

Berkeley Psychology INSIGHT



Letter from the chair

Dear Alumni and Friends,

We made it! To be sure, Spring 2021 was challenging. We started the year in political turmoil with the January 6th storming of the Capitol building, and then later came the Derek Chauvin trial and all that it represents, the sharp jump in racist violence against AAPIs, and the physical, mental, and financial toll of the ongoing pandemic and the grief and loss that it has brought to so many. All the while, we remained away from campus and the face-to-face interactions, high-fives, and hugs that are such deeply ingrained parts of who we are as social beings.

But, we made it. And the future has become brighter with each passing week, with Covid-19 illness and deaths dropping and vaccination rates climbing, as well as plans to return to campus this summer and into the fall well underway.

This spring, we graduated over 250 undergraduates and over 20 graduate students received their doctorates. Congratulations! To learn about some of our very accomplished graduates, please see our [commencement webpage](#). We are so very proud of each and every one of them! This spring we also recruited two new faculty who will join us in January 2022! [Keanan Joyner](#) will join our Clinical Sciences area and [Bill Thompson](#) will join our Cognition area.

This spring, we also began to see the outlines of a new vision for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in our community and beyond. In the fall, we established a separate Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion committee, co-chaired by faculty members Mahesh Srinivasan and Arianne Eason. We are grateful for the committee's thoughtful efforts this year toward laying out a plan of action. Two things about this plan are clear: it is imperative we take action and this action must be a collective effort. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are not for a single committee or a handful of individuals to "deal with;" instead, they reflect shared and fundamental values that we must all work together, day by day, to attain.

All the while, our faculty and graduate students continued to [win distinguished awards](#) for not just their research, but also for their [teaching and mentoring](#).

As we head into the summer, I want to express a personal note of thanks to the psychology community as a whole—for sticking together, for stepping up, for adjusting as nimbly as possible to new and ever-changing circumstances, and for having empathy for and showing kindness toward others in our community during times of struggle – be it due to illness, loss, racism, work setbacks, loneliness, and so forth. Much gratitude to all.

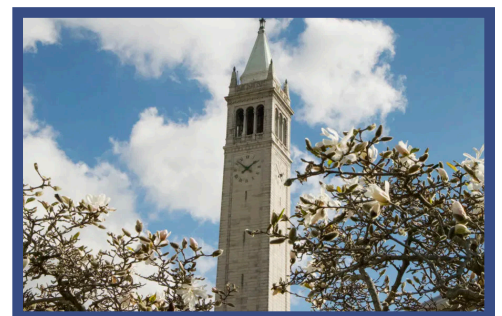
Give to Psychology, [here](#)

Also please send us your stories and life updates — we feature alumni stories on our website and would love to hear from you!

And keep in touch with us via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and our [Department website](#).

Best wishes for a restful, peaceful, and fun summer,

Serena Chen
Professor and Chair



Honors and Awards

Shelly Zedeck, emeritus professor of Psychology and Graduate School Professor, received the 2021 [Edward A. Dickson Emeriti Professorship](#), a distinction awarded to emeritus professors to recognize their continued pursuit of public service, research, and teaching.

Alison Gopnik, professor of Psychology, began her term as the [Association of Psychological Sciences \(APS\) president-elect](#) in June 2021, a distinct honor that will help drive the APS into the current decade.

Stephen Hinshaw, professor of Psychology and Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, was [elected](#) to the 2021 class of the American Academy of the Arts & Sciences. Since 1780, the Academy has brought together leaders across all disciplines to cultivate ideas that will advance humanity.

Celeste Kidd, assistant professor of Psychology, is a 2021 recipient of the Association of Psychological Sciences [Janet Taylor Spence Award](#), in recognition of early-career scientists who have made transformative contributions to psychological science.

Jan Engelmann, assistant professor of Psychology, was named an [Association of Psychological Sciences Rising Star](#), reflecting outstanding early-career significant contributions to furthering psychology.

Ozlem Ayduk, professor of Psychology, was a recipient of the [2021 Social Sciences Distinguished Teaching Award](#), an honor given to exceptionally effective and generous teachers of both graduate and undergraduate students.

Dan Catterson, Berkeley Ph.D. alum and statistics lecturer, received an award for [Extraordinary Teaching in Extraordinary Times](#), a new award allotted to instructors who exhibited ingenuity and skill throughout a year of virtual instruction.

Allison Harvey, professor of Clinical Psychology, was awarded the [2021 Distinguished Scientist Award](#) by the Sleep Research Society, a prestigious award recognizing significant original and sustained contributions to sleep science.

Anne Collins, assistant professor of Psychology, was awarded the [2021 Cognitive Neuroscience Society Young Investigator Award](#), awarded to early career scientists for outstanding contributions to cognitive science.

Charter Hill Society for Psychology

The Charter Hill Society is a community of alumni dedicated to supporting UC Berkeley Psychology, its students and faculty, and each other. Members will be invited to special programming for Psychology as well as to events with Charter Hill members from around the College. Recent lectures and events have featured Nobel laureates and leading figures in Psychology and Neuroscience.

Charter Hill members make a three-year pledge to the Psychology Department of \$1,000 or more per year. Gifts directly support the students and faculty of Berkeley Psychology.

To become a member of the Charter Hill Society, make a three-year recurring commitment at tinyurl.com/GiveBerkeleyPsych. (One-time gifts can also be made.)

For more information or questions, contact Anya Essiounina:
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2021 Commencement

Undergraduate Awards

Departmental Citation Award:

The Departmental Citation is awarded to the top undergraduate in the Psychology Department based on all aspects of academic life including: research, coursework, writing, and service to the university.

Ethan Willbrand (Weiner lab): Ethan completed his degree with a double major in Molecular and Cellular Biology and Psychology with a concentration in Neurobiology. He served as President of the International Honors Society in Psychology (UC Berkeley Chapter), Vice President and Club Co-founder of Together Educating All Children in Hospitals (TEACH), and is a mentor in his research lab. In his honor's thesis, he identified a new neuroanatomical structure, which has developmental and evolutionary importance for the field.

Swan Research Prize:

The Swan family generously donated funds in memory of Katherine Craig Swan, a 1932 Berkeley honors graduate in psychology. The Swan Research Prize is supported by this endowment and awarded for outstanding undergraduate honors thesis research.

Aris Richardson (Chatman lab): Aris's project explores the factors contributing to male centric bias in children's literature and character production.

Michelle Taw (Zhou lab): Michelle's project investigates the role of culture in emotion expression and regulation in preschool children.

Ethan Willbrand (Weiner lab): Ethan's project identifies a novel neuroanatomical structure that serves as a tripartite (microanatomical, macroanatomical, and functional) landmark in the human brain.



Warner Brown Memorial Prize:

Awarded annually to graduating seniors in the Department who have shown great promise in psychological research.

Leighann Ashlock (Fisher lab): "Leighann possesses a unique blend of innate clinical research insight, purpose-driven motivation, and intellectual curiosity that will ultimately make her an exceptional psychological researcher."

Sienna Bruinsma (Ivry lab): "It is abundantly evident that Sienna is a person who believes in 'paying it forward,'... she is enthusiastic about helping others to build the skills and knowledge that will help them to succeed in psychology."

Yuyang Zhong (Nelson, Keltner & Chen labs): "Yuyang is not your average undergraduate or research assistant—he is far above his peers in his conceptual and research aptitude, not to mention initiative, diligence, and genuine passion for research."

Support more cutting-edge psychology research [HERE](#)

2021 Commencement

PhD Graduates

Congratulations to all our PhD Graduates! Read on to learn about their graduate research, their post-graduation plans and some advice they have for future graduates.

Sara Chung, PhD:

Graduate Research: During my PhD, my research examined early risk and protective factors for the psychosocial adjustment of children from bilingual/bicultural families. Specifically, my work aimed to identify protective coping strategies and culturally relevant parenting behaviors in bilingual/bicultural families in the service of bolstering resilience in parent-child relationships.

Post-Graduation: I will be joining the NIMH-funded Clifford Attkisson Clinical Services Research Training Program at UCSF as a postdoctoral fellow.

Advice: What I found most helpful in getting through grad school were practicing acceptance of my own pace, gratitude for unexpected opportunities and my support system, and flexibility when faced with setbacks. Have patience with yourself and try to enjoy the process!



Maria Katharina Eckstein, PhD:

Graduate Research: I created computational models of human behavior, using Reinforcement Learning and Bayesian inference. I was particularly interested in learning and decision making, hierarchical cognition, and adolescent development.

Post-Graduation: I just started a job as a Research Scientist at Google DeepMind in London!

Advice: It's a marathon, not a sprint. Set up good, sustainable habits for yourself that you'll be able to keep up for your entire PhD (and maybe life!). E.g., good work-life balance, good reading habits, open mind set, good communication, good relationships with the people around you (at work and outside of work!), finding something that *you* are excited about. Also be aware that your advisor is "just" your advisor - they have their own goals and motivations and will try to be helpful, but won't (be able to) solve your problems.

Support more cutting-edge psychology research [HERE](#)

2021 Commencement

PhD Graduates



Nicole Gumport, PhD:

Graduate Research: My research focused on learning and memory for the content of therapy sessions, examining sleep in adults with serious mental illness and adolescent night owls, and better understanding how to bring treatments that we develop and test in research settings into publicly-funded mental health settings.

Post-Graduation: I will be a postdoctoral fellow on the Biobehavioral Research Training Program T32 at the Stanford University School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

Advice: Apply to every opportunity you are excited about even if it may feel like a long-shot. You never know what will land!

Alice Yu Hua, PhD:

Graduate Research: I examined how emotions relate to brain health (how aspects of emotional functioning break down in neurodegenerative diseases) and mental health (how individual differences in emotional functioning relate to mental health symptoms in familial caregivers of individuals with dementia).

Post-Graduation: I'll be a postdoctoral clinical psychology fellow at UCSF, where I'll be conducting neuropsychological assessments, providing therapy interventions, and researching the neurobiological changes of emotion in neurodegenerative diseases.

Advice: Community and connection are everything.



Support more cutting-edge psychology research [HERE](#)

2021 Commencement

PhD Graduates



Amanda D. Perez, PhD:

Graduate Research: During my PhD my research revolved around the causes, consequences, and remedies to racial biases. My dissertation looked at a new way to analyze implicit racial biases as well as the predictive utility of this method.

Post-Graduation: Post-PhD I have accepted a Post-Doctoral position working with Dr. Amani Allen at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health. We'll be doing research around the themes of racial inequities in health as well as the health impact of racial discrimination on minoritized individuals.

Advice: Find a non-academic hobby and allow yourself time for self-care & to unwind. I learned to knit & crochet during grad school and found it meditative.

Jordan A. Tharp, PhD:

Graduate Research: My research circled around the effects of social power, power roles, and dominance on emotion regulation, emotional expression, and impulsive behavior in the context of emotions. I explored different mechanisms, such as approach and inhibition and role-specific norms, that drive these patterns.

Post-Graduation: Starting July 2021, I will be a Researcher at Verily Health Platforms, a life sciences Google-affiliated organization focused on using technology to improve human health.

Advice: It goes by so fast -- I would advise to start study planning and IRB approval your first year if possible! I would also focus on topics you are *truly* excited about and interested in - you will be investing your life into them for years (and not do research to get a manuscript...). Lastly, from day 1, establish *very* clear work - life boundaries (such as no emails after a certain time) and (literally) block off your calendar for things outside of academics.



2021 Commencement

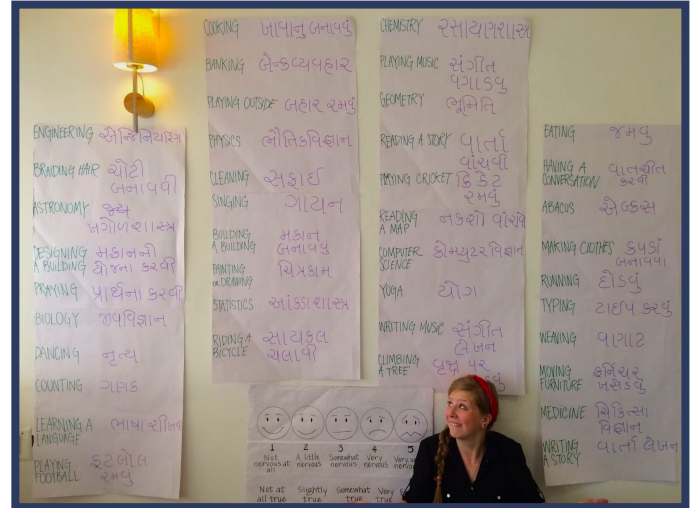
PhD Graduates

Rachel A. Jansen, PhD:

Graduate Research: I aimed to gain a full picture of how people perceive math and how these perceptions develop by investigating how people assess their ability in math compared to other domains, describe their feelings of belonging in math, and conceive of the meaning of "math."

Post-Graduation: I'm working at NWEA as a Learning and Assessment Engineer where I will apply my modeling work on metacognition to actual student data and help improve educational assessments and the information we can glean from them.

Advice: Getting a PhD is hard...and I didn't actually feel truly competent until maybe my 4th year. I urge anyone starting this sort of program to prepare for this by making sure you have support (e.g., therapist, regular calls/hangouts with friends that you never skip even when stressed) and are engaged in things that can both distract you and remind you of your competence...



Adam J. Krause, PhD:

Graduate Research: My PhD research examined the interplay between the brain and the body following sleep deprivation.

Post-Graduation: I will be doing a postdoc at Stanford at the Computational Psychiatry, Neuroimaging, and Sleep Lab.

Advice: My advice to incoming graduate students is to stay modest and patient towards your work, and of course, to get enough sleep.

Congratulations to all our Ph.D. Graduates: Nicholas Angelides, PhD; Hannah G. Bosley, PhD; Frederick Callaway, PhD; Zhimin Chen, PhD; Ruthe Jane Foushee, PhD; Neta A. Gotlieb, PhD; Angela J. Johnson, PhD; Katharine Chiyono Kimura, PhD; Enitan T. Marcelle, PhD; Susan S. Mauskopf, PhD; Christina M. Merrick, PhD; Megan Elizabeth Norr, PhD; Vinitha N. Rangarajan, PhD; Jonathon Wendall Reeves, PhD; Sophia A. Sanborn, PhD

Publications



Emotional empathy associated with worse outcomes for caregivers

As dementia prevalence increases worldwide, the mental health of caregivers has become an increasingly pressing public health concern. **Alice Hua, PhD** with **Bob Levenson, PhD** studied caregiver emotional functioning and asked whether cognitive empathy (knowing how someone feels) and emotional empathy (sharing in how someone feels), related to caregiver mental health symptoms. They found that greater emotional, but not cognitive, empathy was associated with worse mental health in caregivers, even when accounting for other known risk factors. This suggests that emotional empathy may be an important risk indicator in caregiving and a target for future interventions.

[Published](#) in *Clinical Psychological Science* in Mar. 2021



RESEARCH DISCOVERIES

Demystifying the link between relationships and sleep

Does the quality and quantity of social relationships affect sleep? A recent systematic review published in *Sleep Medicine Reviews* by **Belinda Carillo** in **Serena Chen, PhD's** lab points to yes. Their review, spanning over 200 articles, summarizes a clear link between quality of sleep and the presence and valence of broad social ties. Importantly, this bidirectional relationship persists across the lifespan and has been observed within romantic, family, and work domains.

[Published](#) in *Sleep Medicine Reviews* in Jan. 2021



Do you feel what I feel?

How do we know what another person is feeling? Do our physiological responses (think sweaty palms or fast heart beat) clue us in? **Felicia Zerwas** with **Iris Mauss, PhD** sought to answer these questions in a recent study published in *Biological Psychology*. Friend pairs were placed in a stress-inducing speech task while the researchers recorded physiological and subjective experience metrics. Pairs who had better understanding of each other's experiences also showed more similarity in their physiological responses. This suggests that physiological responses play a key role in our understanding of others' feelings.

[Published](#) in *Biological Psychology* in April 2021

Publications

RESEARCH DISCOVERIES



A key player in motor learning

We all know that “practice makes perfect”, but how does motor learning (reducing errors through practice) actually help advance a skill like playing basketball? Past work has argued that experiencing a *visual error*, such as a mismatch between the basketball and the hoop, helps to drive motor learning. However, **Jonathan Tsay** and **Rich Ivry, PhD** used a [novel experiment](#) to highlight an alternative: that *proprioceptive errors*, such as a mismatch between shooting posture and expected posture, play a key role in establishing motor skills.

[Published](#) in *Journal of Neurophysiology* in April 2021

Understanding the Dunning - Kruger effect

The ability to assess our own performance is a fundamental skill, but people often misjudge their own ability, particularly in cases where they perform poorly. To better understand this phenomenon **Rachel Jansen, PhD** with **Tom Griffiths, PhD** conducted a large-scale replication study of these performance effects, and developed a model to explore how prior beliefs about ability and skill at estimating correctness influence self-assessment. In a study published in *Nature Human Behaviour*, they found that people who did worse on grammar and logical reasoning tasks were also less able to estimate whether they were correct. This suggests that poor self-assessment may be driven by difficulties evaluating performance and not prior self-beliefs about ability.

[Published](#) in *Nature Human Behaviour* in Feb. 2021



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