the functioning of the N&B area.

Sophie Peterson

Charles G. McClintock Graduate Fellowship in Social Psychology

The Charles G. McClintock Award is a tribute to Charles (Chuck) G. McClintock, the first social psychologist at UCSB. This fund recognizes his contributions to social psychology, the UCSB graduate program in social psychology, and all those who benefited from knowing him. This fellowship recognizes an advanced graduate student in the Social Psychology Area for their outstanding scholarship.



Suyi Leong

GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

Greg Ashby Graduate Student Fellowship in Cognition, Perception, and Cognitive Neuroscience

The award is intended to recognize students who exhibited Greg's example of research with high levels of theoretical and computational rigor, along with demonstrated excellence in service and mentorship.

Jordan Garrett

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship

The National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship helps ensure the vitality and diversity of the scientific and engineering workforce in the United States. The program recognizes and supports outstanding graduate students who are pursuing research-based master's and doctoral degrees in fields within NSF's mission.

Joshua Ortega (Honorable Mention)

GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

Students Receiving PhDs

Alyssa Bedrov, Leo Jimenez Chavez, Jordan Garrett, Devi Klein, Suyi Leong, Laura Pritschet,
Rammy Salem, Daniel Thayer, Vinnie Wu



CONGRATULATIONS!
YOU DID IT!



CLASS NOTES

What are your fellow Gauchos up to?

For more information on getting involved with the PBS alumni community, contact us at: pbsalumni@psych.ucsb.edu

Steven Guzowski, 2013, BA, Psychology. I have had a few positions working with kids sports programs and am now a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). I work in a school district in LA working with students who have behavioral challenges and IEPs. I spend much of my time doing staff training and implementation. When not working, I enjoy camping and riding motorcycles with friends.



CLASS NOTES

Hoben Thomas, 1958, BA, Psychology. Professor Emeritus, Penn State, University Park, PA. Academics with interest in individual differences might be interested in: Sex Differences in Reading and Math Test Scores of Children, a free monograph from Springer. The convolution model has wider applications. That research and modest philanthropy has occupied my time.

Caroline Chavez Griffith, 2013, BA, Psychological & Brain Sciences. I've worked in Human Resources (HR) for the City & County of San Francisco for the past four years. Currently, I'm an HR Analyst for the Department of Public Health. I love working for the City to resolve HR-related issues like position management and pre-employment screening. I'm forever grateful for the outstanding professors and staff at UCSB. Go Gauchos!

Tara Framer, 1979, BA, Psychology. Currently living in Tarrytown, NY providing marketing communications and graphic design for non-profit organizations and green energy companies. I also am a Certified Classical Homeopath and serve on the Board of Directors of the Council for Homeopathic Certification. My hobbies include hiking, gardening, and cooking.

Tonya M. Pan-Weisz, 2009, BA, Psychology and Business Economics. I completed my MA in Psychology at SDSU in 2013, my MS in Psychology at SDSU in 2015, and my PhD in Clinical Psychology at SDSU/UC San Diego in 2019. I'm currently a Staff Psychologist at the Veterans Affairs San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) and an Assistant Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry (non-salaried) at UC San Diego. Outside of work, I enjoy swimming, yoga, home improvement projects, listening to audiobooks and podcasts, and spending time with friends and family, including my husband, two daughters, and dog.

Cassie Hansen, 2009, BA, Psychology. I have been working in Human Resources since graduation and currently am the Director, People & Total Rewards at a multistate homebuilder. In the 15 years since graduation from UCSB, I have received my MBA, gotten married, and moved to Boston. Besides working in the People (HR) business, I spend my time catching up with friends, doing yoga, hiking and playing with my two cats.

Sean Sowersby, 1997, BA, Psychology, and Water Ski Team Alumni. I am a Firefighter for the City of Downey and reside in Brea, CA with my daughter (10) and son (8). We enjoy frequent trips to the desert in the winter for off roading and to the lake in the summer for boating. I stay busy with Pickleball, fitness, home projects and volunteering at my kids' school as Safety Chairperson, Watch D.O.G.S Co-Chairperson and PTO Financial Reviewer. Thank You, UCSB, for a wonderful education and life long friendships.

Scott Norris, 1988, BA, Psychology. Scott went on to get a teaching certificate in Multicultural Studies from the University of New Mexico and MBA from San Jose State University. Shortly thereafter, Scott was diagnosed with a highly malignant brain tumor (Glioblastoma Multiforme). In 2007, Scott was invited back to UCSB to be a guest lecturer by Professor David Sherman to talk about how self-affirmation can buffer against the effects of stress during life threatening situations. Scott was considered a long-term survivor of this disease and passed away on November 5, 2022.

Matt Quinley, LCSW, 1992, BA, Psychology. I recently retired from Sacramento County, Department of Health Services after 29 years of service where I worked as a program manager overseeing county operated behavioral Health programs. I am now working with my wife who owns a small business in Elk Grove, CA. We provide training, continuing education, and consultation to residential care facilities and care workers. I am also preparing to start a private practice. I look back fondly on my years and experiences in the Psychology Department at UCSB. Dr. Robert Sherman's experimental psych classes are the most prominent in my memory :).

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Thank You from the PBS Chair Shelly Gable

The Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences is extremely grateful to our Alumni Council and the other generous donors to our department. The contributions that our alumni and friends of the department make allow us to support important programs throughout the year, such as our Society for Undergraduate Psychology, Psi Chi, and Access Grads. Events such as ENGAGE, the Graduation Awards and Recognition ceremony, and our annual graduate student research showcase, MiniCon, wouldn't be possible without the support of our generous community. You have many choices of where to direct your philanthropy, time, and energy; we are honored and humbled that you recognize the value of supporting PBS. We are proud of our department and are excited for the future.





“UCSB is the world’s best kept secret.”

-Jeff Henley, '66
Vice Chairman, Oracle Corporation

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