Our laboratory conducts research on both normal and abnormal human cognitive and emotional processes by measuring nonverbal physiological responses such as heart rate and muscle tension. This covers a wide range of topics so let me give you specific examples of four of our recent publications and ongoing projects.

1. **Can emotions be learned without conscious awareness?** Can the way you feel about another person be conditioned without your awareness? We tested this question by having a picture of a specific person always followed by an unpleasant picture. Physiological responses indicating the learning of negative feelings toward that person occurred only in participants aware of the stimulus relationship. These findings highlight the importance of conscious cognitive processes in mediating learned emotional states. We also found that the participants who became aware had lower physiological arousal and better short term memories than those who did not become aware, indicating a potentially important individual difference in learning.

2. **Do moving objects elicit more fear than stationary objects?** Fears of spiders and snakes are quite common. Our research indicates that physiological expressions of these fears are greater to computer generated moving images of these objects than to pictures of the actual live objects that are stationary. This method of measuring fear may be useful in the clinical treatment of phobias and other anxiety disorders. To test the application to phobias, we are now presenting the computer generated moving images of snakes and spiders to participants who have high fears of these objects. In this way we will see if the highly fearful participants differ from participants with normal levels of fear in both the degree and the nature of their physiological responding.

3. **Why do schizophrenic patients perform poorly on sustained attention tasks?** Schizophrenic patients are impaired in tasks that require sustained attention to stimuli. We detected physiological abnormalities in schizophrenic patients that occur within milliseconds after onset of the stimuli presented during this type of task. These findings help clarify the nature and source of the cognitive impairments in schizophrenic patients.

4. **Can we predict when schizophrenic patients are going to relapse?** Over 1/3 of schizophrenic patients relapse within one year of their hospital discharge. We have now found physiological abnormalities that reliably occur in the weeks preceding relapse. These results help us understand the processes that lead to relapse and may aid in the early detection and prevention of psychotic relapses.

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**Newsletter at a glance**
- Spotlight: Dr. Michael Dawson and his lab
- Wednesday Coffee: Guests
- Department Welcomes Chinese Scholars
- Did you know?
- Spotlight: Dr. Ashley Borders
- “Have you read anything good lately?”
- Upcoming Events
- Announcements

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**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 guest at 9:30 AM—10:00 AM Bring questions and comments!**

**October 29—David Neal—9:30 AM**
**November 12—John Cacioppo—9:30 AM**
**November 19—Elaine Andersen—9:30 AM**
**December 3—Michael Dawson—9:30 AM**
Psychology Department welcomes Chinese Scholars

The Chinese Scholarship Council has initiated a fellowship program for faculty, junior faculty, and late year graduate students to come to the United States to do research for 6 to 24 months. The Chinese Scholarship Council sponsors the fellowship with a monthly stipend along with airfare to and from the United States.

In March 2008, a delegation of the Association for Psychological Science visited four Chinese Universities/Institutes and signed an agreement with the Chinese Psychological Association to match up scholars with participating United States institutions. Following the visit, APS sent a letter to all its Fellows to call upon them to participate in the program. As a member of the APS delegation, Dr. Zhong-Lin Lu co-signed the letter with the President and deputy President of APS. The list is currently posted on the CPA website (http://www.cpsbeijing.org/aps_work.htm). Both APS and CPA expect that the list will make an impact in 2009.

Prior to the APS visit, Dr. Lu has been an active participant with the Chinese Scholarship Council and as a result we currently have four Chinese Scholars in our department working with Dr. Lu and one working with Dr. Antoine Bechara.

This summer we welcomed Dr. Liping Wang, who is a full professor at Zejiang Industrial University, and is here for 6 months working with Dr. Lu on amblyopia, Dr. Haixian Wang, who is here for 12 months, is junior faculty from Southeastern University of China, and he is working with Dr. Lu on Multivariate Analysis of fMRI. Mimmi Cheng and Yue Leng are both graduate students from Southeastern University of China who will be here for 12 months. Ms Cheng will be working with Dr. Lu on second language acquisition, and Ms. Leng will be working with Dr. Lu on decision making. Another graduate student, Qinghua He, will work with Dr. Antoine Bechara on decision making.

The goal of these Chinese Scholarship Council sponsored fellowships is to foster exchange between scholars in China and the US, and to develop long-term collaborative research programs.

Did You Know?

- Irving Biederman was recently published in the LA Times and reprinted in newspapers all over the country and the UK for his Op-Ed piece entitled: “The 411 to Avoid Boredom.” The piece can be found at: http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/Ia-oe-biederman19-2008jul19,0,3327488.story. He also was featured in two interviews, one on KUSC on the neural basis of aesthetics, and one interview on NPR’s “Fair Game with Faith Salie,” the subject of which was “Infovores.” The interview can be found at http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/fairgame/jukebox?action=viewMedia&mediaId=688281.

- Congratulations to Elaine Andersen and the ‘Bring Me A Book Foundation’ who just recently had their $150,000 grant proposal approved by the California Community Foundation. This is the first literacy organization that the CCF has funded in the past 5 years.

- Carlos Rodriguez, 1st year graduate student (Faculty advisor, Margaret Gatz) has been approved by the USC Graduate school for an EDGE Travel Grant. Carlos will attend The National Institute on Aging (NIA) Grants Technical Assistance Workshop in association with the Gerontological Society of America, 61st Annual Scientific Meeting.


- Gerald C. Davison, dean of the USC Davis School of Gerontology and Professor of Psychology, has been traveling the world extolling the virtues of new technologies and their benefits for older adults. In the spring he traveled to Taiwan to speak on Gerontechnology and in November he will be going to Dubai to participate in the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on the Challenges of Gerontology. http://www.usc.edu/uscnnews/stories/15701.html

- In October, Irving Biederman presented invited talks at a Fissen Workshop in West Paris, a colloquium at the University de Paris Descartes, the Frankfurt Institute of Advanced Studies in Germany, two colloquia at the University of Bangor in Wales, U.K., a colloquium at the University of York, U.K., and talks at the CNRS Institut de Neurosciences Cognitives de la Méditerranée in Marseille, France, and a workshop at the European Conference of Computer Vision in Marseille, France.

- On October 23, 2008, Jack McArdle hosted 25 nationally and internationally renowned cognitive psychologists and economists to discuss the results of his latest NIA sponsored research project: “Assessing and Improving Cognitive Measures in the Health and Retirement Study (HRS).” The HRS is a 16-year old, nationally representative study of older adults, which examines people’s retirement decisions in addition to their health, social, economic, and psychological status. Researchers value the information they gain from knowing a person’s cognitive status—the ability to think, reason, and remember things—because cognition can serve as an asset or be a limitation. The efforts of those who attended this meeting will transform the way cognition is measured in the 2010 HRS survey.
Many of you know that Ashley graduated from USC. She has been a full-time non-tenure track faculty member since Fall, 2008. She teaches Abnormal Psychology, Intro to Clinical Psychology, and Intro Psychology. She loves teaching and is especially enjoying getting to know her graduate student TAs. During her last few years of graduate school, Ashley lectured part-time at Cal State Long Beach. She’s happy to talk with any students who are interested in gaining teaching experience before they graduate.

Ashley’s research focuses on the effects of rumination on anger and aggression. She and social psych grad student Marija Spanovic recently developed a coding system to determine the content of people’s rumination (after audio-taping people ruminating, not too unlike an ATSS protocol!). She also recently submitted an article on the relationships between mindfulness, rumination, and aggression.

Ashley continues to see clients in therapy, both at the USC training clinic and as a psychological assistant in private practice in Culver City (where she is accepting new clients, if anyone has referrals). Her clinical areas of specialty include working with older adults and caregivers, as well as mindfulness-based approaches. Her new favorite professional activity is supervising graduate student therapists, and she hopes to do more of this in the future.

Ashley grew up in Southern California and went back east for college (go Bulldogs!). In college, she practically double-majored in psychology and history (they didn’t offer minors, and she decided in her senior year that she didn’t want to write 2 senior essays, so she just retained the psychology major). After college, she moved back to Los Angeles and spent 2 years doing research at UCLA and one year teaching high school History and English. Although she ultimately decided to pursue clinical psychology, she retains a love of history (and of teaching, obviously). Finally, Ashley is a lifelong musician; she plays the cello in community orchestras and small ensembles and sings in various choirs (she also conducted children’s choirs through grad school to earn extra money). But she says we shouldn’t hold our breath about hearing her play or sing, as she’s a shy performer.

**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*

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*Psychology Department Welcome Back Party*

*And Sarnoff Mednick’s Retirement*
Comments on the benefits of attending Wednesday Morning Coffee

“You get to interact with faculty members with diverse research expertise and engage in intellectually stimulating discussions on things you may not have thought about. It may not directly contribute to your own research, but it will certainly help advance your understanding about psychological research (the planning, execution, challenge, and success). Of course, healthy snacks, fresh juices and coffee/tea are always lovely! — Cecilia Poon”