

We've Got Issues

Willamette University Psychology Department Quarterly Newsletter

From the Chair

Welcome back, everyone! It's hard to believe that we're already almost halfway through another academic year!

The psychology department is delighted to welcome a new face this year. In this issue of the newsletter, you will be introduced to the newest member of the psychology department, Jeremy Miller. Professor Miller, a cognitive psychologist, is teaching Introduction to Psychology (two sections) and Cognitive Processes this term. He will also be teaching research methods and statistics for us.

Professor Miller received a B.A. degree in psychology from Millersville University in Pennsylvania. He completed an M.A. (2003) and a Ph.D. (2005) in Cognitive Psychology at The State University of New York at Binghamton.

His primary research area is that of human memory. Specifically, Professor Miller is interested in the interaction between memory systems and perceptual systems, and the manner in which these

systems work in concert to allow the formation of representations of the physical world around us. Of particular interest to Dr. Miller is the role of perceptual fluency (the speed and ease with which we process a stimulus) in how we make memory decisions. Please help us make Prof. Miller feel welcome, and stop by to say hello when you have a moment.

We're happy to report that Staci Simmelink-Johnson has returned for another year as a full-time visiting professor, and she is teaching Introduction to Psychology, Personality Psychology, and Senior Year Experience. Her office for Fall 2005 will be Smullin 252.

In addition, we're fortunate that Samuel Stem, a professional counselor with considerable clinical experience, has joined us this fall to teach a topical seminar on the Psychology of Addictions.

Finally, you might have noticed that Professor Hermann is on a research leave this term. He was awarded a junior faculty leave for the fall semester and is spending

his time at his alma mater, Ohio State, working with colleagues. He is enjoying the opportunity to present his work on self-esteem and self-presentation, as well as his projects with graduate Gale Lucas and professor Jim Friedrich on culture and perceived esteem, to other faculty and graduate students for feedback and lively discussion. He is looking forward to returning with lots of good research ideas for students who want to collaborate with him. He'll be back with us for the spring term.

The other big departmental change is that Professor Friedrich has completed his three-year term as Department Chair, and I'm his successor. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns with which I might be able to help!

Again, welcome back, and have a wonderful year!

Sue Koger
Chair

October 2005

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Mark Your Calendar...

October 21st

Mid Semester Day—no CLA classes

October 31st

Happy Halloween!

November 12th

Psychology Subject Exams for Graduate Record Examinations (GREs)

November 21st

CLA Web Registration begins.



Welcome
Back!!

Workplace “Integrity” and Academic Honesty

In recent years, personnel and industrial psychologists have seen a virtual explosion in the use of so-called “integrity tests” to screen and hire employees. These measures are designed to assess attitudes and past behaviors related to such counterproductive work behaviors (“CWB’s”) as theft, fraud, drug use, and absenteeism in the workplace. Recent research has suggested that integrity tests rank behind only cognitive ability tests and measures of specific job knowledge in their ability to predict desirable workplace performance.

A related area of concern within our educational system involves academic dishonesty – including everything from plagiarism to cheating on exams to false reasons given for securing excused absences or assignment extensions. If one thinks of being a student as a kind of “job” and academic honesty as a desirable aspect of “performance,” does it make sense to think that what we know about predicting CWB’s in the workplace might actually be used to predict students’ academic cheating?

Recent psychology major Gale Lucas (WU’ 05) joined me two years ago to begin a project exploring this very question. An ongoing controversy in the fields of personality and social psychology concerns the degree to which one can really predict behavior based on measures of attitudes and personality traits. Most of the research on academic dishonesty, for example, has suggested that factors in the immediate situation might be far more important than general traits or attitudes in predicting who will “cheat” and when. A major limitation of this work, however, is that only a limited range of traits or attitudes have been explored, and they have often been used to predict only single instances of cheating (e.g., whether someone will cheat on an exam at a specific point in time).

In contrast, personnel and industrial psychologists have typically been more concerned with predicting “longer term” behavior or trends. If we know a person’s enduring attitudes and habits or qualities, will that help us accurately forecast general patterns of behavior (as opposed to specific instances) in some other work-related context?

In the study that Gale and I did, we worked with a large sample of introductory psychology students representing a broad cross-section of WU majors and interests (you might even have been among the group!). In an initial session, students anonymously completed two different integrity tests – one a commercially available instrument that looked primarily at admissions of past “deviant” behaviors, and the second a publicly available test used in integrity research that measured mostly attitudes and opinions about theft and workplace honesty. Neither of these instruments asked any questions having to do with attitudes or behaviors related to academic cheating.

In a second session a few weeks later, students responded anonymously to an Academic Dishonesty Inventory (ADI) that Gale developed based on past research instruments. The ADI includes a list of 26 different behavioral examples of academic dishonesty and asks respondents to simply indicate for each one whether or not they have engaged in the behavior at least once in the past two years. For example, 57% of our Intro Psych sample admitted to having paraphrased from a book without acknowledging the source; 65% admitted to allowing another student to copy their homework; only 5% said they attempted to gain special consideration by offering favors or “bribes”; and 0% reported having someone else take an exam in their place. The ADI as a whole is scored on a 26 point scale that simply tallies the number of different behaviors the respondent admits to having engaged in.

The frequency with which students reported engaging in academic cheating is, itself, an interesting question. Yet the primary purpose of the study was to see if we could predict their self-reported level of academic honesty over the last two years by knowing scores on “academically unrelated” measures of workplace integrity. The results were quite striking. For one of the measures – the Employee Integrity Index – scores correlated $r = .53$ ($p < .001$) with scores on the academic dishonesty measure. For the other integrity measure – the commercially used Insight Survey – the correlation was $.48$ ($p < .001$). In both cases, scores on workplace integrity measures were strong predictors of students’ self-reported academic honesty. These relationships were smaller but still strong even after controlling for socially desirable responding (a tendency to respond to questionnaires in ways that promote favorable impressions, which could artificially inflate correlations in a study such as this.)

Is there any moral to the story here? First, one always has to be cautious in interpretation – remember “NHST Step 7,” all you former Friedrich Pych 253 students? 😊 In terms of the theoretical question about “traits” predicting other behaviors, we did receive strong support. It’s important to note, however, that most of the participants in the sample were first or second year WU students, which means instances of cheating they recalled “from the last two years” might well have occurred in high school where norms regarding cheating are perhaps different. WU students know well that the University takes a very firm stance on academic integrity violations and pursues these cases seriously. Nevertheless, such results do suggest that simply changing environments may not radically alter academic integrity behaviors. If past attitudes and actions – even in work settings completely unrelated to school – are highly predictive of academic honesty, it suggests that promoting academic honesty might require more than simple “university rules” or careful proctoring and monitoring.

If people’s behavior in this realm is in fact guided by more general attitudes and traits regarding honesty and integrity, then perhaps a route to greater and more universal academic honesty is for students, faculty, and administrators to continue to cultivate an environment that encourages people to live by and *internalize* these shared standards of honesty – standards that are at the very core of what it means to be in a community of free and independent learners seeking truths about the world. Perhaps an “honor code” is indeed something that works best when mutually supported and internalized as part of our beliefs and values rather than simply being a set of rules enforced by authorities as they try to police the academic environment.

To read more about this recently published study, see:

Lucas, G.M., & Friedrich, J. (2005). Individual differences in workplace deviance and integrity as predictors of academic dishonesty. *Ethics & Behavior*, 15, 15-35.



Introducing Professor Jeremy Miller...

I was born in Birmingham Alabama, but spent the majority of my formative years in a little town in Central Pennsylvania called Muncy. The sparsely populated hills of central PA are no place to spend your college years, so I made the journey south to the slightly bigger small town of Lancaster PA for college at Millersville University, where I received my B.A. in psychology. Following college, I took a few years off from school and worked in the emergency stabilization unit of a psychiatric hospital.

In 2000, I decided to head back to school. I attended graduate school at the State University of New York at Binghamton. I completed my masters degree in psychology in 2003. I finished my Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology in May of 2005. During my time in Binghamton, I developed an interest in human memory, and I continue to be fascinated with the topic. My research has been focused on the manner in which sensory information interacts with recognition memory. I am looking forward to continuing this research program at Willamette.

I am extremely excited to be joining the faculty here at Willamette University. I am confident that working at Willamette will offer me an excellent opportunity to grow as both an instructor and a researcher. My girlfriend Rachel and I are also excited about the chance to relocate to the Pacific Northwest. Our explorations of Salem and Portland have left us impressed, and we are looking forward to exploring the area in more depth in the near future.

Jeremy Miller

Graduate Record Examinations (GREs)

Prometric Testing Center
1020 Green Acres Rd., Suite 11
Eugene, Oregon 97408
(541)485-4589

Prometric Testing Center
14623 McLoughlin Blvd S.E.
Milwaukie, Oregon 97267
(503)659-0486

University of Oregon
720 East 13th Avenue, Suite 302B
Eugene, Oregon 97403
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~testing>
(541)346-2772

Prometric Testing Center
1122 NE 122nd Avenue, Suite 106 A
Portland, Oregon 97230
(503)254-4159

Psychology Subject Exams for GREs

Psych Subject Exams for GREs are still pencil-paper tests, offered only three times a year, and will be administered on **November 12** and **December 10, 2005** and **April 1, 2006**. Oregon State University, Portland State University and Linfield are the closest schools for the November test; Willamette is a testing site only for the December exams. For further information, please visit www.gre.com or call Nancy Norton at Career Services, x6413.



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Quarterly Newsletter

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Research Methods and Analysis I, Sensation/Perception