Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah to alumni and friends of the Department of Psychology. I hope that this newsletter finds you in good health and good spirits in these rough economic times. Our department and university continue to struggle with budget cuts even as demand for our classes rises, but we have still accomplished a lot this year, and have much to share. In fact, this may be our “newsiest” newsletter yet!

We were fortunate to add a new tenure-track faculty member to our ranks this year. Dr. Paul Romanowich (page 2) comes to us with a background in learning theory and applied behavior analysis. His current research is in the area of smoking cessation, and the conditions that help a smoker to successfully quit.

Psychology is currently one of the largest departments on campus; we have around 800 undergraduate majors, plus minors and graduate students. Last year, we also had the distinction of serving the largest number of students of any department on campus, with around 760 full-time-equivalent students in our classes in the spring semester.

The department continues to bring speakers to campus to enrich the research climate, and to give students a sense of the breadth of the field of psychology. This semester, we were able to help sponsor a speaker on the white supremacy movement, T.J. Leyden. We were also fortunate to bring Dr. Robert Emmons from UC Davis to campus as a visiting scholar for the department (Dr. Emmons is featured elsewhere in this newsletter); his research on gratitude is particularly important in these trying times. Both of these speakers drew hundreds of students, faculty, and community members.

If you are able to give to help support the activities of the department, including student scholarships, travel, research support, and bringing in speakers, I encourage you to try the university’s new online service http://www.csuchico.edu/advancement/make_a_gift.php/. Thank you to all who have been able to give to support the activities of the department. Your support contributes to the legacy and prestige of our department, college, and university, and enriches the education of our current and future students.

Please keep in touch with us. If you happen to visit campus, please consider stopping by the department office in Modoc Hall, room 215 to say “Hello.” If you can’t come in person, we would appreciate it if you would drop us a line and let us know how you are doing, and how you are using what you learned at Chico State.

Did you get our Postcard?

This was probably too easy for most of you. Professor David Winzenz joined our faculty in 1970, and is memorable for his breadth of knowledge, teaching skill, sense of humor, and commitment to the teaching profession. He still teaches introductory psychology and statistical methods. Winzenz is also a long-time bicyclist and cycling advocate volunteering with the Chico VELO bicycling club.
Welcome to our Newest Member of the Faculty

Professor Paul Romanowich was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and grew up in the “other” bay area around Tampa, Florida. He received a BS in Psychology and a BA in German from the University of Florida. He then moved across the country and earned a MA and PhD in Psychology, with an emphasis in behavior analysis, from the University of California, San Diego. Most recently, he completed a post-doctoral fellowship involving research on smoking cessation and behavioral pharmacology at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, Texas. He has published research on a range of topics such as shot allocation in professional basketball players, conditioned reinforcement, and the effects of self-efficacy on smoking cessation. His current research interests include refining contingency management techniques and the effects of context on behavior. He is currently teaching courses in learning and behavior.

Update from PSI CHI Honor Society

During fall 2009, Chico Psi Chi participated in the Walk Now For Autism fundraiser to raise money for autism treatment and awareness. We had bake sales, restaurant fundraisers, and donations to achieve our goals. Every other week we hosted a guest speaker to talk about a point of interest, as well. We welcomed Professors Kline, Wolfe, and Romanowich, as well as Jonathon McCabe from a local business specializing in behavior therapy with children diagnosed with autism. This coming spring we will be hosting a faculty versus student softball game, as well as our biweekly meetings. For information, please email chicopsichi@gmail.com or visit our board in the Modoc hallway!

Softball: Students versus Faculty

An (almost) yearly tradition continued this past spring when the students challenged the faculty to a game of softball. As usual, the faculty won with the help of a few of our graduate students.
When Dr. Robert Emmons was a first-year student at the University of Southern Maine, he originally intended to become a weatherperson. He enrolled in classes in geography and physics. He discovered that he was not particularly interested in the content of these classes. In addition, he noted that the students in these classes were similar to himself—men. Where were all of the women? They were majoring in Psychology. Emmons found out that the women knew something that he did not; psychology is a very interesting discipline!

By 1981, Robert Emmons was in the graduate program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign working on a doctorate in Personality Psychology with a minor in Clinical Psychology. The title of his dissertation was “Personal Strivings: An Approach to Personality and Subjective Well-Being.” Dr. Emmons is now a full professor at the University of California, Davis, and his major focus continues to be subjective well being. He has done ground breaking research on the role of positive emotions such as gratitude and forgiveness in keeping us physically and mentally healthy. In the last decade, he has authored or co-authored four books and 41 articles and book chapters. He is also the editor of the Journal of Positive Psychology.

The President’s Visiting Scholar Program allows a department to bring an eminent scholar to campus for a three day period to meet with faculty, students, and community people, to give a major public address, and to teach classes. October 27 to 29 the Department of Psychology hosted Dr. Emmons as the fall 2009 President’s Visiting Scholar. He taught three classes, met with groups such as Enloe Hospital’s Planetree group, was interviewed by the local media and addressed a turn away crowd in Holt 170.

One of his major messages was based on his research with over 2,000 participants ranging in age from 8 to 87. He has found that keeping a gratitude journal can cause us to “re-cognize” (rethink) important aspects of our lives. In various studies, participants keeping a gratitude journal have improved their sleep and exercise patterns, made progress toward life goals, and lost significantly more weight than participants keeping either a “daily hassles” or daily activities journal.

Students who participated in activities with Dr. Emmons described his findings as “energizing” and indicated a desire to take more classes in the area, either at Chico State or in graduate school. Several faculty are contemplating some new research strategies. Enloe Hospital and Butte County Behavioral Health would like additional addresses from Dr. Emmons. Throughout Modoc Hall, as people engage in the ordinary courtesies of daily life—holding doors open or retrieving dropped articles—the phrase “thank you!” rings out. Thank you, Dr. Emmons! You made a lasting impression!

“A person with the disposition to feel grateful has established a worldview that says, in effect, that all of life is a gift, gratuitously given. Although we cannot in any direct way be grateful, we can cultivate gratefulness by structuring our lives, our minds, and our words in such a way as to facilitate awareness of gratitude-inducing experiences and labeling them as such.”

R.A. Emmons
My name is Marie Lippmann and I am a 25-year-old Psychology major from Dresden, Germany. I am currently attending Chico State as a visiting scholar under the supervision of Dr. Neil Schwartz, and I am very happy about being given this great opportunity.

Back in Germany, I am a student of Technical University Dresden (TU Dresden). I am in the diploma program, which is somewhat between the master’s and the PhD program in the US. My main interest is in psychological research in the field of learning and instruction. I have been working at the Institute of Learning and Instruction as a student research assistant for the last two and a half years, being supervised by the German lecturer and researcher Dr. Susanne Narciss. During that time I was mainly engaged in research on feedback and self monitoring. It was also Dr. Narciss, who introduced me to the research of Dr. Schwartz from Chico State, whose research focuses on graphics and metacognition.

Since I am very much interested in becoming a researcher in learning and instruction and in working internationally, I was enthusiastic about applying for a position as a visiting scholar at Chico State. There is also a recently established agreement of cooperation between TU Dresden and Chico State, which enables students to come on exchange visits, and I am more than happy to be the first student who can benefit from this great agreement.

Since August this year, I have been part of the research group of Dr. Schwartz, and it has been a great experience so far. Being involved in several projects on decorative and metaphorical graphics, as well as on metacognition, I’ve already learned so much about psychological research, ways of approaching psychological problems, and team work in general. Since my final thesis on metacognition is carried out as a cooperative project between TU Dresden and Chico State, I am also able to put everything I learn into practice right away, which is of great value, too. I will be working in Chico until August next year, and my goals for the time between now and then are to gain as much scientific and personal experience as possible and to contribute to the work of the teams here and in Dresden at my best.

As a visiting scholar, I am also interested in fostering intercultural understanding. This is why I am an active member of two international organizations on campus—International Neighbors and UNITE. Both organizations focus on overcoming intercultural barriers and establishing international relations between people, institutions and/or companies all over the world. By contributing to the work of these organizations, I hope to give back a little of all the positive study-abroad experience I have been able to gain in Chico so far.
My name is Stefan Krause, and I am 23 years old. I am a graduate student at the University of Koblenz-Landau, campus Landau in Germany. My study interests are currently in cognitive and media psychology, as well as in instructional design. I am here because there is a university agreement between Chico State and my university. This agreement gives students the opportunity to work in a foreign country to develop my research and language skills.

I am really fascinated by scientific work, so I have worked as a student assistant in a big project of educational research on the performance of elementary school students in Germany – a program called VERA- VERgleichsArbeiten in Grundschulen. There, I’ve been responsible for the construction of SPSS syntaxes for a later data evaluation.

In addition to this project, I contributed to a project on media influences of crises and war on TV and newspapers. My task was to conduct a qualitative topic analysis on the most frequently used TV news and newspapers in Germany.

The last study I joined in Germany before coming to California focused on the “Sad-Film-Paradox.” This is a phenomenon where people choose movies which trigger unpleasant feelings (e.g., grief). Such a behavior is hard to bring into accord with common media psychology theories which focus on hedonism with regard to choice and the assessment of movies.

All my previous experiences in research have encouraged me in my goal to become a scholar. Thus, I was really excited when I heard about the agreement between Chico State and the University of Koblenz-Landau, and I knew that I did not want to let this great opportunity pass by. Therefore, I talked to Dr. Schwartz when he was in Landau for his sabbatical, and fortunately he offered me the opportunity to come here.

I have been here almost four months, and am grateful that I can work on interesting projects. Right now, I am working on a study which deals with decorative graphics. Decorative graphics function metaphorically to influence the way learners cognitively interact with a passage based upon the theme they make salient in a text. For the experimental design, we want to use an expository text about a current global political issue which also emphasizes the practicalities of how people understand and deal with a political problem.

Besides this valuable experience in advancing my scientific interests, it's also a personal enrichment to be here. Living in a different culture, meeting new and interesting people, and travelling around the west coast broaden my horizon, and it is an unforgettable experience for my life. Therefore, I am absolutely delighted being here, and I really thank Dr. Schwartz for his helpful and constant support in developing my skills.
Dr. Penelope Kuhn’s neuroscience laboratory in the Department of Psychology has grown over the past few years, offering undergraduate and graduate students opportunities to learn basic techniques in neuroscience histopathology as research assistants. Generous support from the Psychology Department, College of BSS, and University Foundation has enabled the lab to procure several pieces of equipment necessary for the type of neuroscience research that takes a bottom-up approach to behavioral science.

Currently, two lines of research are being undertaken by the lab. One set of projects concerns brain and spinal cord injury, regeneration, and plasticity, aimed at enhancing functional recovery. A colony of genetically-engineered mice enables students to compare changes in the injury process and recovery due to the absence of a specific neurotrophic factor receptor, called p75. Experiments include comparisons of axon microstructure between controls and mutants and correlations with motor function. This project focuses on computer-assisted image analysis and quantification of tissue features visualized by photomicroscopy. Blocking the activity of p75 is being considered a potential treatment strategy for brain and spinal cord injury, reducing the injury response and encouraging axon sprouting.

Another line of research concentrates on the neurobiological basis of addiction and the neurological consequences of drug abuse. Ongoing experiments include comparing alcohol withdrawal between control mice and mice housed in an enriched environment, the effects of fetal alcohol exposure on astrocyte development in mice, and the effect of chronic alcohol use on oligodendrocyte viability, myelin ultrastructure, and functional outcomes. The contribution of blocking cannabinoid receptors on memory dysfunction has also been examined.

Throughout these projects, students have gained expertise in research design and execution of a variety of systems neuroscience techniques such as animal husbandry, functional behavior assays, surgical intracardiac perfusion with fixative solution of tissue for brain and spinal cord removal, tissue embedding and sectioning on a cryostat for microscopy or sectioning on an ultramicrotome for electron microscopy, basic histochemistry, immunocytochemistry, and computer-assisted image analysis with quantification of microstructure for statistical analyses. The caliber of research assistants participating in these projects is evidenced by several students receiving the Undergraduate Student Research and Creativity Award. The most recent recipients are Sheila Dougherty, Eric Markey, Danielle Schneider, and Joel Breck.

Results from projects in the Neuroscience Lab have been presented by students at the annual international Society for Neuroscience conference. During last year’s SfN conference in Washington, D.C., Professor Kuhn took seven neuroscience lab students on a tour of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. The NIH is the world’s largest medical research institute, with over 27 separate institutes on the main campus. Students visited a previous lab member and recent Chico State graduate, Justin LaPorte, who was working in a research laboratory in the National...
Institute of Mental Health investigating the effects of mutations in the serotonin reuptake transporter and growth factors in a mouse model of depression. Justin took everyone on a tour of his lab and also the housing facility for one of the mouse colonies. Justin is currently at UPenn and is on his way to Jefferson Medical College next fall. His experience at the NIH was the result of being awarded a post-baccalaureate Intramural Research Training Award. This is a paid fellowship position in medical research for one to two years for students interested in gaining research experience and laboratory skills before entering graduate school. Like Justin, each year other students from the neuroscience lab at Chico are awarded IRTA positions at the NIH after graduation. Currently, Eric Markey is at the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism researching cocaine addiction. Others enter a PhD in Neuroscience (Josh Ohrtman at U Colorado, Brannon Green at Georgetown University in Washington D.C.) or PhD program in Behavioral Neuroscience (Ethan Beckley at Oregon Health and Sciences University, where he is researching hormonal contributions to behavior) or are working in research positions in government (Liz Floto is working on a PTSD project with Veterans Affairs), academia (Nicole Hockenbury is working on a project concerning traumatic brain injury at Georgetown University, Xiang Hua at UC San Diego) or industry (Armanda Waddington is working in a new biotech company researching growth factors).

The neuroscience lab in the Department of Psychology at Chico State continues to expand, including more projects and students enthusiastically engaged in and dedicated to brain research.

"It is this potential for plasticity of the relatively stereotyped units of the nervous system that endows each of us with our individuality."

Eric R. Kandel
December 2, 2009 marked the first anniversary of the death of the most famous patient in memory research, Henry Gustav Molaison. H.M. had epilepsy surgery in 1953 at age 27 that removed a structure we now know to be important in memory formation, the hippocampus. Although free of seizures after the brain surgery, H.M. had difficulty forming new memories (anterograde amnesia), and had some retrograde amnesia as well. By all accounts a very agreeable fellow, H.M. consented, with his family’s support, to participate in numerous studies by scientists over the next 50 years. Studies on H.M. formed the basis for our understanding of implicit and explicit memory, motor or procedural memory, and even the very basic notion that memory is not distributed equally throughout the brain, but has features mediated in part by specific brain structures. This past December 2, The Brain Observatory at U.C. San Diego launched Project H.M. with a historic event enabling Chico State psychology students, and anyone with internet access, to participate in a live video feed of the dissection of H.M.’s brain. The process took over 50 hours and resulted in over 2500 sections of the whole brain, at 70 microns thick (thinner than a hair), that will be mounted on glass slides and stained for specific structures and cells. H.M.’s brain will be reconstructed into a 3D digital image, and all of the images and data will be available to anyone interested in brain research. Given the accumulated behavioral data from 50 years of research, and the potential to correlate structure with functional outcomes, H.M.’s contribution to memory research is unparalleled in science. To read the blog or follow the continued processing of H.M.’s brain tissue, go to the following link: http://thebrainobservatory.ucsd.edu/hm_live.php

A soft brush prepares to delicately scoop up a 70 micron thick section of brain tissue being cut at -40° C as Dr. V. Ramachandran (small window to the lower R) visits the lab to witness the historical sectioning of H.M.’s brain.
We all deceive ourselves to some degree. Whether it’s over-emphasizing our good points or conveniently “forgetting” some of our missteps, the idea that people can engage in self-deception is not new. However, the idea has been around for so long that numerous theoretical approaches to understanding self-deception have produced many conflicting definitions of what the construct is and how it should be operationally defined.

According to Dr. Michael Ennis, a major flaw is that researchers in this area are usually overly reliant on self-report questionnaire measures. Asking participants to consciously report on processes that are mostly unconscious is, at best, a questionable approach, but one that is all too common. Professor Ennis’s research program offers an alternative by using a wide variety of biological measures. Although it has long been known that biological measures are more resistant to inaccuracies and “faking,” too few psychologists are using them. He says he hopes to change that in the future by training his graduate and undergraduate students to be sophisticated scientists who are well-trained in immunological, endocrinological, and psychophysiological measures. Currently, Ennis and his lab group are collecting biological data for three projects to understand better how unconscious processing works.

The first project addresses self-deception from a health psychology perspective by measuring antibodies to Epstein-Barr virus (EBV). EBV is a virus that most people are infected with and, even though it usually does not produce any disorders, looking at how the body responds to it provides a measure of how well a person’s immune system is working. Participants for this project receive free psychological counseling every week through the Counselor Training Center at Chico State. Each participant contributes a blood sample at the beginning of their counseling and then again, after about eight sessions, to see if their EBV antibodies have changed. Ennis explains that, “according to the work of James Pennebaker, emotional disclosure produces immune benefits. That is to say, talking about things that make us sad, angry, or guilty can actually improve our health. However, people who are more self-deceptive may not have those benefits—they can’t talk about their negative feelings and traits because they’re less consciously aware of them. So far, we’ve analyzed data from 28 participants and we’ve found that participants who perceive themselves as facing many stressors have higher levels of EBV antibodies, which tells us that their immune systems are more taxed. That’s a good start, but we’ll need about 90 participants before we can begin to see if more self-deceptive participants are different than others.”

In addition, Ennis and undergraduate students Gibran Mendez, Ana Aguilar, Torie Mantzouranis, Victoria Galvan, and Julia Arenas are assessing the validity of a new tool to measure unconscious processing. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) flashes faces of black and white people on a computer screen, which are quickly followed by positive words (e.g., loving, good, trustworthy) or negative words (e.g., hateful, bad, deceptive). Using the computer keyboard, participants must indicate whether or not the word presented should be assigned to the black or white face flashed before it. The key to this measure is that participants must respond to the images and words so quickly that they do not have time to consciously think about their response. Although it is argued that this method assesses participants’ implicit, unconscious assumptions about racial preferences, there is heated debate about the validity of this measure. Ennis and his group are using skin conductance to help resolve this issue. According to Professor Ennis,

“Skin conductance measures our ‘fight-or-flight’ response, and we’re predicting that participants who implicitly prefer people of their own ethnicity will have increased skin conductance when they watch short movies of people of other ethnicities. In addition, we expect to find these results even when we’ve statistically controlled participants’ explicit, conscious racial preferences. Remarkably, we’re the first to assess the IAT using skin conductance, which is very exciting.”

Finally, Ennis is doing research with Kaci Smith, an undergraduate who has received several awards to pursue her research. Their research is based on the work of evolutionary psychologists who propose that men’s self-deception may have evolutionary value. It may actually be an adaptive trait, because men who are able to deceive themselves that they possess many desirable characteristics should be better able to convince potential sexual partners of their desirability. Therefore, Ennis and Smith predict that salivary testosterone will be correlated with self-deception and desired mating success with many partners. They’ve currently collected over 70 saliva samples from participants and will be analyzing their data soon.
Last January, I boarded a United flight for Frankfurt. I would be spending six months on my sabbatical in a small town in southwest Germany, about 16 kilometers from the French border. There I would be working with my colleague, Professor Schnotz, in the Multimedia Research Unit (MRU) of the University of Koblenz-Landau, visiting colleagues in a number of universities across Western Europe, expanding a research consortium, and developing a new program. It promised to be a very busy visit.

When I arrived, it was wintry, cold, and quiet—but, oh-so-beautiful. Doris Forster, a German graduate student who apprenticed with me in Chico a year prior, found a loft for me to live in and a bicycle to get me to and from the university. While there, I had the opportunity to work with Professor Schnotz, his doctoral students, and Doris. I gave a series of guest lectures at the University of Koblenz-Landau on writing for publication; and, I was invited to present my research at the University of Salzburg in Austria, the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium, and the University of Bari in Italy. It was a productive, focused, and satisfying winter-spring semester.

My sabbatical was designed to expand the development of an international consortium of research apprenticeship—a consortium I have been building for the last nine years. The consortium is set up with seven universities in Europe. Seven colleagues and I share our graduate students by having the students work in our respective research groups and labs conducting investigations in the learning sciences. This collaboration gives master’s and doctoral students the opportunity to work for a semester or two at the Universities of Bari in Italy, Dresden or Koblenz-Landau in Germany, Cyprus on the island of Cyprus, or Salzburg in Austria—and of course, Chico State. For the graduate students here in our department, it has been a wonderful opportunity for them to learn in a foreign country, meet international graduate students, and apprentice in the conduction of research with research scholars in Europe. During my sabbatical, we also added the University of Grenoble in France.
What was so special about France was the collaboration with Grenoble professor Erica de Vries. Dr. Schnotz, Dr. de Vries, and I decided it was time to get busy and build an international master’s program that we had been talking about for the last two years. Thus, on March 24, 2009, we submitted a proposal for funding to the Atlantis Program (a joint funding scheme of the European Commission and the U.S. Department of Education), the first international program in cognitive visualization—the International Cognitive Visualization Program (ICV).

The ICV Program is a dual master’s program between the California State University-Chico, the University of Grenoble (France), and the University of Koblenz-Landau (Germany). It is designed to prepare specialists in the design, interpretation, and utilization of visualization media. Cognitive visualization is a new field of study situated at the nexus of cognitive science, instructional design, applied computer graphics, communication studies, education, and business. The international aspect of ICV is an emergent area of expertise in cognitive visualization, in the context of international problem solving. Specialists in ICV will have a deep understanding of the transaction between computer-based visualization displays and the cognitive and emotional processes of the human mind in designing, and deriving meaning and communicating from, these displays. They will be eligible for employment as visualization experts in publishing companies and advertising agencies, as well as in litigation law firms, and engineering companies.

In the fall of 2010, the ICV program will begin its first semester. Admitted students will follow an intense curriculum in cognitive psychology, applied computer graphics, learning science, sociocultural theories of human behavior, and language arts over a period of two years. Three French, three German, and six American students will be accepted each year, with each set of 12 students moving through the program as a single cohort. They will be working with industry partners in France, Germany, and the U.S. as part of the program and will be learning three languages—English, French, and German. When the program is complete, all students will be fluent in two of the three languages and emergent in the third. They will also earn two master’s degrees in two years—one awarded from Chico State and the other from the University of Grenoble. It promises to be an exciting program!

In short, it was a productive sabbatical, and I want to thank the Department of Psychology and the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences for permitting me to take it. If you have any questions about it or want to know more, email me. I would love to hear from you. Most importantly, if you are interested in applying to the ICV program, or know someone who is, check it out at: [http://www.csuchico.edu/psy/icv](http://www.csuchico.edu/psy/icv) and apply soon. The deadline for fall 2010 admission is: April 15th, 2010. Also, become a friend of the ICV Program on FaceBook!

Neil H. Schwartz, PhD
Professor of Psychology
nschwartz@csuchico.edu
Synesthesia

Professor Martin van den Berg joined the Psychology Department in August 2007. While still working on his dissertation at the University of Virginia, he had started a side-project on synesthesia and is now continuing that research at Chico State. People with synesthesia have a rare condition where they experience sensations in one modality while another modality is stimulated. For example, they might hear sounds while looking at colors, or feel shapes when they taste certain foods. The most common form of synesthesia is called grapheme-color synesthesia where letters, numbers, and words have colors.

In his initial research van den Berg was interested in the question whether the colors experienced by grapheme-color synesthetes act like normally experienced colors. For instance, do synesthetic colors have the same effects in figure-ground and perceptual grouping tasks as normal colors do in normal people? With a sample of people with synesthesia from the Chico area he found that, indeed, these colors can influence other perceptual tasks, suggesting that these are real color experiences.

In that same research he found that the colors experienced by people with synesthesia are not all equally powerful. Some synesthetes have very strong and vivid color experiences that they experience out in front of them. For others it is more a mental experience, where the color is experienced “in the mind’s eye.” His current research focuses on quantifying this difference in strength. He does this by measuring how strong the effect of the synesthetic colors is on a variety of tasks, thereby having converging methods to answer this question.

The research on synesthesia done by van den Berg consists of behavioral studies where participants with synesthesia and control participants perform standard tasks without any brain scanning. However, this research can help us to understand how different parts of the brain interact, and how these processes create our mental experiences. Unfortunately for researchers, the occurrence of synesthesia is very low. It is estimated that 1 in 2000 people has a form of synesthesia. There is also a positive side to this low occurrence. According to Martin, “because synesthetic participants are hard to find I don’t spend a lot of time running my study and instead have more time to be involved in other projects, such as supervising honor’s and graduate students in their projects.”

If you think you may have synesthesia and are in the Chico area, or if you know someone in the Chico area who you think may have synesthesia, consider contacting Professor van den Berg to participate in his research. His e-mail address is MvandenBerg@csuchico.edu.

Unconscious Decision Making

Jamie Kiss is a graduate student in the Psychology Department. She is doing research with Professor van den Berg on decision-making.

It is a common belief that the best decisions are made after a period of careful, conscious deliberation. For example, when buying a car one may take many pieces of information into consideration – weighing and measuring things like price, features, color, and dependability.

Surprisingly though, recent research that focused on how to make the “best” decision has uncovered a counterintuitive finding: decisions that are made on really complex issues are better when you are prevented from thinking consciously about the choices (Dijksterhuis et al., 2006). This can be explained by the notion that conscious attention is restricted, due to the limitations of working memory. When you are distracted from the problem at hand, thus not having the ability to remember or forget pertinent aspects, our supposedly unlimited unconscious may be hard at work organizing all of the information in order to make the best decision. Could this explain why sometimes we suddenly have the answer to a complicated problem after we “sleep on it”?

On the other hand, research done to critically examine Dijksterhuis’ claims has stated that he has ignored significant work in the areas of judgment and decision-making. These researchers consider that the results can be better explained by a classic study in cognitive psychology. Hastie and Park (1986) claim that people make decisions as the information comes in, or later based on what they can remember from it. “The disagreement between Dijksterhuis and the other researchers is what got me fascinated and prompted me to settle their debate,” says Kiss.

In her master’s research she hopes to shed more light onto each of these opposing views in order to have a better standing of how to get the best results when making complex decisions.
2008-2009 Psychology Honors Class

Front row from the left: Phuong Luu, Darshika Patel, Jessica Bibbo, Angela Hernandez, Linda Kline. Back row from the left: Rachel Perry, Denni Rollins, Brian Greeley, Andrew Nichols, Erica Parker, Eric Markey, Bonnie Sharpe.

Geniella Putman (Magna Cum Laude, 2009), Psychology major and last year’s Psi Chi president, had the top Chico State score on the CLA (Collegiate Learning Assessment) test taken in spring 2009. Over 90 students, representing all campus colleges, participated. She received a certificate of accomplishment and $500 for having the top Chico State score. Putman is now pursuing a master’s degree at USC.
Congratulations to All our Recent Graduates

California State University, Chico

BSS Award Winners
May 2009
Bryan Bartlett
Edith Brask Memorial Scholarship

Jessica Bibbo
Hugh M. Bell Memorial Scholarship
Psychology Honors in the Major

Jessica Bucey
Cum Laude

Marques Burris
Hugh M. Bell Memorial Scholarship

Michelle Dann
Cum Laude
Honors in GE

Brian Greeley
Warren R. Coleman Memorial Scholarship
Psychology Honors in the Major

Angela Hernandez
Psychology Honors in the Major

Alexandria Holley
Hugh M. Bell Memorial Scholarship

Melissa Jackson
Magna Cum Laude

Annalisa Koch
Paul S. Spear Memorial Scholarship

Tawni Kramer
Hugh M. Bell Memorial Scholarship

Reka Lassu
Summa Cum Laude

Phuong Luu
Psychology Honors in the Major
Cum Laude

Eric Markey
Psychology Honors in the Major

Jarren Miller
Hugh M. Bell Memorial Scholarship

Elizabeth Molaro
Hugh M. Bell Memorial Scholarship

Andrew Nichols
Hugh M. Bell Memorial Scholarship
Psychology Honors in the Major
Honors in GE
Summa Cum Laude

Erica Parker
Psychology Honors in the Major
Summa Cum Laude

Jeremy Parsons
Psychology Honors in the Major
Honors in GE

Darshika Patel
Psychology Honors in the Major
Honors in GE

Samuel Perry
Hugh M. Bell Memorial Scholarship

Rachel Perry
Psychology Honors in the Major
Magna Cum Laude

Geniella Putman
Honors in GE
Magna Cum Laude

Suzanne Rindlisbacher
Peter C. Apostolakos Memorial Scholarship

Denni Rollins
Psychology Honors in the Major
Cum Laude

Emma Schutz Fort
Hugh M. Bell Memorial Scholarship

Wade Serrian
Magna Cum Laude

Bonnie Sharpe
Psychology Honors in the Major

Kaci Smith
Psychology Outstanding Student in 2009

Sherry Todd
Peter C. Apostolakos Memorial Scholarship

Karen West
Hugh M. Bell Memorial Scholarship

Michelle White
Magna Cum Laude

Amanda Williams
Cum Laude

Laura Wilson
Hugh M. Bell Memorial Scholarship
According to the results of a survey by Harris Interactive (2007), women working in office settings spend more time per day with a computer than they do with their significant other (9.3 hrs and 3.6 hrs, respectively.). Nine percent of women indicated that they had had their present computer longer than they had been with their present romantic partner. Although psychology students spend a great deal of time with a computer—in lab, at home, in study groups—no graduates of the Psychology program report having married their computers. Marriage is a very popular activity among our alumni. **Becca Falkner** (BA, 2007) was wed to Shawn Drobny and the couple now lives in Newport Beach. She is a program coordinator at Girls Inc, in Newport Beach. Also from the class of 2007 is **Shalea Bode**. She is presently enrolled in the MA program in Psychology. She was joined in matrimony with Eric Lewis in 2008. **Michelle Francis** (BA, 2005) married David Palmer. Michele is a social worker with Alta California Regional Center in Sacramento. **Noel Juney** (BA, 2004) is presently living in Livermore, working as an enrollment specialist at CAPE Inc., a nonprofit agency. She married Jacy Krogh in 2008. **Keri Good** (nee Prazak, BA, 2003 and her husband, Michael, married in 2005. They live in Arizona and both work for Progressive Insurance. They recently welcomed a son, Nolan, into the family. Perhaps Nolan will want to be a psychology major one day. **Susan Rasmussen** (nee Brice) is celebrating her 14th year with the South Tahoe Public Utility District. She is presently a Finance Administrative Assistant. This spring, she will celebrate her son’s graduation from high school. In the fall of 2010, he will begin his studies at Chico State as a Psychology major!

Thirty years ago, Jim and **Mo Dietz** were wed. Mo received a BA in Psychology in 1975. She is presently a special education teacher with Chico Unified School District. Jim and Mo celebrated their landmark anniversary with a tour of the central coast of California.

Thirty years of marriage is a great accomplishment, other alumni have been honored recently for accomplishments in professional areas. **Stephanie Van Steyn** (BA, 1997) recently accepted a job as the human resources manager for ConSol. She presently resides in Lodi. Her career in human resources has taken her to Sacramento (Blue Diamond Growers) and Stockton (PacWest Telecomm Inc.). **Jodie Beck** (BA, 1995) was awarded both the Portrait Photographer of the Year and the Wedding Photographer of the Year in 2008 by the Professional Photographers of the North Valley. Ms. Beck owns Madison Grace Photography in Chico. **Todd Fredericks** (BA, 1987) was appointed assistant professor at the Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine. He was also promoted to the rank of colonel in the United States Army. Dr. Fredericks completed his second tour of duty in Iraq in 2008. **Teddy Spencer** (BA, 2008) was accepted to the prestigious theater program at Southern Methodist University and began her three-year master’s program this fall. Only eight students are accepted every other year. The program includes stints in New York and Europe to hone their artistic skills. We will have to keep our eyes on the silver screen and national stages for our next sighting of this alum.

While at Chico State did you suffer from test anxiety? Anxiety issues, as well as self esteem and stress-illnesses may benefit from hypnotherapy. **Sally Pearson** (MS, 2000) received her graduate degree in psychology from CSU, Chico. She presently works at Life Design in Chico, in a practice emphasizing hypnotherapy and self hypnosis. Her business partner is her sister, Linda, also a hypnotapist.

Did you deal with your caffeine addiction by periodic visits to Bidwell Perk, during your tenure as a psychology student? That business is now owned and operated by **Michelle Power** and her husband, Gentry. Michele graduated with a BA in Psychology in 1992. The Gentrys are parents to twin boys, and Michelle is a member of the Board of the Alumni Association.

It is with sorrow that we acknowledge the passing of some members of the psychology family. **Randall Langeland** (BA, 1981) died in January. He lived in Chico with his family and owned J. Randall and Associates, a medical software company. In 2008, **Robert Sears** (BA, 1995) died. His passion and career had been as a professional BMX biker.

---

**By the time you are 80, you've learned everything. You only have to remember it.**

**George Burns**

---
Donors: We are grateful to our alumni and friends who have contributed to our department activities and scholarships this year.

Mr. Dennis Ahern  Mrs. Monica Hart  Ms. Jille Shankar
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Avila  Mr. & Mrs. Michael Johnston  Mr. & Mrs. Richard Shult
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Baily  Mr. Devin King  Mrs. Nancy Smalley
Bank of America Foundation  Mr. David Kinghorn  Mr. & Mrs. Kerry Smith
Mr. William Becker  Mr. & Mrs. William Krause  Mr. & Mrs. Eric Summa
Mrs. Jennifer Fisk-Becker  Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Lange  Ms. Miriam Tarman
Mr. & Mrs. Brett Browning  Ms. Marilyn Lloyd  Mr. & Mrs. Jack Van Rossum
Mr. Chris Bruening  Mrs. Autumn Long-Megle  Mrs. Diane Vaughn
Mrs. Terry Burgoyne  Mrs. Gina Losito  Mr. & Mrs. James Veit
Ms. LesLee Burnett  Ms. Paula Martinucci  Ms. Donna Wada
Ms. Diane Chatlosh  Mr. & Mrs. Edward McClain  Ms. Lisa Warthan
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Danielson  Mrs. Penelope Mittag  Mr. Jeffery Weatherly
Ms. Pamela Dirks  Mr. & Mrs. Jose Nuno  Mr. & Mrs. Greg Wheeler
Mr. & Mrs. Larry Donnelley  Mrs. Susan Rappleye  Mr. & Mrs. Scott White
Mrs. Shana Fain McDonald  Mrs. Susan Rasmussen  Mr. Donald Williams
Mr. & Mrs. John Flanigan  Mr. David Rolandelli  Ms. Cherly Woehr
General Electric Company  Mr. Damean Searle  Ms. Judith Zachai

Your Contributions Make a Difference

The department has established a “CSU, Chico Excellence in Psychology” account funded by donations that are used to purchase materials or provide learning experiences that will directly benefit Chico State psychology students, but are not supported in the regular budget. As the account grows and proceeds are used to strengthen education in the department, we will continue to keep you informed in future issues of the newsletter.

If you are willing and able to contribute to this fund, whether in small or large amounts, we ask that you please make your check payable to “CSU, Chico Excellence in Psychology #06125” and mail it to Chico State Fund, California State University, Chico, Chico, CA 95929-0240. Donations can also be made online at http://www.csuchico.edu/advancement/make_a_gift.php/. We will acknowledge your gift in writing so that you may claim it as a deduction on your federal and state income taxes. Thank you!