Welcome to a new Academic Year and to our new Colleagues and Graduate Students~!

Getting to Know Each Other…..Spotlight on John Monterosso

I grew up in New York and went to graduate school in experimental psychology at U Penn, where I studied judgment and decision-making, with Jon Baron, John Sabini, and Henry Gleitman. I narrowed in on the topic of impulsivity in decision-making, and especially on reductionist accounts of self-control. Applying the strategy that extreme cases can provide good clues about how things work, I study decision-making and brain function associated with addiction. I did this as a Postdoc with Anna Rose Childress and George Ainslie, and then as an Assistant Professor in Psychiatry at UCLA. My wife Carrie Bearden is a clinical psychologist studying neurodevelopment of disorders with genetic origins, and is at UCLA Psychiatry, where she recently received tenure. We have a 2 year old girl (Kylie) and a nearly 6 year old boy (Zack). We also have an old cat that ruins furniture and has no good qualities unless you count longevity, which in this case, I do not. We are still in the process of moving in to a house in West LA that we are all enjoying.

My current research utilizes neuroimaging and is built around two projects, each supported by an R01 from National Institute on Drug Addiction. The first looks at brain response to reward as a function of variables including delay (referred to as “delay discounting” in the behavioral literature) and relates this to decision-making. The second project looks at neural activity during decision-making with a significant primary reward -- cigarette smoke for craving smokers. In that experiment, opportunities to smoke during fMRI are provided using a ridiculous homemade contraption that keeps smoke from escaping into the scanning environment. The overarching goal in these projects is to delineate sub-processes, at both the psychological and neural systems levels, that underlie the impressive human capacity for delay of gratification.

Two Project Assistants, Xochitl Cordova (a diehard Bruin – class of 03) and Lisa Giragosian (who graduated from Wellesley College two years ago) will be in SGM 815 carrying these projects out. They are both outstanding – everyone keeps telling me that!

REMEMBER !  EVERY WEDNESDAY MORNING IS COFFEE AND PASTRY IN ROOM SGM 501

Some weeks we will have special guests for conversations about their career paths, their views of Psychology today, and their research projects of greatest personal interest.

SPECIAL GUESTS AT 9:30 AM—10:00 AM
BRING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS!

- SEPTEMBER 3—ANTONIO DAMASIO
- SEPTEMBER 24—GAYLA MARGOLIN
- NOVEMBER 12—JOHN CACIOPPO

Newsletter at a glance

- Spotlight: John Monterosso
- Wednesday Coffee: Antonio Damasio, Guest on Sept 3
- Sarnoff Mednick: announces retirement
- Spotlight: Steven Lopez
- Upcoming Events
- Did you Know?
- "Have you read anything good lately?"
- GASP: Graduate Association of Students in Psychology
- News updates
Dr. Sarnoff Mednick is among the most distinguished members of the psychology faculty, with an illustrious career in the study of mental disorders. He has been a member of the USC faculty since 1977 in the Department of Psychology and at the Social Science Research Institute. Dr. Mednick was one of the first scientists to revisit the genetic basis of mental disorders following the backlash against behavior genetic research in the 1970’s after the era of eugenics. He is widely known for his innovative use of the high-risk paradigm (i.e., studying the offspring of schizophrenics). His 1984 paper in Science on the genetics of criminal behavior is considered a landmark study. He is a leader in demonstrating pre- and perinatal influences on schizophrenia, having been one of the first (if not the first) to show influenza exposure in the 2nd trimester raises the risk of schizophrenia. He also did early work on creativity, which continues to be cited today.

Mednick has received multiple awards honoring his research, including: the Zubin Award from the Society for Research in Psychopathology for distinguished research in psychopathology; the Distinguished Scientist Award from Division 12 of the American Psychological Association; the Earl U. Suddin Award in Biological Psychiatry; and the Lieber Prize for outstanding research in schizophrenia. He was also recognized by an NIMH Career Development Award from 1986-2001.

In addition to his productive research and impressive publication record, Mednick has mentored numerous students, many of whom have established themselves as outstanding scientists.

“I could write pages about how much I admire and respect him. Sarnoff’s contributions to academia are immeasurable, as he has earned the nickname, “Grandfather of schizophrenia and criminality.” His landmark studies serve as reminders of what can occur when an individual possesses a combination of brilliance, creativity and a curiosity to understand the human condition. Within moments of first meeting Sarnoff, one is struck by his kindness, warmth, sense of humor and humility—the combination of which make him unique in any arena, particularly academia.” ...Jasmine Tehrani, Ph.D.

“Sarnoff’s direct contributions to psychiatric research are without question monumental and well known. What is perhaps less documented or described is his personal influence on the many students he has mentored in his 40 plus years as an academician. Thus, his influence on psychiatric research will be far greater than his direct contribution.” ...Meggin Hollister, Ph.D.

Getting to Know Each Other…..Spotlight on Steven Lopez

“Culture matters” says Professor Steven Lopez, a new member of our clinical area faculty. According to Dr. Lopez, culture affects our everyday behavior in significant ways. However, he cautions us to be careful in ascribing other people’s behavior to their cultural background. “Too often people use distal indicators of culture, such as one’s ethnicity, race, or nationality, and fail to assess culture directly in trying to understand individuals.” Dr. Lopez and his collaborators at UCLA, Dr. Alex Kopelowicz, a psychiatrist, and Dr. Linda Garro, an anthropologist, are concerned that mental health clinicians, in an effort to consider cultural factors in working with diverse clients, are oftentimes applying cultural stereotypes. To address this, he and his research team have developed a cultural training module, which they refer to as “Shifting Cultural Lenses.” He has received support from the National Institute of Mental Health to evaluate whether the training leads to an increase in culturally competent behaviors (e.g., directly asking the client their cultural views rather than assuming culture plays a role given their ethnicity). “A lot has been written about cultural competence but we know little about whether any training in this area actually leads to changes in therapist’s behaviors, and to positive outcomes in clients.” The study is being carried out with local mental health clinicians in public outpatient clinics in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

Dr. Lopez returns to USC where he held his first academic position from 1982-1992. He has spent the last 16 years across town at UCLA. “It’s great to be back. At times it feels very familiar, like returning home, and other times it feels very different. The latter reflects change and what I consider to be positive change. It will be fun working here again. The faculty, staff and students have been most welcoming.” Dr. Lopez brings with him a small staff, led by Dr. Ana Ribas, a post-doctoral fellow, Mariana Cervantes, project assistant and a cadre of coders to rate taped clinical sessions.

Dr. Lopez and his research team reside on the 10th floor, where the cage washer was once located. He invites anyone from the department to visit them. He and his group would be happy to assist anyone in their efforts to understand the role of culture in others, whether you are a clinician or not.
DID YOU KNOW?

- Gayla Margolin received the USC Mellon Mentoring award in the category of Faculty Mentoring Undergraduate Students.

- Zhong-Lin Lu received an NSF grant to support a workshop to be held in Beijing in May 2009 on “Cognitive Science: From Cellular Circuitry to Computational Cognition.”

- Beth Meyerowitz received a grant from the Rosenzweig-Coopersmith Foundation to support her work on “Trauma and Resilience Among Orphan Heads of Household Who Survived the Rwandan Genocide.”

- Margaret Gatz was named recipient of the 2008 M. Powell Lawton Award for Distinguished Contributions to Clinical Geropsychology. Gatz received the award at the August 2008 APA annual meeting where she delivered an invited address.

- Carlos Rodriguez and Taona Chithambo, entering Provost's Diversity Fellows, were selected for a summer program for incoming doctoral students sponsored by the EDGE (Enhancing Diversity in Graduate Education) program in the Graduate School.

- Karoline Brandt was one of 12 Discovery Scholar prize winners. The Discovery Scholar prize is awarded to undergraduates who have produced exceptional scholarship or creative work while at USC. Under the mentorship of Stan Huey, Brandt measured fluctuations in pronoun use by Asian-American trauma patients and assessed correlations between medical narrative and positive health outcomes.

- Toben Mintz has recently been appointed to the Editorial Board of the journal Cognition. Quoting from the journal’s description: "Cognition is an international journal that publishes theoretical and experimental papers on the study of the mind."

USC VISIONS AND VOICES
Presents
“AESTHETICS AND THE BRAIN”
WITH DR. IRVING BIEDERMAN
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2008 at 6:00 PM
USC FISHER MUSEUM OF ART
Admission is free
Reception to follow

USC PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT
Presents a colloquium with
John Cacioppo, Ph.D.
Tiffany and Margaret Blake Distinguished Service Professor, Director, Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience
University of Chicago, Department of Psychology

“Operating Characteristics of the Affect System”
November 12, 2008
HNB 100
12:00—1:00 pm

Have You Read Anything Good Lately?


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Welcome to our new incoming Graduate Students!

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<td>Megan Taylor-Ford</td>
<td>Beth Meyerowitz</td>
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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Tania Abou-Ezzeddine
Post Doc Clinical Child Neuropsychology, The Help Group, UCLA (NPI)

Yolanda Cespedes
Post-doctoral Psychology Fellow
USC UCEDD at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles

Wilson Chu
Post Doc Fellow, Cognitive Sciences, UCI

Yu Gao
Post Doc Research Associate
University of Pennsylvania

Jonathan Nakamoto
Research Associate
WestEd, Evaluation Research

Anthony Rissling
Post Doc
Biological Psychiatry and Neuroscience Program, UCSD

Ya-ling Yang
Post Doc
Laboratory of Neuro Imaging, School of Medicine, UCLA

McGuigan Awards 2008

Frank Joseph McGuigan received his Ph.D. from the University of Southern California in 1950. He went on to a distinguished research career publishing over 90 journal articles, books, and book chapters dealing with cognitive psychophysiology, research methodology, and stress.

McGuigan generously donated funds to the Department of Psychology for an annual award to be given to students who show special promise in contributing to psychology as a materialistic science.

Winners of the 2007-2008 McGuigan Award

Serena Bezdjian (mentor, Laura Baker)
Serena is publishing important psychophysiological studies regarding the genetics of childhood antisocial behavior

Xiaomin Yue (mentor, Irving Biederman)
Xiaomin is contributing important research to our understand of the neural basis of the recognition of faces and objects.

Congratulations!

Recipient of the Psychology Department Summer Research Awards

Marissa Ericson, Marija Spanovic, Siva Tian

DEPARTMENT WELCOME BACK PARTY SEPTEMBER 24, 2008, 3:00—5:00 PM SGM 514
DEPARTMENT HOSTS EURO GANG CONFERENCE

In May 2008, the department hosted a workshop “Cross-National Street Gang Research” funded by a grant to Dr. Malcolm Klein from the Provost’s Advancing Scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences Initiative.

Eight scholars from the Eurogang Steering Committee—4 from Europe and 4 from the US—led workshops about the Eurogang research program. They were joined by 6 USC faculty with interests in street gang research and by 10 young scholars (5 from USC and 5 from other universities).

Psychology was well represented. Karen Hennigan and Margaret Gatz from Psychology served as co-hosts, along with Malcolm Klein. The USC faculty included David Schwartz and Stanley Huey, while the young scholars included Brynn Kelly and Dawn McDaniel. The intent was to foster new joint comparative research. In addition to being funded to attend the meeting, the young scholars were offered the opportunity to apply for seed research funding to initiate comparative studies.

Have You Read Anything Good Lately?


Full articles are posted outside SGM 538. Please send your newest / best publications to Twyla Ponton, ponton@usc.edu

USEFUL WEBSITE ADDRESSES

http://college.usc.edu/psyc/home/

http://college.usc.edu/psyc/news/announcements/index.cfm

http://thelot.usc.edu

http://myusccollege.usc.edu

Sarah Duman, Psychology graduate student, with her poster, “Parental Attunement: Measurement Methods and Relation to Problem Behavior”. Sarah recently presented this poster at the 2008 APA convention in Boston, MA. Sarah’s poster was printed on our new HP DesignJet printer!

Psychology Department Large Format Printer

HP DesignJet

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

See Sandy for details

DEPARTMENT WELCOME BACK PARTY SEPTEMBER 24, 2008 3:00—5:00 PM SGM 514

Editor and Photographer: Sandy Medearis