Welcome to …..Wendy Wood

I am a new social psychologist in the departments of psychology and marketing. This newsletter is a chance for me to say hello and to explain what I hope to accomplish in the next few years. My position is part of the Provost Professor program that supports hires across schools. I am excited to be the first faculty hired in the College and the Marshall School of Business. These hires keep USC at the forefront of the innovative scholarship and teaching that occurs across disciplines.

USC has a strong social psychology program in the psychology department. Social psychologists study how individuals are influenced by other people and groups. This question is basic to many fields. So research and teaching in social psychology is found in marketing, management, the law school, other social sciences, and health. Each program is great individually but could be even better with stronger ties across programs—teaching joint classes, collaborating on research grants, and jointly supervising graduate students. We also are jointly hosting Alice H. Eagly, who will be on campus this year as the first USC Distinguished Visiting Professor in Social Psychology. Her office will be in SGM 1016, so please stop by to say hello.

USC is building a new laboratory on the 8th floor of SGM for research on social behavior. It’s a communal lab facility, which means that it is open to faculty and students who need research space and equipment for psycho-physiological testing, computerized presentation of stimuli, video recording of individuals and small groups, and other social research methods. More details shortly.

My research addresses two questions. One is how attitudes and other dispositions guide behavior. I have been working with David Neal to understand how and why people develop habits and how habits can be changed once they are formed. Habits challenge the idea that we control our own behavior. For example, in a study of eating habits, moviegoers got stale or fresh popcorn to eat. They all reported not liking the stale popcorn, and they ate less of it, at least when they did not have a habit to eat popcorn at the theater. But moviegoers with a popcorn habit ate just as much when it was stale as when it was fresh. Thus, these people ate habitually in response to familiar cues in the movie theater and not because they liked the food. Given that habits are triggered by cues in the performance environment, changing habits involves inhibiting the cuing mechanism or altering the cues.

My research also focuses on gender, especially questions about the evolutionary origins of gender differences. Some of this work examines gender across cultures to identify the aspects of men’s and women’s behavior that are common to all cultures and the aspects that vary with social structures and local ecology. For example, I am now working on a project to understand how the amount of sex segregation in schools and at work in different countries influences who we compare ourselves to (men? women? both sexes?) and thereby influences men’s and women’s self-perceptions.

My office is in the Chair’s conference room this fall, and I hope that you will stop by and say hi.
Getting to Know Each Other ..... Spotlight on David Neal

First, thanks for the warm welcome to USC! I am a social psychologist studying automatic influences on everyday behavior and judgment. Within that broad framework, I currently have three specific lines of research. The first and largest is in collaboration with Wendy Wood here at USC and addresses the interface between people’s habits and various self-regulatory mechanisms. Together we have studied the powerful influence of environmental cues in triggering habitual behavior in ways that bypass the control of people’s goals and attitudes. We have also demonstrated some ironic benefits of habits, such as showing that lowering people’s self-control can sometimes actually help them follow through with their habits (e.g., making it to the gym). With Tanya Chartrand at Duke, I have been studying how automatic mimicry of facial expressions can improve the accuracy of people’s emotion perception. We found that applying a simple facial cream that heightens awareness of facial feedback can significantly improve people’s ability to read other’s facial emotions. Conversely, we found that Botox injections, which impair automatic mimicry and thus facial feedback, led to significant impairments in emotion perception.

Finally, with Gavan Fitzsimons, Sarah Moore and Baba Shiv, I have been looking at how hypothetical questions (like those often used in polls and surveys) can function like a Trojan horse and influence future behavior and decision making. Our studies have focused on isolating the cognitive mediators of these effects and demonstrating their impact in important real-world domains, like jury decision making and health behavior.

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Did You Know?

- **Dr. Zhong-lin Lu: Best Visual Illusion of the Year.** Zhong-lin Lu was a member of the winning team in the 2009 Best Visual Illusion of the Year contest. See The Break of the Curveball.
- **Dr. Justin Wood** was awarded a New Investigator Award from the American Psychological Association, for the best article in one of the JEP journals by a new investigator (PhD in previous 3 years or less). Justin received the award for his article "Visual Working Memory for Observed Actions", published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology: General.
- **Lauren Ng (advisor, Dr. Stan Huey)** taught a class for high school students in USC’s Summer Seminar Program. The class is an introductory psychology course called “Shaping the Self: The Psychology of Personal Development.” The seminar ran 5 days a week during the month of July, and culminated in a student poster presentation and party.
- **Kelly Young-Wolff (Advisor, Dr. Carol Prescott)** was awarded a Gold Family Graduate Fellowship from USC College for summer 2009.
- **Tian Tian (Advisor, Dr. Rand Wilcox)** was recently awarded a Final Summer Dissertation Fellowship from USC College.
- **Cecelia Poon (Advisor, Dr. Bob Knight)** was awarded a Conference Travel Award from USC College for summer, 2009.
- **Dawn McDaniel (Advisor, Dr. Stan Huey)** was awarded a Diversity Enhancement Placement Assistance Award from USC College for summer, 2009, for dissertation research.
- **Charisse Corsbie-Massay (Advisor, Dr. Stephen Read)** was selected to attend the American Psychological Association’s Advanced Training Institute on Research Methods with Diverse Groups, June 22 through June 26.
- **Jaclyn Ronquillo (Advisor, Dr. Stephen Read)** was awarded a Dissertation Research & Writing Award from USC College for summer, 2009.
- **Nicole Sintov (Advisor, Dr. Carol Prescott) received the 2009-2010 Oakley Fellowship.**

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David Neal, Ph.D.
Announcements

Psychology Department Launches New Website!

http://college.usc.edu/psyc

In April, 2009 the College advised the department of exciting and wonderful news! The Psychology Department was next in line to have their website redesigned. This was great news with one big caveat...our deadline for the completion of the project was June 30, 2009! A big challenge with a short timeline.

After many long hours, led by our tireless department chair, Margaret Gatz with help from the website committee, and input from the area heads, along with Tana March, web mistress from the college, we have launched our new psychology department website! Thank you to Roger Stewart and the College!

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*
UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendars for the Departmental Welcome Back Celebration!

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 9:00—11:00 am

This year we will be celebrating back-to-school with a Wednesday Morning Coffee and breakfast goodies.

Come by to say hello to everyone, meet the new doctoral students and faculty, and locate your mailbox!

COLLOQUIA

September 16
Dr. Alice Eagly
Visiting Professor of Psychology, USC
Professor of Psychology, Northwestern University
“Through the Labyrinth: Women as Leaders”
HNB 100
12:00 –1:00pm

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October 7
Dr. Harris Cooper
Professor and Chair
Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Duke University
“Ethical Issues in the Conduct and Reporting of Meta-Analysis”
SGM 414
1:00 –2:00 pm

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October 21
Dr. Richard Davidson
Vilas Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry
University of Wisconsin, Madison
“Order and Disorder in the Emotional Brain”
HNB 100
12:00-1:00 pm