

Letter from the chair

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Time flies when one is busy! Much has happened that I'm excited to share with you.

A time of growth

We have had an exceptionally strong recruitment season this year. Since I took over as Chair, we have hired 4 new faculty! Amitai Shenhav (Cognitive Neuroscience), Mariam Aly (Cognition), Jasmin Brooks (Clinical Science), and Giovanni (Gio) Ramos (Clinical Science). Amitai and Mariam will be starting at Berkeley as early as this July. Of the two new faculty recruited by my predecessor, Serena Chen, Gul Dolen started in January 2024 and Hedy Kober will be joining us starting in July 2024. All in all we will have 4 new colleagues to welcome to our community this Fall. Jasmin and Gio will both be joining us in July 2025.

We will also have 18 new graduate students joining our program this Fall, the largest incoming cohort of recent years. We have collectively awarded over a dozen years of academic fellowships to the incoming cohort, which was enabled by the generosity of the Graduate Division. Many thanks go out to our Dean Lisa Garcia-Bedolla.

Some goodbyes

Despite this wonderful growth in our ranks, we are also saddened to know that 4 of our colleagues, Joni Wallis, Frederic Theunissen, David Foster, and Jack Gallant will be moving to the new Neuroscience Department come July 1st. In addition, Ann Kring will be retiring at the end of June and Jason Okonofua is moving to Brown University. They will be sorely missed; nevertheless, we wish them the best in their new endeavors!

Other noteworthy highlights

We have had another successful Big Give this year. With Kathy Knopoff's generous offer of matching funds, and with the contribution of many of you, we were able to raise over \$20,000 for the department. These funds will be used to support our graduate students. Our graduate program is graduating 20 students this year – the largest single cohort to leave the department in recent history (see page 5). We are excited for them, and proud to always call them Cal Bears.

Fiat Lux

In the 2024 rankings of the U.S. News & World Report, UC-Berkeley was again the No.1 Public University in the country, and our undergraduate program was ranked the No. 1 Psychology Program. Our graduate program was also tied with Stanford as No. 1 and each subarea was individually ranked within the top 3 in the country. We have a lot to be proud of.

Roll on, you Psychology Bears! I look forward to seeing you all in Fall 2024 after a restorative summer....

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 [Twitter \(X\)](#), and our [Department website](#).

Ozlem Ayduk
Professor and Chair



Honors and Awards

FACULTY

Iris Mauss, Professor of Psychology, has been awarded the [2024 Society for Affective Science Mentorship Award](#) for her unparalleled devotion to the career development of her mentees.

Robert Knight, Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience, has received the [2024 Award for Distinguished Scientific Contributions](#) from the American Psychological Association (APA). This award recognizes senior scientists for distinguished theoretical or empirical contributions to basic research in psychology.

Jan Engelmann, Professor of Psychology, received the [2024 Early Career Award in Developmental Science](#) from the Jean Piaget Society. This award recognizes outstanding career contributions in Developmental Psychology.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Emily Rosenthal, a Clinical Science PhD student, has received the [2024 Philanthropic Educational Organization Scholar Award](#). This award provides substantial merit-based awards for women of the U.S. and Canada who are pursuing a doctoral-level degree.

STAFF

Harumi Quinones, Student Services Director, has been awarded the [2024 Chancellor's Outstanding Staff Award](#). This award recognized staff members who demonstrate excellence in performing their job duties and make significant contributions to the UC Berkeley campus community. Harumi was also awarded with the [2024 Social Sciences Distinguished Service Award](#). The Distinguished Service Award recognizes a staff member who has made extraordinary service contributions to their department and to the UC Berkeley campus.

Jefferson Ortega, third-year PhD student, and **David Whitney**, Professor of Psychology, are the recipients of the [Brain Foundation grant](#) to improve emotion recognition in individuals with autism by increasing their ability to focus on important social cues during social interactions.

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 [here](#). (One-time gifts can also be made.)

For more information or questions, contact Anya Essiounina:
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Publications

Emotion regulation in dementia caregivers and the role of gender

Caring for a loved one with dementia can be rewarding yet often leads to increased depression among caregivers. Consequently, understanding how caregivers regulate their emotions is crucial for supporting their mental health. In a recent study published in [Dementia and Geriatric Cognitive Disorders](#), [Breanna Bullard](#) and [Robert Levenson, PhD](#) examined the effectiveness of emotion regulation strategies on caregivers. They found that for women, but not for men, cognitive reappraisal (thinking about a situation in a different way) was linked to fewer depressive symptoms. This finding highlights the need for future research to consider individual differences, like gender, when identifying emotion regulation strategies in order to best support the mental well-being of dementia caregivers.



Current Biology

Disagreement fosters curiosity, learning

Disagreement often carries a negative connotation, but could it also lead to positive outcomes? In a study published in [Child Development](#), [Antonia Langenhoff](#), [Mahesh Srinivasan, PhD](#), and [Jan Engelmann, PhD](#), found that disagreements can have important positive consequences for cognitive development. Specifically, preschoolers who had disagreements with other children while learning to operate a novel toy were less confident in their initial beliefs, and more curious to determine the true answer, than children who experienced agreement. These findings highlight that disagreement may be a valuable tool for fostering curiosity and learning in adolescence.

RESEARCH DISCOVERIES



Dementia and Geriatric Cognitive Disorders

Advanced feedback enhances sensorimotor adaptation

Visual feedback is essential for learning and improving motor skills. However, it is unclear when visual feedback should be presented to observers in order to optimize motor learning. In a recent study published in [Current Biology](#), [Tianhe Wang](#), [Rich Ivry, PhD](#), and colleagues show that providing feedback during motor movement enhances adaptation and reduces motor error compared to providing feedback at the end of the movement. This result suggests that the motor system can generate a prediction of the motor consequence before the movement is completed. Thus, learning is increased not when the feedback is synchronized with the movement, but when the feedback is aligned with the internal prediction of motor outcome.



Child Development

Publications

RESEARCH DISCOVERIES

Small moments of self-compassionate touch improves emotional wellbeing

When facing mistakes or failures, do you blame yourself or feel isolated in your experience? These reactions are common but can be shifted through self-compassion — treating yourself as a caring friend would. In their study published in [Behaviour Research and Therapy](#), [Eli Susman, PhD](#), [Serena Chen, PhD](#), [Ann Kring, PhD](#), and [Allison Harvey, PhD](#), evaluated a 20-second daily self-compassion “micro-practice.” Participants who were guided to place their hands over their heart and belly while thinking kind thoughts such as “How can I be a friend to myself in this moment?” experienced improved self-compassion, emotional wellbeing, and reduced stress with daily practice. Daily micro-practices like these have the potential for augmenting single-session interventions and offering help when more time-intensive approaches may be less accessible.



[Behaviour Research and Therapy](#)



[The Journal of Attention Disorders](#)



Mapping the dimensions of ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is characterized by high levels of inattention (such as forgetfulness and disorganization) and hyperactivity/impulsivity (such as interrupting and fidgeting), and is believed to also involve difficulty in regulating emotions. In their study published in [The Journal of Attention Disorders](#), [Emily Rosenthal](#) and [Sheri Johnson, PhD](#), in collaboration with researchers at the University of Miami, explored how ADHD symptoms relate to emotion-related impulsivity. They discovered that inattention was related to dysregulated thoughts and motivations during strong emotions, while hyperactivity/impulsivity aligned with dysregulated behavior. These associations were consistent regardless of the presence of anxiety, depression, or behavioral problems, indicating that different ADHD symptoms are associated with different forms of emotion-related impulsivity, even in individuals without co-occurring emotional difficulties.

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

2024 Commencement

PhD Graduates

CONGRATULATIONS to all of our PhD GRADUATES!

Read on to learn about their graduate research, their post-graduation plans, and some advice they have for current and future graduate students.

Gerald Young, PhD:

Graduate Research: My research investigated how social (e.g., social identity, social integration into groups) and affective processes (e.g., emotion regulation, emotion beliefs) relate to mental health across and within diverse populations to inform how to build inclusive environments in which all people are mentally healthy and thrive.

Post-Graduation: Starting this fall, I will be a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Diversity Science at Ohio University.

Advice: Have a structured routine/schedule that you adhere to for working and figure out a work/life balance that works best for you.



Lauren Weittenhiller, PhD:

Graduate Research: I examined the social and emotional challenges of people who experience psychosis. Specifically, my work identified factors that limit social engagement and how people with psychosis respond to being socially excluded.

Post-Graduation: I'll be a post-doctoral fellow in the MIRECC Advanced Fellowship in Mental Illness Research and Treatment program at the VA Greater Los Angeles, where I will be researching the community integration of people who experience psychosis and/or homelessness.

Advice: When your self-confidence wavers, find the person who most believes in you, and allow yourself to see through their eyes.



Want to keep up with our students?

Be sure to [follow us on Twitter!](#)

2024 Commencement

PhD Graduates

Devon Sandel-Fernandez, PhD:

Graduate Research: I study impulsivity, behaviors people use to regulate emotions (like self-harm and substance use), and how these behaviors unfold across time in everyday life.

Post-Graduation: I'll be a postdoctoral fellow developing technologies to improve mental health treatment with the Behavioral Research in Technology and Engineering (BRiTE) Center at the University of Washington. I also consult for digital health companies on the use of evidence-based clinical practice and science.

Advice: Take weekends off and get outside often! Your research will fill all the time that you give it, so pick a schedule that's sustainable long-term and stick to your fun plans as much as your work.



Everett Wetchler, PhD:

Graduate Research: We know that human connection is important to our happiness, but so far psychology doesn't have great ways to measure it. The focus of my research is to bring theory and measurement to "social health," building a more nuanced understanding of our social needs, how they affect our happiness, and how to improve them.

Post-Graduation: Post-doc (here at Berkeley) working on well-being with city governments. I'll also be teaching (which I love) - primarily statistics and data science.

Advice: Advisors have a lot going on, so they usually won't be diving deep into your research data or statistical models with you. Go out of your way to create projects where you can collaborate closely with other graduate students. It makes everything better - both the research and your own mood. This is surprisingly hard to make happen, but I can't understate how much it will help you.



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2024 Commencement

PhD Graduates

Joseph Ocampo, PhD

Graduate Research: I studied how specific emotional experiences relate to well-being and the role of identity or culture. For example, I developed a measure of emotion that explains more about different facets of well-being like social connection and how culture plays a role in emotional experience by influencing our appraisals of factors like control or safety.

Post-Graduation: I will begin a postdoc at the Department of Psychology in the College of Sciences at San Diego State University.

Advice: Start writing applications to academic jobs early! It took me a long time to make my first application decent. Writing about my work and what I aim to do also clarified a lot about what I want to do.



Elena Leib, PhD

Graduate Research: I study learning and reasoning and have focused on math and science education. For my dissertation, I studied how we strategically use space and spatial tools, such as graphs and data visualizations, to support our thinking and reasoning, and how we can help students learn to use these tools more effectively.

Post-Graduation: This summer, I will be starting as a Research Fellow for PERTS (The Project for Education Research that Scales), a non-profit education research and development organization. I also plan to continue teaching statistics and R (a programming language used for data analysis) to undergraduate students, which was one of my favorite parts of graduate school!

Advice: The path is always winding. You don't always know where you're going or how you'll get there, but you are stronger and more resilient than you can ever know. Keep following what excites you and you'll always be doing something that you love!



2024 Commencement

PhD Graduates



Juliana Chase, PhD:

Graduate Research: I used mice to examine the role of autism risk genes in associative learning and cortical connectivity. My work established a context-dependent pattern of increased learning in animals that had mutations, underscoring the importance of emphasizing strengths and weaknesses in Autism.

Post-Graduation: First, a long vacation that will include as many outdoor activities I can pack in. Next, I'll move to NYC to start a postdoc in neural circuits, extending my PhD work, while continuing to be involved in both science communication and neuroethics.

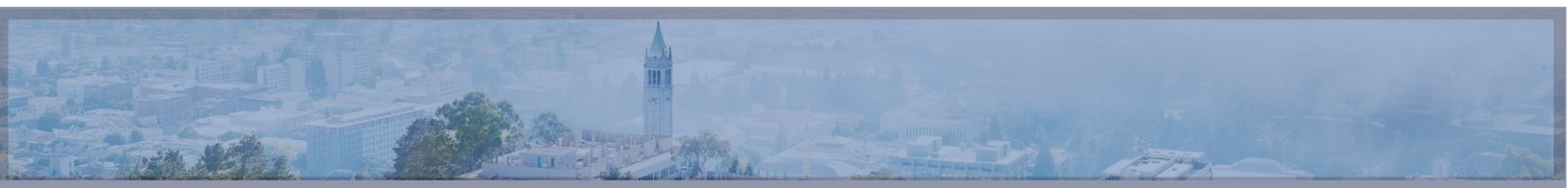
Advice: Make friends with other graduate students and talk to them – graduate school is hard and surrounding yourself with people who understand what you're going through is indispensable. Get out and run the east bay hills - it's incredible (shoot me an email if you need trail recs!).

Ozge Ugurlu, PhD:

Graduate Research: I examine how self-control is linked to affective processes, such as emotion recognition and regulation, as well as their joint implications for socioemotional functioning, well-being, and mental health. My research also examines the role of positive emotions, specifically awe, in fostering social connections.

Post-Graduation: I will continue my training as a postdoctoral scholar at UC Berkeley. I will investigate the causes and effects of loneliness and implement global and cost-effective interventions to mitigate it.

Advice: Do not fret if you feel you do not have it all figured out in your early years. Stay curious and open. Your researcher identity will find you as you will naturally gravitate towards it.



2024 Commencement

PhD Graduates



Milena Rmus, PhD:

Graduate Research: My research centers on translating cognitive theories into streamlined computational models (mostly reinforcement learning), with parameters that quantify how people process information.

Post-Graduation: Doing research at the Helmholtz Institute for Human-Centered AI

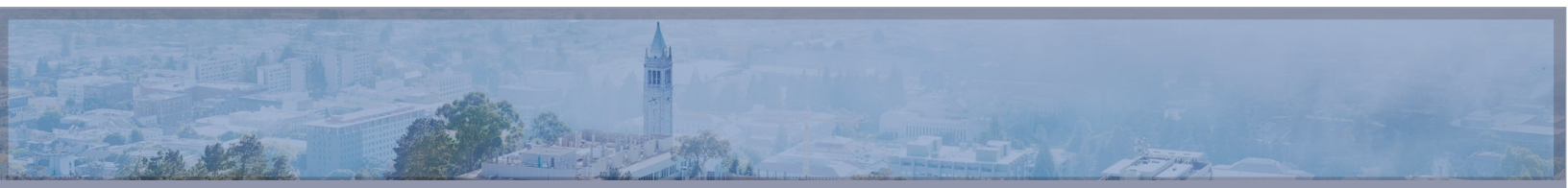
Advice: Go on side quests. Chill with cats.

Madison Frances Browne, PhD:

Graduate Research: I applied mouse models to examine the importance of lighting environment on brain development, cognitive functioning, and healthy aging. My findings highlight the importance of stable daily light exposure in neurobehavioral development and a role for therapeutic lighting in the treatment of age-associated cognitive decline.

Post-Graduation: I'm currently on the market for a job in science writing. I hope to work with an organization passionate about alternative therapies for psychiatric disorders and brain diseases, and to increase public understanding of the relationship between physical and mental health.

Advice: It is likely that you will enter a cycle of chronic stress during grad school, so building resiliency and healthy coping skills is essential to preserving your wellbeing. I discovered meditation in my last year and it changed the game--I recommend finding small but regular moments of joy outside of work, whatever that looks like for you.



2024 Commencement

PhD Graduates



Gold Okafor, PhD:

Graduate Research: I investigate racial and gender disparities through emotion research. My research questions include "how does the race and gender of an emotional person influence the judgments of the emotional person?" and "Are emotion regulation psychological assessments generalizable and valid across different cultures?"

Post-Graduation: I'll be starting a postdoctoral position at Yale University, which is a fantastic opportunity to further my research in social psychology. I am also waiting to hear back from another potential offer, and I am carefully considering all my options before making a decision on my post-graduation plans.

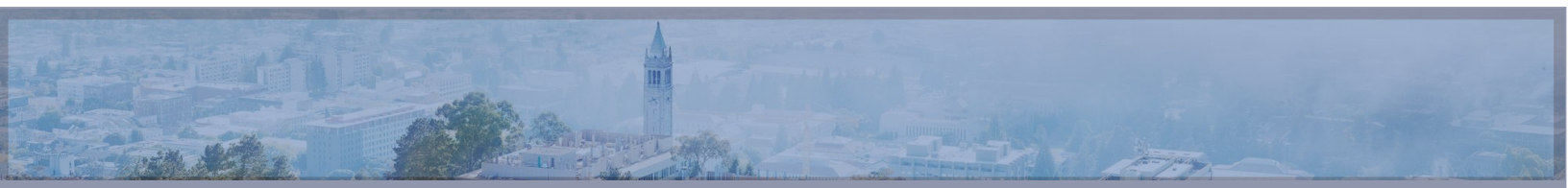
Advice: 1) Nothing in grad school is more important than your health, happiness, or anything else you want to prioritize. 2) It is not a competition. Every other person is on their own separate, incomparable research journey. You are only competing against yourself and that's great because you are the best you in the world.

Ashley E. Halkett, PhD:

Graduate Research: I studied sexual behavior and health outcomes in adolescent girls and young women with ADHD.

Post-Graduation: Still TBD, but my goal is to work as a behavioral research scientist at a research institution or non-profit.

Advice: Graduate school is not pre-life, so don't put other important events or priorities on hold! And get outside as much as possible, preferably with your fellow grad students - commiserating makes the years go faster!



2024 Commencement

PhD Graduates

Jennifer Senta, PhD:

Graduate Research: My research uses computational models of algorithmic processes to investigate how psychopathology influences the brain at a mechanistic level.

Post-Graduation: I'll be starting a postdoctoral research fellowship at the Helen Wills Neuroscience Institute at UC Berkeley to investigate the neural correlates of my computational research using MRI.

Advice: Don't spend any time or energy comparing yourself to other PhD candidates; your journey is your own!

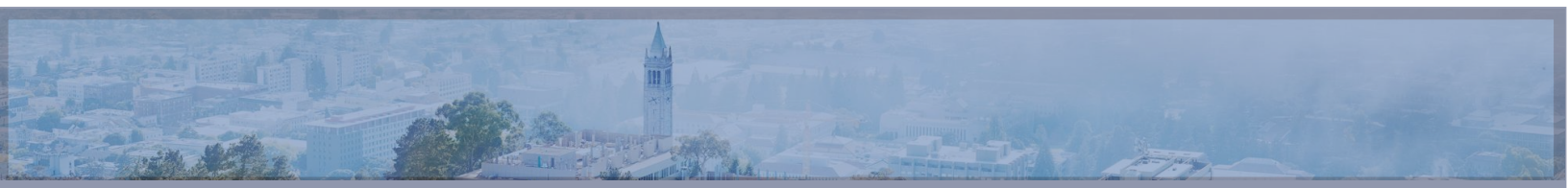


Undergraduate Student Awards

Patrick George Kelly was awarded the Departmental Citation in Psychology! 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.

Wenqing Cao, Kim Christine Pape, & Candance Patrice Sorensen have been awarded the Warner Brown Memorial Prize! This prize is awarded annually to graduating seniors in the Department who have shown great promise in psychological research.

Laura Cho, Miranda Leigh Shen, & Katrina Wong have been awarded the Swan Research Prize! This prize is awarded annually to outstanding undergraduate researchers to support their honors projects.



2024 Commencement

PhD Graduates

CONGRATULATIONS to all of our PhD GRADUATES!



Antonia Frederike
Langenhoff, PhD



Eliza Kosoy, PhD



Laura Guzman, PhD



Laura Henry, PhD



Mari Knuth-
Bouracee, PhD



Peter Soyster, PhD



Stephanie Haft, PhD



Suzie Shdo, PhD

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