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Psych NUws

The Newsletter of the Northeastern University Psychology Department

Volume 12, Number 2 (January 2006)

From the Editor

Welcome to the new semester! As always, I have had a good time assembling this issue of *Psych NUws*. As you know, this newsletter is intended for the reading pleasure and information of the whole Psychology Department, but the special audience is the undergraduates. I am sure there is something in every issue that is relevant to every student. I also delight when students offer to contribute to the newsletter. You can contribute news, ideas, humor—practically anything that the department would find interesting. Sometimes what we include isn't strictly about psychology, but that's fine. We are members of a community and we can enjoy things in common whether they are "psychology" or not.

In every issue there is a column called "News of Our Grads." This is especially relevant to the current undergrads, as you will find the insights, stories, adventures, and decision making sagas of students just a bit more advanced than you are. Their experiences are very useful when you face your own decisions after graduation. Sometimes these grads give advice on choices you make even *before* you graduate. Our grads go in a wide variety of paths including graduate school and various jobs. Sometimes they are still looking, and sometimes they feel they have found their heart's desire. Sometimes they are willing to talk about their mistakes. So, I hope you always read these contributions that our grads have generously sent to us.

--Prof. Hall

News of Our Grads

Joanne Fratarolli, '97

I started Northeastern University as a Psychology Major in September of 1993. After taking a Social Psychology Seminar in my 3rd year, I became very interested in learning more about research in general and about social psychology in particular. I was fortunate enough to work as a research assistant in two

different social/personality psychology laboratories; one with Dr. Judy Hall where we studied nonverbal behavior, and one with Dr. Elizabeth Cole where we studied people's perceptions of discrimination and sexual harassment. Having frequent one-on-one interaction with the faculty and graduate students really enriched my experience at NU, and having hands-on exposure to running experiments, coding and analyzing data, performing literature searches, and writing papers served to increase my interest in research and in psychology.

After completing my bachelor's degree in September of 1997, I felt that I needed a break from academia before continuing on to graduate school. I moved to Southern California with a good friend from college and searched for research-related jobs on websites such as "monster.com" and "latimes.com" using keywords like, "research & assistant" and "psychology & bachelor's degree". I was surprised to see that there were quite a few jobs in research for people with a bachelor's degree in Psychology! I obtained a position at a family planning organization that ran clinical trials (experiments) on new forms of birth control methods – we signed up couples to test out new methods and they reported back to us on how well they worked. I got wonderful experience interacting with participants and learning about research while I recruited participants, explained the studies, answered their questions, asked them screening questions to determine their eligibility to participate, scheduled study appointments, collected in-person and telephone interviews to collect data, and reviewed/coded information from participants' medical records.

After two years of assisting in the clinical trials research, I was ready to return to school and refocus my energies on my interest in psychology. I applied to five Social/Personality Ph.D. programs and got accepted to one of them – the University of California, Riverside. (I did not realize how competitive the Ph.D. programs were – even with a high GPA and good GRE scores!). My advisor in the program, a very accomplished and esteemed social psychologist named Dr. Robert Rosenthal, was nearing the end of his career, and I was fortunate enough to have a lot of latitude in choosing my own area of research and designing/running studies very independently. As an undergraduate, I had done some reading about the beneficial health effects of writing expressively about traumatic events and I had always wanted to conduct my own expressive writing experiments – which I able to do (several

times) throughout my graduate school career. In addition to doing research, the program at Riverside gives graduate students a great deal of opportunity to work as teaching assistants in the undergraduate classes and even to teach their own classes over the summer and in their 4th and 5th year. I was a teaching assistant for a bunch of different courses – all the way from Intro Psych to an Honors Seminar – and I taught two of my own classes over the summers.

I am happy to report that I just recently completed my Ph.D. from UC Riverside and that I am teaching several classes both here at UC Riverside and at some other local colleges in the area. I plan to use my training as a researcher and a teacher to become a college professor – something that I have always wanted to do, even since high school. I will begin applying for full-time positions in a couple of months (for a job that would begin in September 2006). I hope to follow in the footsteps of my advisors before me – Drs. Hall, Cole, and Rosenthal – by inspiring other students to fulfill their dreams.

Jeannette Gordon Reinoso, '99

As a dual major in Psychology and Spanish and a minor in Women's Studies, I put all these interests together and became a J. William Fulbright scholar and spent one year living in Seville, Spain enjoying the richness of Spanish culture while also conducting research about female survivors of domestic violence. If you'd like to apply for a Fulbright grant to another country, visit www.iie.org. NU has talented faculty and grant writing specialists who can help you write your grant application.

I knew I wanted to provide therapy to outpatient Spanish and English speakers across the lifespan, and to teach and conduct research. As a result, I began my doctorate in counseling psychology at Arizona State University in 2000. I anticipate completing my degree in 2006 with a dissertation on internalizing and externalizing behaviors in child sexual abuse survivors, and a year-long internship at a university counseling center and a community mental health center.

Aida Cajdric, '01

I graduated with a BS in Psychology. I enjoyed my time at NU since the freshman year. I also knew that I wanted to study psychology from early on, so I made sure that I got to work in one of the psychology laboratories in the department. In my sophomore year I started working in Dr. Naarendorp's lab and that was a great experience. I wanted to get as much experience in psychology as possible. The work I did produced my first publication, which for applying to graduate schools is priceless. After completing my work there, I decided to work on my honors project in Dr. DeSteno's lab. I worked with him for a couple of years and the product of that work was another publication and poster presentation at a professional conference. The work that I did at NU helped me find a job after I graduated and made me realize what exactly I wanted to do and what graduate field to go into.

I was always interested in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) related to war victims and how it impacts the acculturation process. After I graduated I decided to take a short break and work in a more clinical field. My resume, which grew stronger at NU, allowed me to get a position at the National Center for PTSD with Dr. Keane. I worked with him on a Bosnian Project that involved looking at the impact of PTSD and the influence of cognitive behavioral therapy on this particular population. My work with

Dr. Keane allowed me to make my resume even stronger so when I decided to apply to graduate schools it was much easier.

After a very stressful process of applying to graduate schools and waiting, I was accepted to St. Louis University's Clinical Psychology program. I currently work with Dr. Weaver, whose work matches my interests perfectly. She has worked with Bosnian populations, as well as victims of intimate partner violence and child abuse. I am a third year student now and I am collecting data for my dissertation. My focus is still on the Bosnian population and the impact of Bosnian culture and PTSD on smoking behavior and motives. I love being at St. Louis University. Graduate school is hard but if you choose a program that matches your interests and needs, it is easier.

I strongly recommend that if you have interests in studying psychology, to talk to your professors and tell them that. They will help you to create the perfect resume, and they will inspire you to achieve your goals. If you are not certain about what field of psychology you may want, talk to them. Whichever field is for you, there is a faculty member at NU who can help you. And if your interests do not match perfectly onto theirs, which happened in my case, they will help you get experience, which later on in my education proved to be extremely useful.

Yota Gikas, '02

After receiving my bachelor of arts degree in psychology, summa cum laude, from Northeastern University, I continued my education at the Boston College Lynch School of Education. During my studies at Boston College, I completed two internships. In the summer of 2003 I was an intern at the Franciscan Children's Hospital in Brighton, MA, working in the McLean-Franciscan Child and Adolescent Program as a psychiatric inpatient unit intern where I facilitated psychotherapy groups with adolescent clients. During the 2003-2004 academic year I worked at the Curtis-Tufts Alternative School in Medford. The Curtis-Tufts School is an alternative high school for students who have behavioral, emotional, and/or learning difficulties. As an adjustment counselor intern, I provided both individual and group therapy, as well as crisis intervention and support. In 2004, I received my master of arts degree in mental health counseling from Boston College with highest honors.

I am currently a second year doctoral student at Suffolk University, where I am working towards earning my Ph.D. in clinical psychology, with a concentration in child and family clinical psychology. My first year as a doctoral student was very eventful. I was a teacher's assistant for two undergraduate general psychology courses. I absolutely love teaching and hope to receive the opportunity to teach my own course once I gain some more experience. In the fall of 2005, I will be completing the majority of my coursework as well as collecting data for my research study concerning dominance and leadership styles among ethnically identified female college students. I will also be a teaching assistant for a psychology of the family undergraduate class, as well as working 20 hours per week at the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital in Jamaica Plain, MA. At the Shattuck Hospital I will be providing individual and group therapy, as well as clinical assessments for an adult forensic population suffering from severe mental health disorders. During my spare time, I am a volunteer youth advisor at the Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Cambridge, MA.

Elizabeth Salib, '04

Since January I was out of work for quite a while. I spent a lot of time applying to jobs and interviewing, but there just always

seemed to be a better applicant. In March, I finally gave up and decided to temp with Manpower at Bank of America. I had a great, cushy job as the Admin Assistant to the Senior VP of Charitable Management Services. I didn't have too much work to do and my co-workers/supervisor were fantastic. In the meantime, I decided to start searching for a permanent position outside of MA. I had a few interviews in the DC area and I finally landed a Research Assistant job with Children's National Medical Center in Washington DC.

So in Mid-July I moved to Maryland and began my new job. But of course my job is far more complicated than it seems. I do research in the Pediatric ER and am part of a national network of hospitals that all do the same research (in order to increase participant size and actually be able to influence clinical practice). The network is called PECARN, Pediatric Emergency Care Applied Research Network (www.pecarn.org), and I was hired from DC Children's Hospital to work out of Johns Hopkins Hospital. So here I am, working in Baltimore, and they have me coordinating the research at Hopkins and Howard County General Hospital (a Hopkins Hospital). The work is fairly interesting, but I've never been one to be fascinated with medical research and clinical trials. Because of the nature of the ER where we have to wait for patients to come in with an injury to enroll them into the studies, I am on call 24/7. That's probably the worst part of my job, along with the fact that I am my only co-worker in a city where I don't know anyone.

Working at Hopkins is... fascinating. The PedsER is rather unfriendly towards research, which is surprising because Hopkins is a leading hospital in research. I assume they must be famous for the quality of their lab research. The ER staff is fairly overworked and so they don't appreciate my asking them to do more work (no matter how small) for the research. Everyone in the hospital is fairly cut-throat and interested in only doing their work so my diplomacy skill are really being put to the test. On the plus side, the days I work at Howard County Hospital are a breath of fresh air next to Hopkins. The hospital staff is friendly, helpful and eager to participate in research that may help the children they treat. Also, I really enjoy working with the 2 PIs from both hospitals. They are incredibly supportive, helpful, and allow me a huge amount of creative freedom and independent work. Right now I'm in the process of recruiting my own interns for both hospitals!

Peer Advising in Psychology

Though you are always encouraged to see your advisor, your instructors, and any other faculty member to discuss whatever is on your mind, you also have the option of talking to peers. Through the College of Arts and Sciences, in conjunction with the Psychology Department, Jennelle Yopchick and Kendra Brackett are available to all students for Peer Advising. This includes any concerns or questions regarding the Psychology Department and curriculum, core requirements for the College of A&S, faculty members, the co-op experience, and academic calendars or deadlines.

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Kendra Brackett, brackett.k@neu.edu

SENIORS! Don't Forget the Departmental Graduation Ceremony

As you may know, on the evening before the official spring graduation, the Psychology Department holds its own (mercifully much smaller!) celebration of our own Psychology and Behavioral Neuroscience graduates. Graduates are invited, along with their

families and significant others, for our ceremony that includes addresses, awards, and distribution of certificates, followed by a reception with food and drink. This is an opportunity for your families to see, hear, and meet professors and to hear about the year's accomplishments of their talented offspring! Invitations will be sent out during the spring.

Exciting New Doctoral Program at the University of Michigan

The Psychology Department at the University of Michigan has just announced a new doctoral program that has five main areas of focus: IDENTITY, MOTIVATION, POWER, OPPRESSION, and CULTURE. This program reflects some of the hottest research areas within social/personality psychology today. The program is called "Personality and Social Contexts," and it brings together not only these timely themes but also connects to broad societal issues that are often neglected in traditional experimental psychology departments. Be sure you investigate this program if you have interests in this direction:

www.lsa.umich.edu/psych

And, in case you don't know, it is common for PhD programs to support you fully with a living stipend as well as waiving tuition. This is the case for the U. of Michigan program, the Northeastern U. Program, and many others. Yes, you heard me right! You don't pay them, they pay you!

At Our Back Door: Graduate Studies at Suffolk University

Suffolk University offers a PhD in Clinical Psychology (see essay by Yota Gikas, above). Several features are unique to this program. First it emphasizes a clinical-developmental perspective, the view that clinical problems are best understood in the context of knowledge about normal and optimal development over the lifespan. Second, the program prepares students to work as creative problem-solvers in a wide range of research, clinical, educational, organizational, and public policy settings. Third, it emphasizes a rigorous understanding of the interrelations between basic and applied research and between qualitative and quantitative methodologies in contributing to theoretical and practical knowledge. The department embraces a scientist-practitioner orientation (sometimes called the Boulder model). Within the program there is a Neuropsychology Concentration that provides entrée into one of the fastest growing areas in psychology, with applications in educational, vocational, medical, psychiatric, and forensic settings. There is also a Clinical Child Concentration. For more information, visit:

www.suffolk.edu/psychology.

A Smorgasbord of Student Resources at Psi Café Website

First, you take an introduction to psychology class and recognize that understanding the multitude of topics in psychology won't be easy. Then you make an even quicker realization that sorting through an infinite number of Web sites on every imaginable issue is unlikely to make your goal any easier.

Well, there is a place on the Web capable of condensing your online routine, called the Psi Café at:

www.psy.pdx.edu/PsiCafe.

Psi Café is an easy to navigate virtual space filled neatly organized psychology themes linked to many interesting Web sites. For example, in the Resource Section you can access careers, research, and graduate training, along with resources on funding, psychological associations, and the history of psychology. Each area in the Resource Section has subsections.

Some of the best covered areas are Key Theorists, which showcases information on prominent personalities across a dozen disciplines; the Research in Psychology category (which includes Research Methods, Statistics, and Scientific Writing); and the Developmental section.

So, next time you get hungry for Psychology but find the supermarket shelves just too confusing, visit this café!

--Summarized from *APS Observer*, December 2004.

You Don't Know What the BFLPE Is? You'd Better Read On Because It May Be Relevant to You

Everyone has heard of the BFLPE—Big Fish in Little Pond Effect—but most people don't know that it has received extensive empirical research by psychologists, especially Herbert W. Marsh, a social psychologist at the University of Western Sydney in Australia. Prof. Marsh has conducted worldwide research on the relation of students' academic self-concepts to the eliteness and achievement level of the high schools they go to.

The results are fascinating and upsetting at the same time. In his biggest effort to date, Prof. Marsh and colleagues studied over 100,000 high school students in 26 nations. He asked the students to fill in a 3-item questionnaire concerning how good they felt about themselves in terms of academic performance and aptitude. Then he assembled achievement test scores from the students, from which he was able to compare the three crucial ingredients for testing the BFLPE: academic self-concept, individual academic performance, and schoolwide performance (i.e., the average academic achievement of all the students in the school).

The same results emerged in essentially every country: Being a better student was associated with a better academic self-concept (not surprisingly), BUT, also, being in a higher achieving school was associated with a *lower* academic concept. In other words, the higher achieving the school, the worse students felt about themselves.

This research raises important questions about educational settings and how people are influenced by them. Undoubtedly, being in a higher achieving school contributes to better individual achievement, yet at the same time produces feelings of doubt and inferiority.

Prof. Marsh and others have conducted many studies to find out the generality of the BFLPE. For example, he writes that academic self-concept is consistently negatively related to schoolwide achievement levels, but general self-concept and self-esteem are not. There are many areas of life in which BFLPEs may occur, including sports teams and workplaces.

--Summarized from the *American Psychologist*,
May 2003.

New Faculty Interview: Dr. Nancy Kim, Language & Cognition Area

Psych NUws: What did you major in in college? How did you get interested in psychology?

Dr. Kim: I started thinking about psychology after seeing an old black-and-white movie called *The Snake Pit* about mental illness and therapy. It painted a much simpler picture of mental illness than is the case in real life, but I loved the idea that people could become experts at understanding what goes on in the human mind. When I got to college, I joined a lab and did research on mental imagery in brain-damaged patients, on music cognition, and on the relation between reason and emotion. All this stuff got me particularly interested in cognition.

Psych NUws: Where and when did you get your BA and PhD?

Dr. Kim: I got my BA from Harvard in 1997 and my PhD from Yale 5 years later. So, I'm used to these toasty New England winters!

Psych NUws: How did you decide on getting a PhD?

Dr. Kim: By the end of college it seemed there were still a lot of questions about the mind to explore. One I'd always wondered about was why people stereotype other people. So I went to grad school to study how the mind organizes information by automatically compartmentalizing the world into categories. Of course, we lump other people into categories just as we do everything else.

Psych NUws: What's your research about?

Dr. Kim: My research asks how our knowledge about the world, particularly our causal and explanatory knowledge, affects our categorization, memory, and decision making.

Psych NUws: Are you interested in having undergrads work in your lab?

Dr. Kim: The Northeastern undergrads working in my lab have been fantastic! Any undergrads who might be interested in doing research in my lab are welcome to come and talk with me about it. Students help design experimental stimuli, run experiments, and work with me to analyze and interpret the data in terms of theories and existing computational models of categorization.

Psych NUws: Do you have any advice for undergrads who are seeking to find their career paths?

Dr. Kim: Every person's situation is so different... but keep talking with as many people as possible—friends, family, faculty, and staff—and don't give too much weight to any one person's opinion, except your own!

And You Thought Psychology Journals Were Dull!!

Did you know that lots of the research currently being done in experimental psychology is not only extremely interesting, but also relevant to your own life, AND not that hard to understand? You might be daunted at the idea of reading “real” psychology articles rather than the distilled descriptions you find in your textbooks. But, actually, reading psychology articles is not that difficult. The authors nearly always set up the Introduction to capture general interest and to provide some background for people who don’t already know the area well, and they paraphrase the results in plain English in parallel with the presentation of statistical analyses. That way, you can skip the statistics if you need to and still understand what was done and what they found. And the Discussion always summarizes the results so there’s no way you can miss the message!

Just one issue of *Psychological Science* (September 2005) yielded these findings (among others, of course):

Violence and sex do not sell products advertised on TV, according to research by B. Bushman. In a controlled experiment, adults of both sexes and all ages were shown TV programs containing sex, violence, or neither. The same 12 ads were incorporated into the shows, just as on TV. Afterwards, viewers of the sexy and violent shows remembered the brands less, were less interested in the brands, and were less likely to select a coupon for it. If advertisers think that sex and violence sell products, they are wrong.

Human pheromones really do attract. Researchers led by Y. Martins had homosexual and heterosexual men and women wear gauze pads in their armpits for 9 days and then the gauze pads were put into unlabeled jars according to group. Then different groups of homosexual and heterosexual men and women sniffed the jars and made pleasantness ratings. There were distinct group differences. For example, gay males preferred the odors of gay males and heterosexual females, while the other 3 groups found the odors of gay males to be the least preferred.

Odors in a room can exert unconscious influences on your behavior. In research by R. Holland and colleagues, participants who were unobtrusively exposed to the smell of citrus-scented all-purpose cleaner experienced heightened mental accessibility to the concept of cleaning and were more likely to keep their immediate surroundings clean during an eating task. Participants were completely unaware of these influences on their behavior.

Although as students you do not probably subscribe to issues of psychology journals that you can browse through, you might consider visiting the new periodicals room in Snell Library. You can spend a fascinating hour or two browsing and skimming through new issues of many journals, not just psychology journals. You just might find the idea that inspires your career direction!

Rumination Is Not Just for Cows

Research by prominent depression researchers focuses on rumination, or the tendency to dwell persistently on negative thoughts (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 77). There is a well established link between rumination and depression. The current research found that rumination can impair thinking and problem solving, and drive away critical social support. Though ruminators report reaching for others’ aid more than nonruminators, they actually receive less of it. In fact they report social friction due to friends getting tired of endless requests to listen to negative thoughts

and feelings. The rejection then fuels further rumination and depression.

Women are more likely to be ruminators than men. Women are especially likely to focus on their emotions when they are sad. Even though excessive rumination seems to be harmful to mental health (or at least a sign of poor mental health), ruminators think that it gives them insight. They also tend to be perfectionists. This line of research adds to evidence that depression and social interaction are related because of the negative cycle of depressive people driving away their friends, which makes them more depressed.

---Summarized from *Monitor on Psychology*,
November 2005

OPPORTUNITIES

The Speech Perception Lab needs you if American English is your native language, you have no speech or hearing disorders, and you are between 18 and 45 years of age. We pay \$10/hr for one or two hour experiments, scheduled at your convenience. Call 373-4462 for details.

Psychology Faculty often have openings for directed study students. Directed study gives you 4-Semester Hour credit as an elective or as a substitute for one of your required lab classes. Check the Psychology Office and notices around the department. Also, approaching faculty often works even if they have not posted a position.



Psych NUws is an endeavor of the members of the Northeastern University Psychology Department. All contributions are welcome!

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