



PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

University of South Alabama, March 2003



Ph D PROGRAM MOVES AHEAD

Department Chair **Dr. Larry Christensen** reports that the first draft of our Psychology PhD proposal has been finalized to the best of our abilities, and now rests in the hands of the Dean and other USA Administrators. They will provide their input and ultimately a decision as to whether it should be sent to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. If all goes well, at some point in future time we will be bringing in PhD students instead of Masters students. This would benefit our research faculty immensely, since there will be more time to involve grad students in **HEFTY** long-term 4-year projects (instead of more superficial 2-year projects).

AT LAST PSYCHOLOGY has BRAIN WAVE LAB

Our brand new faculty member is **Dr. Jack Shelly-Tremblay**, who came to us in August 02, from Colorado State (undergrad), via The New School and The City University of NY. His interests are in reading processes, attention, and psychophysiology. And the reason Jack is here at the USA is that we needed a BRAIN WAVE LAB to get us up to speed with the newest Cognitive Psychology technology. And of course we all liked Jack and the impressive talk he gave to us last spring.

Jack has gotten right to work on his new space, and indeed you would hardly recognize **Dr. Bill Vitulli's** (now retired) former "rat lab" in the SW corner of the 3rd floor. I was truly amazed as Jack gave me the tour: Everything has been remodeled for EEG research! There are six new BIO-PACK computer set-ups for teaching students, complete with electrode caps, and a more isolated booth for more shielded research, using 40 electrode channels! **NEAT!!** Jack conducted me into the dark recesses of the booth, sat me down, started SCAN, and loaded some demo STROOP effect subject data. *[N.B. For those who don't teach Intro Psych, the STROOP effect is the cognitive difficulty encountered when attempting to name a color (GREEN) when it is used to print a conflicting word (RED).]*

To continue... I was overwhelmed with the complex display of all the various brain waves emerging on the screen. Furthermore, a PIP would appear at the touch of a button that would map the particular chosen wave of interest onto the

anatomical area of the brain from whence it came. **UTTERLY AMAZING!!** Of all the waves, the most fascinating one for Jack is the totally mental N400 "**conflict wave**", which shows up when the STROOP effect is operating. Jack's main interest right now is in the role of attention and reading comprehension and the STROOP effect: How do color and semantic variables interact to form the N400? Does one mere colored letter induce the STROOP, or must the whole word be colored?

As I conducted other interviews for this newsletter, it was apparent that other faculty members are EYEING Jack's new lab. Indeed, brain wave analysis is a fundamental tool to study any psychological behavior.

MENTOR-MOMS CORRELATE with IMPROVEMENT in WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Dr. Susan Anderson is still very active in the MENTOR MOM program, which "provides a family away from home" for the Women's Basketball Team. The group was started last year, now has more than 25 Moms, and meets 2-3 times per year for social activities. And do the Mentor Moms have a positive effect on scoring? Well, we finished the season tied for FIRST place in the Sunbelt West conference, and played in the Sunbelt Tournament semifinals for the first time since 1989. We finished the season with a 19/10 record overall, compared to 17/11 last year. [How does all this compare with the MEN? They finished the season in a 3 way tie for third place with an overall record of 14/14. Maybe the Men need Mentor Dads?]

Susan has also been busy: (1) acting as Chair last fall during **Larry Christensen's** sabbatical, (2) working on the SACS self-study interviews, (3) handling all the technicalities involved in purchasing **Jack Shelly-Tremblay's** equipment, (4) setting up e-mail correspondence with all her advisees, and (5) completing a proposal to the Dean to upgrade classrooms for Powerpoint, which is used by a lot of our faculty now including **Anderson, Arata, Faust, Rohling, Turner, Williams**.

Susan also attended in Jan 03 the annual meeting of the National Institute for the Teaching of Psychology in St. Pete's FL. Some big names were there, e.g. **Michael Gazzaniga** talking about split-brains, and **Elizabeth Loftus** talking about eyewitness accounts and false memory. In addition, there were

talks about what new areas to emphasize in teaching, e.g. Bio-Psychology, Psychology & Law, and Psychological Assessment, and old areas to de-emphasize, e.g. self-esteem. They even talked about the age-old NATURE-NURTURE controversy, where biology seems to be playing a larger role.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Drs. Lisa Turner & Jenny L-R are joining forces with two other researchers (**Drs. John Borkowski** of Notre Dame & **Joy Osofsky** of New Orleans) to look at the effects of "Parenting for School Success" for kids. All four investigators are collaborating on a NIH R21 planning grant from NICHD (National Institutes of Child Health & Development), which hopefully will lead to a regular R01 research grant in September 03. Their aim is *intervention to enhance parenting skills* in order to facilitate the cognitive, emotional and social development of their children. Specifically, they are training volunteers who will work 1-on-1 as Mentors with first-time Moms (or other primary care-takers), on the following curricula: (1) Mom-Baby Attachment; (2) Infant-Stimulation; and (3) Language. The focus is on Moms who have not completed high school, because their children are at risk for insecure attachment, behavior problems, and learning delays.

Even the period before the baby arrives (last trimester of pregnancy) is very important, because Moms must be well prepared to handle the crucial time period of early infancy (< 1 year old) when all sorts of things are happening emotionally and socially. [Aside: JMS would like to add that this is also an important time in the development of *speech perception* because babies are actively tuning into native language phonology.] In addition, Jenny is looking at the involvement of **grandmothers** in parenting, because it is common for underprivileged first-time adolescent Moms to be living with their Moms.

The groups will meet at the PSYCHOLOGICAL CLINIC about once per month. They consist of about 5 Moms, their babies & 5 Mentors. The Mentors will be both our own students and other "caring people" from the Mobile community, who volunteer through *Volunteer Mobile*. Grad students **Christy Harville & Holly Blanton** are also helping with this initiative. Anyone interested in being a volunteer mentor should call **Lisa Turner** at 460-6013.

FUNCTIONAL FAMILY THERAPY: PREVENTATIVE MEASURE for JUVENILE CRIME

Drs. Elise Labbe & Cay Welsh are both now well immersed in the **Youth Violence Initiative**, which deals with implementing FUNCTIONAL FAMILY THERAPY when kids get in trouble. FFT was started by **James Alexander** (Utah) & **Thomas Sexton** (Indiana) and is now a national-level program. What makes it different from other juvenile justice programs is that it involves the **WHOLE FAMILY** in treatment. Cay is now a full-fledged FFT therapist, and Elise

is in training. And their fame seems to be spreading throughout Mobile County, because recently the Mobile County D.A. **John Tyson** contacted them and offered them 12 families with which to engage their expertise. These are families with potential "problem" kids who are already in the "radar" of the Juvenile Justice System. For example, the kids may show minor problems like truancy behavior, or they may have siblings who are in trouble, but they themselves have no major problems, at least yet. So this type of scenario is ideal for testing FFT: Will early intervention with the entire family be successful in preventing future juvenile crime? The families will be seen weekly in the Clinic, and all information pertaining to both parents and kids will be entered into a gigantic database. Hopefully long-term follow-ups on the kids will give some answers.

Research Assistants involved with the **Youth Violence Initiative** are: **Whitney Huff, Betty Jones, Lyla Kulowski, Nick Mills, Allen Morgan, Jared Vickery & Donna White.**

JUVENILE CRIME & SUICIDE

Dr. Jenny L-R is combining work on the assessment part of the **Youth Violence Initiative** with her **SUICIDE** research. Not surprising, delinquent kids tend to be depressed, impulsive, hostile, and engaged in suicide-prone behavior. She can infer these things from her survey items such as: "I would be better off dead" or "I don't wear a seat-belt". Jenny also has a new grant from the *Office of Juvenile Justice* to look at RESILIENCY, or the ability to cope with life's negative experiences. She is interviewing USA female students, and asking them if, e.g. they have experienced a teenage pregnancy, or been in trouble with the law. So, what helps them cope?

Several students are working with Jenny on various projects: **Motoko Saito** will gather some SUICIDE data from Japan this spring. The hypothesis is that variables such as *shame* and *guilt* (in contrast to depression) will be important in that country. **Allen Morgan** is looking at suicide in **gays & lesbians**. **Amber Humphrey** is looking at substance use in incarcerated males. **Jeff Killbert** is looking at self and social perfectionism.

Jenny is also winding up her GAMBLING study. In one paper, she compared two of the most popular measures to identify prospective potential pathological adolescent gamblers. Out of a total of 568 kids tested, the z tests found approximately 127 youth who could be so classified. The only trouble was that only 18 kids were classified similarly by both tests, so Jenny and her Gambling Group (**Marty Rohling** [USA], **Paul Rohde & John Seeley** (Oregon Research Institute) have submitted a paper that proposes a solution for the measurement dilemma.

WHAT'S NEW in FORENSIC PSYCH

The big news from **Dr. Marty Rohling**, our resident *forensic neuropsychologist*, is that he has just finished responding to a major critique of his ROHLING INTERPRETIVE METHOD,

which aims to catch "sub-optimal performers" (that's right, malingerers) who are trying to claim psychological disability. Marty's method does this by analyzing deviant response patterns in a large battery of psychological tests ("meta-analysis"). For example, large standard deviations between various tests may be a sign of malingering. Marty says it was no problem at all responding to the critique, because the only real problem was that it misunderstood his statistics, specifically individual vs. group statistics. In fact, the authors of the critique had no problem at all with Marty's theory of "meta-analysis" which they thought was REALLY GREAT!

Having dealt with that technicality, Marty now has jumped into a new project concerning uncovering certification practices by the American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology (ABCN). Apparently, there are people out there who think that the criteria are "sub-standard" for certification by the ABCN. So Marty did a little detective work and found out that ABCN standards are actually more stringent than basic medical standards. For example, he estimates that about 89% of those applying for medical certification are accepted, vs. only 42% for the ABCN. SO THERE, says Marty. The upshot of all this is that Marty now has the ABCN on his side, and they are now offering him access to all sorts of data to uncover the true certification picture. Ultimately, Marty thinks that certification should not be so stringent and that the ABCN should allow more psychologists to enter the field of clinical neuropsychology.

SEPTEMBER 11: ONCE-in-a-LIFETIME VARIABLE

SEPTEMBER 11 was a very memorable event for **Dr. Jerry Downey** in more ways than the one we are all familiar with. For SEP 11 gave him a chance to gather (on-line, in real time, so to speak) some valuable HOSTILITY data. It just so happened that on Sep 10 & Sep 11 (2001) Jerry had handy his *Buss-Durkee Hostility Inventory*. This measure asks such questions as: "If somebody hits me, I hit back" (very physical) or "Other people always seem to get the breaks" (more psychological). On SEP 10 (control data), the mean score (for college students) was 65.8 (on a scale of 1 to 145), but on SEP 11, it rose phenomenally to 83.1! Furthermore, one year later (SEP 2002), it was still at 79.4, so look how hostile we still are a whole year later! Obviously, due to SEP 11, many Americans started to feel extremely hostile towards other people in general. Jerry thinks an important factor also was the media bombardment calling attention to differences between eastern vs. western cultures, because as we all know Jerry's real interest lies in the realm of HOSTILITY ⇔ PERCEPTION of DIFFERENCES in PEOPLE.

By the way, Jerry's former student **Marios Argyrides**, budding cross-cultural social psychologist, is now a Ph.D. student at Tennessee State. And Jerry is now working with a new student **Veronica Horenstein** (Argentina), who will undoubtedly start helping Jerry out with the South American view on PEOPLE PERCEPTION.

ASYMMETRIES in MONKEY LARYNX?

Every comparative anatomist knows about the asymmetrical syrinx (sound producing organ) in songbirds, but now it appears that there may be an asymmetrical larynx in primates! **Dr. Chuck Brown** is researching this possibility using a squirrel monkey model. Anatomical asymmetries are of interest to lots of people is because they may somehow relate to the *evolution of human speech*, which is probably the most complex asymmetry that exists in nature. But Chuck doesn't want to leap to any conclusions at present. For now he is content to scrutinize the monkey larynx, looking at left vs. right innervation, left vs. right membranes, left vs. right stiffness, left vs. right conduction velocity, etc. He thinks that anatomical asymmetries could enhance VOCAL ORNAMENT such as *stacatto* and other *pulsed vocalizations* in both monkey and man. He is now looking at 10 squirrel monkey larynges obtained from the USA DCM breeding colony. The real problem will be obtaining human larynges for comparison. Normal human tissues of any sort are not easy to get! Which all goes to show why it is important to develop monkey models of laryngeal activity for extrapolation to humans.

PSYCH PROF appointed USA GOLF COACH

It's not surprising that **Dr. Jerry Williams** has become the new interim assistant golf coach, given his interest in Sports Psychology. According to Jerry, GOLF is the ultimate partial reinforcement addiction! So how is our golf team (men's) doing? Very well, thank you! For the FALL, we won 3 out of 5 NCAA division tournaments, and we look GREAT for the regionals in May/June. Jerry is tremendously interested in all sports, since they allow him to work on his theories of DISTANCE VISUALIZATION & UNDERESTIMATION. He also does consulting for the tennis and baseball teams, and he himself has played basketball in his earlier days at Hutchinson Junior College and Washburn University, both in Kansas. Jerry's other main interest: Perfecting his teaching skills using Powerpoint ("don't use too much text on the screen"). While he is giving thought to retiring in a couple of years, he also plans to keep his foot in both Sports Psychology and part-time Psychology teaching.

CHAIR winds up 6-MO SABBATICAL

Dr. Larry Christensen is back from his half-year fall-term sabbatical, but laments that he didn't accomplish as much as he had hoped (a common occurrence with sabbaticals unfortunately). However, he did do a lot of new serious thinking about FOOD ⇔ MOOD, that infamous feedback loop whereby depression seems to induce carbo-cravings (and vice-versa). Now that Psychology has its very own BRAIN

WAVE LAB (see **Jack Shelly-Tremblay**), Larry hopes to eventually start looking at the brain mechanisms involved in FOOD ↔ MOOD. Specifically, he hopes use the EEG tool to look at certain cortical areas that have been shown to respond with large spikes to sugar ingestion, particularly after it has been withheld, then reintroduced, into the diet.

MUSIC & RELAXATION INTERTWINED

Despite devoting time to the Youth ~~Violence~~ Initiative (see above), **Elise Labbe** has still another interest: Studying the relationship between MUSIC and RELAXATION. New developments here are: (1) NEW EQUIPMENT consisting of heart rate, skin temperature, breathing and muscle tension monitors, all updated state-of-the-art equipment to better probe the **depths of relaxation**; (2) NEW VARIABLE of "lover of music" vs. "indifferent to music"; (3) NEW FINDING that even college students who purport to like ROCK do not choose ROCK *when they want to relax*.

The GRASS is ALWAYS GREENER...

Dr. Kati Arata will retire from ACADEME to devote more time to private practice. Her main interest is in **sexual abuse**, and she wants to devote full time to counseling in this area. Kati will be missed as an extremely active member of our clinical group, playing a large role in the **Youth Violence Initiative**. Her research has uncovered several interesting observations: (1) Most abuse (sexual and other) occurs **within the family**, (2) Boys and girls are **equally abused**, (3) For boys, abuse seems to predict **delinquency**, (4) For girls, abuse seems to cause **depression**, but "they don't take it out on society", (5) Parental neglect (considered by Kati a type of abuse) is a large factor in delinquency, because it typically leads to increased susceptibility to **peer pressure**. Students assisting Kati with her research are: **Jim Dineen, Amber Humphrey, Jeff Killbert, Allen Morgan & Laura O'Farrell**. **Natalie O'Brien**, a graduate of our department, serves as project coordinator.

Dr. Mark Faust has accepted a position at UNC, Charlotte. We will all miss Mark and the lively enthusiasm with which he probed the mysterious, inhibitory, top-down mechanisms used to **mentally switch tasks**. Mark was an inspiration to many students, teaching them all about the extent to which one can stop doing what one was just doing and do something new. Can one completely stop? NO! As we all know well from interacting with Mark, parts of one's previous task will continue (**unconsciously**), even when it is **maladaptive**. Many students have received on-line training in viewing various stimulus words (objects, animals, printed in red and green), and dealt with such variables as *complexity of instructions, low versus high memory load, and task delays*. Many students and faculty alike have learned about intriguing cognitive asymmetries, specifically how *low-level* color processing interferes more with *high-level* semantic processing than vice-versa.

EXTREMELY IMPORTANT MEMBER of OUR DEPT to celebrate 15 YEARS OF SERVICE!

How many know that **Ms. Bonnie Hall** has been in our very own Psychology Department since Feb 1988? She came to us after the big break-up of MA BELL, when she was confronted with the option of "transfer" or "terminate". After dabbling in real estate for awhile, she decided to go for a job at the USA, and boy are we all lucky that she landed here!

When asked about what she likes best about her job, Bonnie said her greatest satisfaction comes from helping and interacting with students. For example, she helps them register/drop/add courses, change majors/minors, assigns them to advisors, enters grades and advisor reports into student files, types waiver and credit forms. As a result, many students send her cards, flowers, and even candles.

Besides these, Bonnie's other duties consist of (not necessarily in order of importance): Acting as receptionist, distributing mail, taking minutes at faculty meetings, supervising work-study students, filing grade reports, typing PA forms and requisitions, maintain budget accounts using QUICKEN, monitoring and purchasing office supplies, maintaining class schedules and syllabi, preparing exams from test banks, maintaining all office equipment (I for one still call Bonnie when a piece of paper gets jammed in the copy machine), ordering textbooks, giving make-up exams, proctoring exams, keeping track of directed-study students, making coffee each morning and "doing anything else I am asked to do as long as it's moral, legal and ethical!"

THANKS FROM ALL OF US, BONNIE!!

NEWS from RETIREMENT

Dr. Bill Vitulli reports that all is well in retirement. He and his wife spent 2 weeks in Italy (Aug 01) and two in Alaska (May 02). He is still consulting editor for two journals, and still presents papers at APA and SEPA. Bill adds: "Retirement for me is not an all-or-none affair but a pleasant transition to a productive yet less demanding lifestyle". On the less demanding side: Bill is a regular walker with 1-year old Boston Terrier Ms. Mugsy.

This newsletter gets by with a little help from JMS

PRODUCTIVITY in 2002

Arata C (2002). Child abuse and sexual revictimization. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 9, 135-164.

Arata C & Lindman L (2002). Marriage, child abuse, and sexual revictimization. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 17, 953-971.

Arata C, Langhinrichsen-Rohling J & Bowers D (2002). Externalizing versus internalizing symptoms: Differential long-term effects of child abuse. *Paper at 7th International Conference on Family Violence*.

- Burns J, **Labbe E**, Arke B, Capeless K, Cooksey B, Steadman A & Gonzalez C (2002). The effects of different types of music on perceived and physiological measures of stress. *Journal of Music Therapy* 39, 101-116. [Surprisingly few studies have studied the physiological effects of music. We found that sitting quietly for 20 min resulted in similar levels of physiological relaxation as listening to classical music. Also, listening to hard rock music is not physiologically or emotionally relaxing.]
- Hamberger L, **Langhinrichsen-Rohling J**, Bonge D, Witte T, & Lohr, J (2002). The clinical utility of an MCMI batterer typology. *Poster at 36th annual meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy*.
- Jones T, Welsh M & **Langhinrichsen-Rohling J** (2002). The effects of magazine advertisements on the body image of college women. *Poster at 48th annual meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association*.
- Labbe E**, Lopez I, & O'Brien C (2002). Optimism and psychosocial functioning in caring for children with Battens and other neurological diseases. *Psychological Reports* 90, 1129-1135. [We evaluated parents who have children with Battens disease, a terminal neurological disease, and found that parents who were more optimistic, regardless of the level of caregiving or the level of their child's illness, experienced lower levels of psychological distress.]
- Langhinrichsen-Rohling, J** (2002). After the love dies: Relationship factors associated with post-dissolution stalking. *Paper at 36th annual meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy*.
- Langhinrichsen-Rohling J** (2002). Prevalence, risk factors, prevention and intervention strategies for adolescent suicidal behavior. *Workshop for the guidance and support staff of the Fort Wayne Community School System*.
- Langhinrichsen-Rohling J**, Huff W & Donald-Waters B. (2002). Fear of the perpetrator in sheltered battered women. *Poster at 48th annual meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association*.
- Monson C & **Langhinrichsen-Rohling J** (2002). Sexual and nonsexual dating violence perpetration: Testing an integrated perpetrator typology. *Violence and Victims* 17, 403-428.
- Parrot C, Burnham K, Quale C, Deatherage L, Chamness S, Lewis D, Ferguson S, Hall P, Baxley T & **Langhinrichsen-Rohling, J** (2002). ACC/AHA heart failure guidelines are effective in the elderly: An outcome analysis. *Poster at 4th Scientific Forum on Quality of Care and Outcomes Research in CVD and Stroke*.
- Sinnott J** (2002). Effects of training on learning non-native speech contrasts. *Poster at 143rd Meeting of the Acoustical Society of America*. [Japanese listeners outperformed American-English listeners in learning to categorize tricky non-native speech contrasts, /r-l/ for Japanese; /d-D/ for English].
- Sinnott J** (2002). Want to know what's going on with human speech perception? Ask a monkey! *Invited address to Cornell University Psychology Department*. [When monkeys have perceptual problems with certain speech sound contrasts, these can provide a clue that humans are not using general psychoacoustic mechanisms in speech perception].
- Solan H, **Shelly-Tremblay J**, Larson S & Silverman M (2002). Visual attention therapy: Impact on reading comprehension: A preliminary report. *Talk at 32nd Annual Meeting of the College of Optometrists in Vision Development*.
- Solan H, **Shelly-Tremblay J**, Larson S, Ficarra M & Silverman M (2002). Effect of visual attention therapy on reading development. *Paper at 32nd Annual Meeting of the College of Optometrists in Vision Development*.
- Vitulli W** (2002). Book review: Representing Sport by Rod Brookes. *Journal of Sport Behavior* 2, 407-409. [This book brings together a wide range of variables from the social sciences, including economics, in an effort to understand contemporary sport behavior on a cross-cultural basis, making an excellent adjunct text for a course on Sport Psychology.]
- White D, **Langhinrichsen-Rohling J**, Morgan A & Tims M. (2002). The associations among dating infidelity, relationship violence, and unwanted pursuit. *Poster at 48th annual meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association*.