

Berkeley Psychology INSIGHT

Letter from the chair

Dear Alumni and Friends,

We had a busy Spring semester, with more faculty, students, and staff bustling around campus than we've seen since the start of the pandemic back in 2020. This Spring semester, we also witnessed many fun and exciting "first's":

- Our Psychology Department ranked **FIRST** in the latest 2023 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, maintaining our top-ranked place from the last set of rankings!
- On May 13, we held our **FIRST** department-wide, in-person gathering and celebration since the beginning of the pandemic – good music, good food, great company!
- On May 19, we held our **FIRST** in-person commencement ceremony since 2019, celebrating three years of graduates!



We also had the pleasure of several special lectures (videos [here](#)), including an eye-opening joint presentation by Prof. Emeritus Irv Zucker and former Ph.D. student Anneliese Beery on the pervasive neglect of females in biomedical research, and a fascinating lecture by Prof. Joni Wallis on taking a brain-machine interface approach to understanding the neuronal mechanisms underlying value-based decision-making. We also continued our celebration of our 100th year anniversary, beginning in January with a special presentation by Prof. Jack Gallant on mapping the brain, and ending the Spring term in April with a special panel of faculty speakers (Profs. Robert Knight, Sheri Johnson, and Jason Okonofua) on how Berkeley Psychology in the 21st century helps solve big problems (videos [here](#)).

While Covid-19 continues to be a part of our lives, along with the psychological, financial, and social challenges it brings, there are signs of resilience and hope around us. We are seeing more smiling (mask-less) faces than we've seen in years, and our faculty and graduate students [continue to win awards](#) for teaching, research, and mentoring.

Looking ahead, Fall 2022 is full of promise, as we adjust to the new normal and plan events for the second half of our 100th year anniversary. As always, we have much work to do – in our classrooms, labs, and society at large, doing our part to find ways to make the world safer, more equitable, more peaceful, and more sustainable.

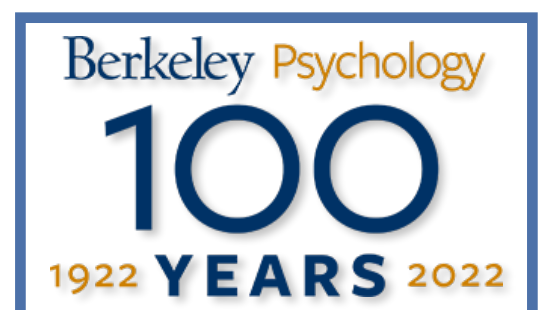
Best wishes for a restorative and fun summer. Look forward to reconnecting in Fall 2022!

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](#).

Serena Chen
Professor and Chair



Department Highlights

A Lasting Legacy: Bob Knight and Donatella Scabini's generous gift to graduates students

Robert (Bob) Knight, Professor of Psychology, and his wife Donatella Scabini, Ph.D, have generously bequeathed half a million dollars to support graduate students in Psychology and Neuroscience at Berkeley. Bob has been a prominent member of the Psychology department and UC community for several decades and has mentored several dozens of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows. Knight hopes that this gift - named Virginia and Robert Knight in honor of his parents, who were strong advocates for education - will carve a path for future members of the community to support graduate student research.



Read the full announcement [here](#).

Meet our newest faculty members: Keanan Joyner and Bill Thompson



Keanan Joyner (Clinical Science area)

Keanan Joyner is studying what puts people at risk for alcohol and drug addiction, and broader externalizing psychopathology. To do this work, the Clinical Research on Externalizing and Addiction Mechanisms (C.R.E.A.M.) Lab uses a variety of methodologies, including electroencephalography (EEG)/event-related potentials (ERPs), ecological momentary assessment (EMA), behavioral genetics, and advanced quantitative approaches. He hopes this work will contribute to early identification and prevention programs to address harmful substance use before it escalates into an addiction.



Bill Thompson (Cognition area)

Bill Thompson studies how complex social networks shape human thought processes and cognitive diversity, from reasoning and decision-making to creativity and language. The Experimental Cognition laboratory combines experimental methods with machine learning and mathematical modeling to develop more equitable social networking algorithms that better support collective learning and well being. In the process, we gain deeper insight into the mechanisms that create human knowledge across generations, and the critical role of human interaction in higher cognitive function.

Publications

RESEARCH DISCOVERIES



Reframing DBT across cultures

While psychotherapeutic treatments have been popular in treating various mental health disorders, researchers continue to find ways to improve them. For example, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) is a leading treatment for suicidal behavior and severe emotion dysregulation and may require cultural adaptations such as translation and the addition of culturally congruent metaphors in order to be effective and relevant for all racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. **Stephanie Haft**, **Sinclair O'Grady**, with **Nancy Liu, PhD** addressed the gap of DBT cultural adaptation by reviewing the literature and providing recommendations in recent work published in the [*Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*](#).



Stress Effects on Pregnancy Outcomes

Psychological stress leading up to and during pregnancy, is associated with increased risk. Yet, the relationship between hormones involved in psychological stress and the hormones responsible for pregnancy remains unclear. In a paper published in [*Frontiers in Integrative Physiology*](#), past and current students with **Lance Kriegsfeld, PhD** including **Neta Gotleib, PhD**, **Madison Browne**, and **Savannah Bever**, found that stress looks biologically different in pregnant versus non-pregnant individuals and that exposure to chronic stress could delay fetal development. Importantly, this effect changed throughout the course of pregnancy underlying the importance of prenatal support across the full term.

Openness to experience is key to developing relationships across races



Who is more likely to have different-race friends and acquaintances: people who are kind and nice or people who are open-minded and curious? In a study published in the [*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*](#) conducted by recent graduate **Stephen Antonoplis, PhD**, with **Oliver P. John, PhD**, it was found that being open-minded and curious, not kind and nice, predicted having different-race friends and acquaintances. Interestingly, other core personality traits did not alter the likelihood of this kind of relationship. Overall, developing cross-race relationships depends primarily on an individual's openness and curiosity.

Publications



The mere state of being viral can make fake news more convincing, even in the absence of direct evidence. Read the popular science write up from Berkeley News [here](#).

RESEARCH DISCOVERIES

Belief in online misinformation swayed by popularity

Understanding why people are so susceptible to online misinformation is more important than ever. One of the potential reasons why individuals may succumb to misinformation is that people may establish their own beliefs based on their sense of what others believe. In two studies published in [Open Mind](#) using real-world pseudoscientific and conspiratorial statements, **Evan Orticio**, and **Louis Martí, PhD**, with **Celeste Kidd, PhD** found causal evidence that when a belief is seen as more popular, it's also seen as more believable. This otherwise rational mechanism can spell trouble on social media, where misinformation is more likely to go viral than carefully researched claims.

Two systems govern practiced actions

"Practice makes perfect" refers to the idea that repeating a certain movement (i.e., swinging a tennis racket) biases future movements in the practiced direction. In a recent publication published in the [Proceedings of Biological Sciences](#), **Jonathon Tsay** with **Rich Ivry, PhD**, revealed two distinct processes that contribute to this type of learning. One process is flexible, enabling us to rapidly enact habitual, well-rehearsed actions; the second process is rigid and hard to turn-off, pushing future actions towards the practiced behavior. By characterizing these distinct processes, it could be possible to design better training programs for athletes and musicians, or to establish more efficacious physical rehabilitation programs for patients with movement disorders.



Naomi Osaka takes a swing in 2020. While clearly an expert, which kind of system is Naomi using to govern her behavior?

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

Honors and Awards

FACULTY

Joseph Campos, professor emeritus of Psychology, received the [Distinguished Contribution Award](#) for Excellence in the Study of Human Infancy from the International Congress of Infant Studies.

Serena Chen, professor of Psychology, was awarded an American Psychological Association [Mentor Award](#) for excellence in leading and shaping the careers of students and colleagues.

Jan Engelmann, assistant professor of Psychology, received an award from the [Society of Hellman Fellows](#), a historic UC endowed program that provides funding for promising assistant professors.

Rich Ivry, professor of Psychology, was nominated to the [American Academy of Arts & Sciences](#), an institution to excellence across academic disciplines.

Dacher Keltner, professor of Psychology, was nominated for a [Webby award](#), for his work on the [Science of Happiness Podcast](#), a podcast that now has over a hundred episodes.

Nancy Liu, professor of Psychology, received the [2021 Walfish Award](#) from the American Psychological Association for work promoting multicultural frameworks in therapies.

Bill Thompson, our newest assistant professor of Psychology, published a paper in *Science* this year that he had started as a UCB postdoc. Read the paper [here](#) or read the [popular science write-up](#).

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Monica Ellwood-Lowe, Development PhD student, led a paper with **Silvia Bunge** that ranked among the top 25 Social Sciences and Human



Find all the episodes of the award-winning Science of Happiness podcast and tips on how to live a more engaged and meaningful life [here](#).

Behaviour articles published in *Nature Human Behaviour* in 2021. The paper, entitled "Brain network coupling associated with cognitive performance varies as a function of a child's environment in the ABCD study," can be found [here](#).

Ruthe Foushee, PhD, who graduated from our PhD program several years ago, won the 2022 [Jean Piaget Society Dissertation Award](#) for her dissertation entitled, "Self-directed learning in language development: interactions of linguistic complexity, learner attention, and language socialization" with **Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton** and **Ozlem Ayduk**.

Manon Ironside, Clinical Science PhD student, was one of 12 student instructors from across all the university to receive the [Teaching Effectiveness Award](#). The title of Manon's essay is, "From Skilled Test Takers to Budding Scientists: Overhauling Assessment in Cognitive Neuroscience."

Erika Roach, Clinical Science PhD student, received the 2021 Society for a Science of Clinical Psychology [Outstanding Teaching Award](#), for creativity and excellence in clinical science instruction.

2022 Commencement

PhD Graduates

CONGRATULATIONS to all of our Ph.D. GRADUATES! Read on to learn about their graduate research, their post-graduation plans, and some advice they have for future graduate students.



Stephen Antonoplis, PhD:

Graduate Research: I studied the interplay of personality and social structure, examining how people shape and are shaped by the environments they live in. I have worked on the development of racially diverse personal networks, the impact of social and economic circumstances on goal development, and ways to improve the measurement and conceptualization of psychological and social factors.

Post-Graduation: In July, I will begin a post-doc at the Department of Medical Social Sciences in the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University. I will spend June vacationing in Europe.

Advice: Have fun and avoid working weekends!!

Vanessa Castro, PhD:

Graduate Research: My research examined whether people can accurately discern how much someone else feels authentic. We investigated this in couples interacting with their romantic partners and with outside observers making judgments about strangers.

Post-Graduation: I'll be starting a career as a User Experience Researcher after I graduate and I currently have a full-time offer at Amazon.

Advice: My advice is to set clear and defined timelines with your advisors that both of you agree upon. Having due dates that are placed earlier than university or grant deadlines will help you make sure you're progressing through your program on time, and make it less likely that you'll be thrown off by surprises.



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

2022 Commencement

PhD Graduates

Helena Karnilowicz, 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 am the head of user research at NewsBreak, a digital media startup company in Mountain View, CA.

Advice: My advice for future graduate students is to lean on your friends and ultimately do what you think is best. What you do in grad school should help you figure out what kind of career you want to have and prepare you for that career. You are the best judge of whether your research, classes, extracurriculars, etc. fulfill this purpose. And your friends will help you get through the slog that is grad school.

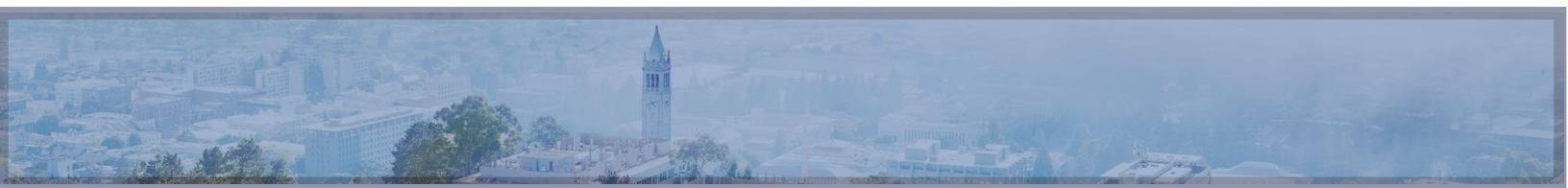


Maedhbh King, PhD:

Graduate Research: The human cerebellum is a fascinating but under-appreciated brain structure. I built maps and models of this "little brain" to understand its involvement in important cognitive functions like learning and memory.

Post-Graduation: I'll be taking up a position as an Integrative Computational Neuroscience (ICoN) Fellow at the McGovern Institute at MIT in late summer 2022. Before I do that, I'll be hopping on my bike and cycling from SF - LA, a trip I've been wanting to take for the last 5 years.

Advice: Find your people and prioritize your relationships with them, they will see you through the good and bad times.



2022 Commencement

PhD Graduates



Samuel J. Cheyette, PhD:

Graduate Research: I explored how people's visual systems determine how many things there are in a scene, using behavioral experiments (e.g., eye-tracking) and computational modeling.

Post-Graduation: I'm doing a postdoc at MIT.

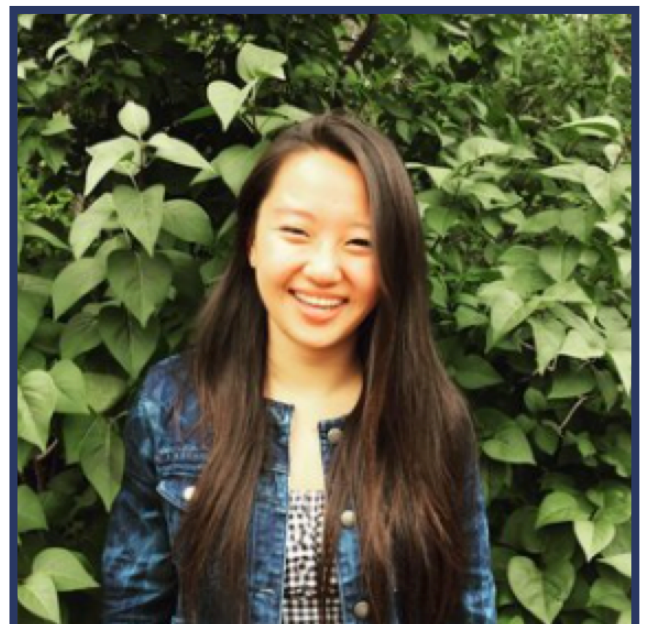
Advice: Put things on your calendar.

Rebecca Zhu, PhD:

Graduate Research: My research investigates when and how children acquire and learn from symbolic systems, such as language and pictures. My dissertation investigates the mechanisms underlying children's acquisition of metaphors based on abstract, functional similarities (i.e., "clouds are sponges"). I find that children as young as four years of age not only understand, but also learn from, metaphors.

Post-Graduation: I was lucky to receive a research grant from the Jacobs Foundation and Aga Khan Foundation to continue my research on children's acquisition of symbolic systems. Next year, I will be a post-doctoral fellow at UC Berkeley, conducting fieldwork research in Mombasa, Kenya to investigate when and how children across cultures and contexts understand pictures.

Advice: Be kind, set boundaries, advocate for yourself and others, and eat before drinking wine. Have fun!



Want to keep up with our
students?

Be sure to follow us on Twitter!

2022 Commencement

PhD Graduates



Paul Connor, PhD



Minha Cho, PhD



Louis Marti, PhD



Sophia Sanborn, PhD



Aya Inamori Williams, PhD



Elizabeth Yartzev, PhD

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:
anya.essi@berkeley.edu

Community Outreach

Cleaning up The Bay



For Earth Day, 2022, around 20 graduate students, postdocs, faculty, and staff (subset of group pictured on the right) came together to help keep our beloved Bay clean and free of trash. We met at the beautiful Albany Bulb (pictured on the left) and collectively picked up close to 200 pounds of litter and waste. We're grateful to live in such a beautiful area and are dedicated to keeping Berkeley and the Bay to be enjoyed for generations to come!

Editor-in-Chief, Director of Design: Juliana Chase

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Thanks to Christina Merrick, PhD for her lasting contribution to our newsletter.

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