I am a new Assistant Professor in the social area. I’m very excited to be joining USC’s psychology department! I received my PhD from the University of Virginia way back in August 2010. Before my time in Virginia I lived in Portland, OR; Kagoshima, Japan; Cambridge, MA; Chicago, IL; and Kansas City, MO, where I grew up.

My research interests broadly cover morality, ideology, and religiosity. Much of my work has been focused on the different kinds of moral concerns people have, and how those concerns vary across individuals, cultures, and contexts. The motivating question for this line of research was: how can “morality” mean such different things to different people? I have also investigated how political ideology influences decision-making processes used in moral dilemmas (e.g., are some actions always wrong regardless of the consequences, or does the wrongness depend on the circumstances and outcomes of the action?).

In the next few years I will be expanding this research in several directions. First, I am making use of recent developments in implicit measures (reaction time tasks, EEG, and other methods that bypass self-report) to investigate how “deep” these differences in moral concerns are. This work on automatic, gut-level moral reactions will also hopefully shed light on some of the mechanisms and processes behind moral judgments and disagreements. Besides broadening the range of methods used to gauge moral, religious and ideological commitments, I will also be working to broaden the sample of individuals under study, to learn more about how cultural and socio-ecological contexts influence what we care about most passionately, and how we represent that caring to others. (One way we’re doing this is through the internet, at sites like YourMorals.org, created by USC’s own Ravi Iyer.)

My office is SGM804 – please feel free to stop by. I look forward to meeting everyone in person. My wife Sarah and I are expecting our first child in November, so parenting advice is welcome!

REMEMBER! EVERY WEDNESDAY MORNING IS COFFEE AND PASTRY IN ROOM SGM 501
9:00 AM—11:00 AM

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

9/1/2010—WELCOME BACK BREAKFAST !!
9/8/2010 - JESSE GRAHAM, PhD
9/15/2010—SHARON NIV (ADVISOR, CAROL PRESCOTT, PHD)
9/22/2010—RICHARD DAVIDSON, PhD
Daniel Paris (honors student, advisor, Dr. JoAnn Farver) was honored in May by having his name placed on the USC Wall of Scholars. The Wall of Scholars was developed in 1994 by the Skull and Dagger Society to honor students who have won national and international fellowships, as well as recipients of USC awards. Daniel also works in Dr. Karen Hennigan’s Center for Crime and Social Control.

Jiye Kim (advisor, Dr. Irving Biederman) was awarded a National Science Foundation East Asia and Pacific Summer Institute Fellowship to do Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation Research in the lab of Dr. Chi-Hung Juan at the National Central University in Taiwan.

Taona Chithambo (advisor, Stanley Huey), Charisse Corsbie-Massay (advisor, Stephen Read), and Elizabeth Chereji (advisor, Carol Prescott) received EDGE travel grants to attend summer programs.

Vanessa (advisor, Dr. Antoino Damasio) was selected to attend the FENS-IBRO summer school on “Cognition and action: systems neuroscience approaches to understanding complex behavior” held in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Vanessa’s poster titled “Activation and interconnectivity of the hippocampus during the feeling of admiration and compassion” was awarded best presentation.

Ravi Iyer (advisor, Dr. Stephen Read) presented a talk "Understanding Libertarian Morality: The Psychological Roots of an Individualist Ideology" at the conference of the International Society for Political Psychology in San Francisco.

Keiko Kurita (advisor, Dr. Beth Meyerowitz) presented a poster on “Cancer Predicts Long-Term Cognitive Impairment in Older-Adult Twins” at the American Psychological Association in San Diego. Her abstract was selected to receive a special travel award from Division 38, and at the APA convention the paper was selected for a special session called Psychological Science Graduate Superstars—Datablitz.

Jennifer Kellough (advisor, Dr. Bob Knight) was awarded exemplary student for her work titled “Aging and judgment of facial emotion” by APA Division 12, Section II.

Lina D’Orazio (advisor, Dr. Beth Meyerowitz) has received an APA Minority Fellowship. New MFP fellows were recognized at the APA convention in San Diego.

Dr. Gerald Davison received the 2010 Evelyn Hooker Award for Distinguished Contribution by an Ally, given by APA, Division 44.

Gerald Sun (undergraduate advisor, Dr. Bosco Tjan) is the first author of an article published in a leading journal in vision research. Gerry used a mathematical model and a signal-in-noise paradigm to identify the mechanism through which practice improves peripheral vision. Gerry is now a graduate student in Neuroscience at Johns Hopkins.

Anirvan Nandy, PhD (advisor, Dr. Bosco Tjan) successfully defended his dissertation and is now a postdoc at the Salk Institute in San Diego.

Rachel Millin (RA with, Dr. Bosco Tjan) won the Elsevier/Vision Research Travel award for her talk titled “Reduced Neural Activity with crowding is independent of attention and task difficulty” at the annual meeting of Vision Sciences Society.

Jessica Brommelhoff, PhD (advisor, Dr. Margaret Gatz) recently defended her dissertation and will be starting her postdoc at UCLA Semel Institute.

Cecilia Poon, PhD (advisor, Dr. Bob Knight) recently defended her dissertation and will be beginning her clinical internship at Piedmont Hospital.

The Psychology Department has a new TEST SCORING MACHINE. Please see Sandy for details.
Have You Read Anything Good Lately?


  See commentary on this article:


**NEURODEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY INTEREST GROUP**

A newly formed neurodevelopmental psychology interest group will have its inaugural meeting September 29th, 2010 at 3:30 pm in SGM 901 on the USC University Park Campus. This interdisciplinary group will bring together researchers and clinicians across USC, from the Departments of Psychology, Neurobiology, Viterbi School of Engineering, Brain and Creativity Institute, Cognitive Neuroscience Imaging Center, Institute for Creative Technology, Zilkha Neurogenetics Institute and the Keck School of Medicine. This interest group will meet one Wednesday each month in an informal setting to discuss recent publications relevant to neurodevelopmental psychology, and will meet at multiple sites (UPC and HSC) to accommodate its participants. These meetings are open to USC faculty, trainees, and staff interested in neurodevelopmental psychology research. Possible areas of interest include, but are not limited to, cognitive and social-emotional functions, recent advances in neuroimaging (structural and functional), neurodevelopmental disorders, application of novel engineering strategies for research use, innovative behavior probes in young children, stress-reactivity and arousal, neurodevelopmental sensitive windows, early learning, animal models, sensory and motor developmental trajectories, and the contribution of genetics to behavioral variability.

If you are interested in being included in future mailings about this group, or if you’d like more information, please e-mail Barbara Thompson at Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute blthomps@usc.edu or Darby Saxbe in the Department of Psychology dsaxbe@usc.edu.
Vanessa (advisor, Dr. Antonio Damasio) in Croatia at the FENS-IBRO summer school with her award winning poster.

Daniel Paris (Honors Student, Advisor, Dr. JoAnn Farver) with President Sample at the Wall of Scholars Ceremony

Sharon Niv (advisor, Carol Prescott) at Singularity University in Silicon Valley

Sharon Niv operating a robot onto a colorful object

Psychology Department
Welcome Back Breakfast!!
~~~Join us to welcome new students and faculty ~~~
Wednesday, September 1, 2010
9:30 am — 10:00 am
SGM 514
Announcements & Colloquia

Upcoming Colloquia

Richard Davidson, PhD
“Order and Disorder in the Emotional Brain”
Wednesday, September 22
HNB 100
12—1:00 pm

Nathan Fox, PhD
Wednesday, October 20
HNB 100
12—1:00 pm

Elizabeth Loftus, PhD
Wednesday, December 1
HNB 100
12—1:00 pm

GASP NEWS!
New Student Orientation - August 25th

If you are interested in being involved in GASP events you are encouraged to show up and join in the fun!

Have an idea for GASP programming? Email Rachel-rachel.beattie@gmail.com