There are many reasons why Psychology has been and continues to be one of the most popular majors at Saint Joseph’s. Prominent among them is the high quality of the Psychology faculty. The Department is home to an active and hard-working group of teacher-scholars whose activities have gotten a lot of recognition both on and off the Saint Joseph’s campus. This year, three of the Psychology faculty were recognized for the excellent quality of their work. Dr. Judi Chapman received a Saint Joseph’s Faculty Merit Award for excellence of service, Dr. Matt Anderson received one for excellence of scholarship, and Dr. Josephine Shih received one for excellence of teaching. In my 25 years of service to the University, I cannot remember when any other of Saint Joseph’s academic departments was honored with three simultaneous Merit Awards.

Of course, the efforts of the Psychology faculty would be pointless without our academically able majors. The Department supports and enhances the pedagogy of its majors with the latest software. In addition to the sophisticated SPSS statistical analysis package, the Department has recently acquired MATLAB and SuperLab for student use and development. Also, beginning this year the Department will sponsor an annual Psi Chi Psychology Student Research Poster Day. This event will be organized by the members of the Saint Joseph’s chapter of Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology. It will be a forum for students who have completed research projects during the academic year to share their work with the University community.

-Donald S. Leitner, Ph.D.
Student Investigates Effects of Social Context on Disgust

Will McKinley is a senior in Dr. Skolnick’s Emotion Lab. While taking Research Methods with Dr. Skolnick, Will approached Dr. Skolnick to inquire about possibly working in his lab. Will began volunteering last spring (2009) and ended-up getting involved in a study exploring disgust responses in the students. “Especially interesting to me is the social function of disgust and how it may change in the presence of others and how it may serve human beings from an evolutionary perspective”, Will explained. Specifically, his work sought to test whether social context may modulate disgust by having female college students interact with disgust-evoking stimuli and a control item while alone, with a nondisgusted partner, or with a disgusted partner. “Participants rated their disgust as higher when they were in the alone condition compared to when they were with a confederate,” said Will. “Participants were also more likely to refuse to participate in disgusting actions when alone. Whether or not the confederate acted disgusted did not affect the participant’s behaviors as much.

Will presented a poster at the Eastern Psychological Association, and at the SJU Psi Chi Psychology Student Research Poster Session. A manuscript with Will as the second author was submitted for publication and is under review. Will is also conducting another study examining differences in the meaning of facial expressions using a Go-No Go task. This task requires participants to respond to faces depicting different expressions as quickly as possible.

Has this research experience moved Will to become an emotion researcher? Not quite. Will explained, “Though emotion research has captivated me during my undergraduate career, I am hoping to go to graduate school for school psychology. I hope to one day be a practicing school psychologist in a charter school in Philadelphia.” Will is set to graduate from SJU in May 2010.

Student Researcher Explores Sex Differences in Romantic Jealousy.

Michael Roberts (BS ’09, MS expected ’10) has been interested in gender differences since he first took introductory psychology. “How gender roles develop and how we learn to express masculine and feminine emotions has always fascinated me,” Michael explains. These interests, as well as a general curiosity in social psychology were further fostered when Michael began working with Dr. Judith Chapman of the SJU psychology department.

Over the course of his studies, Michael developed a specific interest in gender differences in romantic relationships, which has culminated in the research of his Master’s thesis. In his thesis, Michael sought to identify whether one gender feels more jealousy than the other. Moreover, he was curious about whether the jealousy of an individual in a romantic relationship tends to be directed at their partner, or towards an outside person that threatens the relationship. Additionally he was curious about whether gender roles influenced males and females to explicitly express learned social norms while implicitly expressing how they truly feel. “While previous research on romantic jealousy has focused mainly on the feelings of jealousy alone, my research delved into the emotions that often appear side by side with jealousy or can sometimes be the cause of jealousy,” Michael explains.

To examine these issues, Michael had participants read hypothetical scenarios of sexual and emotional infidelity, and subsequently recorded their emotional reactions toward the partner and rival, the individual threatening the relationship. After rating their explicit emotions, he then administered an Implicit Associations Task (IAT) in order to measure their implicit reaction toward the partner and rival for both infidelity scenarios. This task was run on a computer program and required participants to assign positive and negative emotions to the partner and rival as fast as they could, with shorter response latencies indicating stronger emotional intensity.

In regards to the explicit reaction data, gender differences were obtained, with female emotional reactions being more intense than males across infidelity scenarios. Also, males’ and females’ emotional reactions differed significantly in response to partner and rival across infidelities. No significant gender differences were found in regard to implicit emotional reactions. Moreover, his findings generally indicated little difference between implicit and explicit reactions. “This leads me to believe that we truly believe and fulfill our gender roles,” Michael explains.
Congratulations to the 2010 Psi Chi Inductees

In keeping with the Jesuit tradition of service, the SJU Psychology Club is reaching out to our neighbors at Samuel Gompers Elementary School. Members of the Psychology Club are spending their afternoons mentoring students in Gompers’ after-school program. The program was initiated by Dr. Anastasio and some of her graduate students, who were interested in the effectiveness of outside sources on the students’ grades and behavior. Needless to say, the Gompers’ administration and student body were receptive of SJU’s efforts.

From 3:30pm-6pm each week, about 8-10 SJU students provide their services to the children at Gompers. The interactions with the Gompers’ students range from educational assistance like tutoring and helping with homework to fun activities such as playing games and watching movies. The students, ranging from kindergarten to sixth grade, really enjoy SJU’s presence and have shown progress in their schoolwork and behavior.

But the children at Gompers aren’t the only ones receiving benefits from the mentoring program. The mentors are getting a lot out of it as well. Lori Pearson, a junior psychology major, finds the experience of mentoring very rewarding. She strongly believes in the program’s effectiveness and urges other students to get involved. “Even if you are not in the psychology club”, Lori states, “Gompers could still use volunteers and the kids love it”.

Unfortunately, the mentoring program has been suspended due to a lack of funding. However, Dr. Anastasio is working to get the program re-running and to spread the word about the project. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Dr. Anastasio in the psychology department.

Story by Jessica Matynka, BS ’09 MS expected ‘10
Faculty Profile:  
Dr. Pat Garrigan

Dr. Pat Garrigan combines computational techniques and behavioral experimentation to investigate how the human visual system stores information. The research in Dr. Garrigan's lab has most recently focused on how people learn to recognize simple shapes and complex images.

Dr. Garrigan grew up just outside of Shamokin, Pennsylvania and attended Southern Columbia High School. In 1999 he received Bachelor's degrees in psychology and physics at the Univ. of Pennsylvania. In 2005 he received a Ph.D. in psychology from UCLA working with Dr. Philip Kellman. Following a postdoctoral fellowship at Penn under the supervision of Dr. Vijay Balasubramanian, Dr. Garrigan joined the SJU psychology department in August, 2007.

We were pleased with the enthusiastic response to our first Departmental Newsletter. It was great to hear from so many alumni.

If you are a graduate of the SJU Psychology BS or MS programs, we would love to hear from you and share your news with others in Alumni Notes. Please direct any news and updates to the editors. Be sure to indicate the year you graduated and in which program you were enrolled.

Also, feel free to share this information and newsletter with others.

News or Suggestions?
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Contact the editors