

Psychology Department Faculty 2022-2023

Cay Anderson-Hanley

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My research interests lie primarily in the realm of clinical neuropsychology and health psychology. In particular, I am interested in the neuropsychological effects of exercise for older adults, especially as it might relate to the maintenance of cognitive and emotional functioning, and the prevention of dementia. Recent studies completed in my lab indicate the executive function benefits of both strengthening exercise as well as virtual reality- enhanced exercise (cybercycling or pedaling & playing the iPad-based iPACES neuro-exergame) for older adults. Other recent research out of my lab has examined the effects of therapy groups for older adults, expressive writing for the emotional and physical well-being of dementia caregivers, and the benefits of exercise in schizophrenia and autism.

George Bizer

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As a social psychologist, I have broad research interests that include marketing and advertising, persuasion, perceptions of fairness and unfairness, attitude measurement, and social norms.

Zachary Buchin

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My research on human memory is broadly focused on applying cognitive principles to educational practice. I am particularly interested in retrieval-based learning and the testing effect, in which retrieval practice (e.g., recall, flashcards, practice questions, etc.) benefits later memory to a greater degree than more typical study-based strategies (e.g., restudying, rereading, copying, etc.). Specifically, my research examines: (1) how these memory modifying effects of retrieval are affected by divided attention/distraction; (2) the generalizability of retrieval-based learning across educationally-relevant factors (e.g., task complexity and prior knowledge); and (3) the indirect effects of testing on learning (e.g., taking a practice test on A will enhance the benefits from later restudy of A as well as later initial study of new material B). I plan to examine these topics both in the lab as well as in the classroom (e.g., assessing the effectiveness of different evidence-based learning and study strategies).

Daniel Burns

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I study human memory. Recently, my students and I have studied 1) the relationship between memory confidence and repetitive checking behaviors, as seen in individuals with OCD (Do people check more because they have less confidence in their memories?), 2) the extent to which evolution has shaped or fine-tuned our memory systems to facilitate the remembering of some information more than others information, 3) the paradoxical finding that perseverating about dying improves memory functioning, and 4) to what extent eye tracking equipment may provide a window into the cognitive processes we perform when studying and committing information to memory.

Kenneth DeBono

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I am interested in the relations between personality factors and responsiveness to different kinds of persuasive messages. In particular, I study whether differences in self-monitoring tendencies are related to: the kinds of persuasive information to which people are responsive and how they process that information. I often study these questions in the context of advertising. I am also interested in investigating the role that religiosity plays in aspects of mental and physical health.

Timothy George

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My research broadly explores how people generate original ideas, solve problems creatively, and connect concepts through analogy. I use experimental methods to understand the conditions that cause mental fixation in these situations, as well as what conditions mitigate this mental fixation.

Some of my work includes 1) the effects of exposure to example ideas on subsequent creativity. Examples may constrain or stimulate ideas depending on the type of examples. 2) How people process metaphoric language. Understanding metaphors may require inhibiting literal information. 3) The potentially positive impact of constraints in generating ideas. 4) The role of metacognitive biases in creative problem solving 5) How we overcome a focus on surface features when making deeper analogical connections across concepts.

Some more recent interests include how visuospatial imagination may impact creative idea generation, as well as how student exercises incorporating creativity may impact learning..

Mary Guerrant

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I am passionate about utilizing research as a tool to understand and address social problems, particularly those facing diverse LGBTQ+ populations such as immigrants, Latinx persons, and transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. More specifically, my research is focused on health equity and understanding factors which influence health-seeking behaviors and health outcomes. I am particularly interested in sexual health, diagnoses tied to sex assigned at birth (e.g. gynecological cancers, prostate cancer), inclusive sexual education and health promotion, and factors such as self-efficacy, sense of community, communication, and prior experiences in healthcare settings. As a community psychologist by training, I often utilize community-based and participatory methods in my work.

Joshua Hart

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I have three overlapping areas of research interests: (1) The effects of psychological security and insecurity. Humans are fundamentally motivated to feel secure, which affects us in many ways. I and my students have studied the effects of security and insecurity on close relationships, self-esteem (e.g., academic, athletic, and appearance goals), attitudes (e.g., belief in evolution and intelligent design; support for military interventions and political candidates, belief in conspiracy theories), risk-taking, information-processing, and decision-making. (2) Attachment and close relationships. I am interested in how security-related individual differences (especially attachment style) influence close relationship and non-relationship phenomena. (3) Self-esteem and belief systems. I am also interested in the ways that people enhance and maintain their self-esteem and beliefs about the world. Therefore, research on self-esteem or worldviews (e.g., politics, religion, morality) is generally in my wheelhouse.

Jenny Weil Malatras

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As a pediatric psychologist, my clinical work and research encompasses an integrated field that addresses a range of issues related to the physical and psychological health and development of children, adolescents and their families. My research interests broadly focus on the influences of the family environment on child, adolescent and emerging adult adjustment. I am particularly interested in the ways in which aspects of the family environment, including family stability and parenting practices, influence self-regulatory processes, including emotion regulation and health-related behaviors and outcomes. Additionally, I am interested in examining the impact of prevention and treatment initiatives for children, youth and families that comprehensively address family wellness and are based on integrated, multidisciplinary models of care.

Conor O’Dea

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My research focuses on factors that affect how individuals perceive, as well as how individuals attempt to justify, antisocial behavior. I approach these topics across two main areas. The first is understanding how different groups in society use derogative language and humor to derogate people belonging to other groups and also factors that promote intergroup affiliation. My second area of research is involved in understanding the link between masculine honor beliefs and expectations for people to respond violently to threats and insults. It is my theoretical perspective that, in order to better understand why people exhibit antisocial behaviors even though they are aware of societal norms that vilify these expressions (e.g., physical violence, racial discrimination), we should examine factors that affect the justification as well as the suppression of antisocial behaviors.

Chad Rogers

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Much of my prior work has been focused on speech comprehension in young and older adults. My approach represents a combination of cognitive psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and audiology. My specific research topics of late are: **(1) The neural reorganization of speech processing.** I am interested in how young and older adults may engage different routes to successful speech processing by recruiting different neural mechanisms revealed through EEG, structural and functional MRI. **(2) Effortful listening and its impact on semantic processing.** In difficult listening situations people report expending cognitive effort to achieve successful speech comprehension. I am interested in how people use meaning and semantics as a “shortcut” to reduce effort. **(3). Linguistic and acoustic contributions to auditory memory.** I am also interested in how variables like syntax and background noise make information not only difficult to understand, but also less likely to be remembered.

Stephen Romero

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Current research pursues three general goals: (1) Investigating neuronal plasticity associated with acquisition of new cognitive skills, recovery of function after brain injury, and associated with neurological and psychological disorders. These studies include the use of behavioral, neuroimaging and EEG methods with patients and unimpaired volunteers; (2) Investigating the role of optimism in cognitive skill learning through the use of behavioral, EEG, and Neuroimaging methods with patients and unimpaired volunteers; (3) Investigating neurological basis of musical processing through the use of behavioral, EEG, and Neuroimaging methods with patients and unimpaired volunteers.

Linda Stanhope

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I am interested in factors relating to the social development of children and adolescents. In particular I study the interrelationship among such factors as parenting styles, children’s personalities, and their social behavior (e.g., helpfulness, peer relations, problem behaviors). Some examples of recent research projects include: predicting middle school children’s susceptibility to peer pressure and early dating from their own self-monitoring styles and their parents’ discipline practices; understanding preschool children’s helpfulness in the classroom in terms of their temperaments and their theories of mind (awareness of others’ thoughts); investigating middle school students’ views of cyberbullying compared to conventional bullying; looking at helicopter parenting and its relationship to college students’ feelings about their emerging adulthood.

D. Catherine Walker

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My research focuses on body image, eating disorders, and disordered weight- and shape-control behaviors. Specifically, individuals with body dissatisfaction repeatedly engage in body checking or body image avoidance behaviors, to gain or avoid information about their shape, weight, and size. My research has examined how body checking and avoidance behaviors impact body image and weight- and shape-control behaviors. I also have a research interest in body image and disordered eating and exercise behaviors in men. Lastly, my research focuses on clinical applications of prevention and treatment for eating disorders and body image dissatisfaction.

Carol Weisse

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My research examines the dying process from both patient and caregiver perspectives. I am particularly interested in a model of care where patients with home insecurity and/or caregiver instability receive care by non-familial caregivers in community-run residential care homes. My research team has been studying the management of symptoms such as pain, anxiety, and restlessness and how caregivers dispense hospice-prescribed medications. Additional projects have examined the development of empathy and self-efficacy when providing care at the very end of life.