

COR FACULTY MENTORS AND RESEARCH INTERESTS
(In Reverse Alphabetical Order)

Rob Youmans, Psychology. The CSU system serves many at-risk students whose educational experience is burdened by jobs, family care, and by a lack of knowledge about the requirements for success at a university. The goal of this project is to reduce student stress and improve student learning outcomes by improving student decision making using cognitive information feedback, which improves judgments by recording a student's own set of educational goals and reminding them of those goals when new decisions are being made. COR student researchers will learn common techniques for quantifying judgment data, read literature on judgment, analyze data, conduct further literature reviews on student stress, and help present our findings at regional and national conferences. The skill sets involved include learning more about advanced experimental design, data entry, data analyses common to JDM, and conference poster and talk preparations. Most importantly, participating students will be learning how applied research can aid communities.

Erica Wohldmann, Psychology. My research is aimed at understanding the cognitive processes involved in human learning and memory. Most recently, I have been studying the conditions under which motor imagery can be used to learn and retain motor skills, whether the ability to use imagery effectively changes as a function of age, the effects of divided attention on skilled performance, and in testing theories of learning, such as variability of practice and encoding specificity. In addition, I am interested in other factors that influence cognition, such as time pressure and stress. The dependent variables of interest typically include response times and various measures of accuracy, which are derived from computer programs used to test human subjects. Student assistants are involved in all aspects of psychological research, allowing them to gain valuable experience in developing testable hypotheses, conducting literature reviews, collecting and analyzing human subject data, and disseminating research findings to the scientific community.

Michele Wittig, Psychology. *The Social Psychology Action Research Collective (SPARC)* uses an Acculturation Model to examine moderators and mediators of prejudice reduction. This model is rooted in cultural pluralism and incorporates conditions of intergroup contact as well as acculturation variables (including aspects of ethnic identity and outgroup orientation). Our research is conducted in collaboration with teachers, high school students, and non-profit human rights and educational organizations. (2) Student researchers learn ethical principles, review relevant literature and assist with needs assessments. They design and implement action-oriented research, collect and analyze data (using quantitative and qualitative methods), interpret and present results, and use the derived information to address social problems. Conference participation and publication is encouraged. (3) The research has direct impact on the delivery of a curriculum for high school students designed to reduce prejudice and promote intergroup tolerance, which has been shown to improve the mental health of potential targets of discrimination.

W. David Wakefield, Child and Adolescent Development. *Cultural Pluralism Project: Adolescents' Perceptions and Responses to Racial Discrimination.* My general research interests include the personal, social, and academic development of youth in culturally diverse contexts. I am specifically interested in the ethnic identity development and academic engagement among people of color – particularly among adolescents. One of my current research projects involves understanding high school students' experiences with racial discrimination and how discrimination influences academic engagement and motivation. Other projects include exploring young children's understanding of racial categories, facilitating cultural competency among practitioners, and how minority adolescents form their ethnic identity. This research is critical in better enhancing positive interpersonal relationships between members of different racial and ethnic groups. My research has relevance to parents and teachers since they directly structure children's daily experiences. My undergraduate research assistants collect data at local school sites, conduct data analyses, and develop materials for national conference presentation. <http://hhd.csun.edu/wakefield>.

Holli A. Tonyan, Psychology. Overall my research examines early social and emotional development in cultural context. Specifically, right now I have at least two projects on which COR students would be welcome to work. First, I am developing a project to examine daily transitions between home and child day care as a context in which children learn to regulate stress and distress through social interactions. We have begun a systematic review of the literature to examine the factors in child day care and home ecologies that likely influence children's early stress responses. In addition, in order to examine parents' views about transitions, we have conducted an internet-based survey for parents about daily transitions. I hope to develop an internet-based survey for child care providers to parallel the data from parents. The second project is an archival video analysis project examining the coregulation of distress at 14- and 24-months among low-income Latino mother-child dyads.

April Taylor, Child and Adolescent Development. *Advancing Academic Achievement among Urban Youth* examines ethnic minority middle school students' perceptions of social roles, peer culture, and peer group norms and their effect on academic values, achievement, and motivation. Students participating in this research lab learn how to identify research questions, construct survey measures, dialogue with middle school students and personnel, collect, code, and analyze survey and peer nomination data, and write and present research. This lab focuses on concepts relevant to mental health including: ethnicity, goals setting and aspirations, self-concept, perceptions of discrimination, academic motivation, and peer groups. Students work collaboratively as a part of the lab and are responsible for completing a research project conducted with the aid and supervision of a faculty mentor.

Victor Shaw, Sociology. *Drug Use among Southwestern Natives: A Look at the Methamphetamine Epidemic in Native American Population.* Methamphetamine use has developed into a national epidemic in recent years. While use by other population groups is well studied, use by Native Americans still awaits serious scholarly scrutiny. Historically, Native Americans are made known by research for their problematic use of alcohol. Now, methamphetamine, as inexpensive and accessible as alcohol, seems to be gaining as much force and notoriety for its use by Native Americans. This study involves in-depth fieldwork with Native American youths in the southwestern United States. Face-to-face interviews and onsite observations are conducted in cooperation with local health and wellness centers at selected Indian reservations. The study attempts to present systematic information about methamphetamine manufacturing, distributing, and use by Native American youth, and also to provide social, cultural, economic, political, and geographic explanations for methamphetamine abuse as a social problem facing Native American populations.

Mark Sergi, Psychology. *Social Cognition and Neurocognition in Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders* studies social cognition, neurocognition, and functioning in persons with schizophrenia and schizotypy. On the CSUN campus, COR students have participated in all phases of research (hypothesis generation, participant recruitment, testing, data coding/analysis) on a project that examines relations between neurocognition (verbal memory and executive functioning), social cognition (theory of mind skills, emotional intelligence) and functioning (social, academic, and work functioning) in undergraduates with features of schizotypy (e.g., magical beliefs, perceptual distortions, asociality). On the campus of the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center, COR students are testing participants, coding data, and running psychoeducation skills training groups in a study that examines the ability of neurocognitive assessments to predict substance-abusing schizophrenia patients' ability to learn the sobriety concepts and skills of the psychoeducation skills training intervention.

Carrie Saetermoe, Psychology. *Life Chances for LA Youth* studies the perceptions and actions of middle school and high school Chicana/o students, their families, teachers, and counselors as the students consider college as an option for their future. For this qualitative study, COR students learn culturally competent interviewing, focus group moderation, data management (translation and transcription), qualitative methods and analysis, presentation at conferences, community service, and integration into a large, active research and intervention laboratory. Students study many mental health concepts including assimilation/acculturation, contextual opportunities and barriers, family dynamics, and, coincidentally through data collection, substance abuse, depression, and compromised mental health.

Jill Razani, Psychology. *The Neuropsychology Lab.* There are currently two projects offered in Dr. Razani's lab. The Dementia Project examines the relationship between neuropsychological (i.e., cognitive) dysfunction and actual functional ability in patients with various forms of dementia. The Normative Study examines factors that affect the neuropsychological test performance of different ethnic immigrant groups. In both projects, students will learn to administer traditional neuropsychological tests of memory, attention, and abstract reasoning. Both of these projects contribute to the field of mental health as we better understand the relationship between brain and behavior, as well how other factors (such as biculturalism and bilingualism) influence test scores in the absence of brain dysfunction. COR students will work with Dr. Razani and senior lab students to learn the literature, administer tests, score and enter and analyze data. Students will also present the findings at conferences and/or participate in writing research articles.

Jill Quilici, Psychology. When confronted with a problem, one often thinks of a similar previously-solved problem and uses the solution from this problem to help solve the new problem. I am interested in how people develop their ability to solve problems in this manner. My research examines the impact of culture and instruction on the development of problem-solving skills. COR students I mentor will meet with me at least two hours per week. COR students on this project will develop their ability to read and review research literature, design research experiments, develop experiment stimulus materials, collect data, use SPSS to conduct quantitative data analyses, write APA format research papers, and present research at conferences. This research is important to understanding mental health, because a key characteristic of mental disorders is cognitive dysfunction. It is critical to mental health research to understand normal cognition in order to recognize cognitive impairments in individuals experiencing a mental disorder.

Scott Plunkett, Psychology. *Adolescent Resiliency in Multi-Cultural Communities* is designed to enhance the understanding of resiliency in youth through collecting adolescent self-report surveys, father self-report surveys, school-record data, and neighborhood data from students in high schools in Los Angeles which have a large populations of Latino, African American, Armenian, Iranian, and Asian students. Some variables include neighborhood qualities, parenting and peer influences, school climate, ethnic identity, academics, delinquency, violence, relational aggression, substance use, self-concept, and depression. Research assistants learn how to (1) collect quantitative data from self-report surveys, school records, and census; (2) code, enter, and verify data using SPSS and Excel; (3) conduct and report statistical analyses; (4) write research reports; (5) present at conferences, and (6) publish results. <http://www.csun.edu/plunk/armcc>

Janet Oh, Psychology. *Correlates and Consequences of Heritage Language Loss.* In my research, I study the development and experiences of individuals who come from backgrounds in which a heritage language (a language other than the mainstream, dominant language) is spoken. In this research project, we investigate how heritage language development—specifically, heritage language loss—is related to other areas of development, including cultural identity development, psychological well-being, and family relationships. Some data on heritage language development and cultural identity have already been collected from a sample

of college students, and we plan to expand this dataset by collecting data on other areas of development, and by collecting data from adolescents in middle school and high school. Depending on students' interests and progress of the project, they may assist in various aspects of the study, including background literature research, study design, data collection, data entry/coding, statistical analyses, and preparing presentations and publications.

Adilifu Nama, Pan African Studies. *Color Them Black: Black Superheroes in Comics and Film.* Super heroes (e.g. Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Spiderman) are iconic figures symbolizing American morality, political ethos and cultural anxieties. The space that Black superheroes occupy in this imagescape has been ignored. A significant portion of audiences' involvement in various incarnations of the superhero is informed by identification with the central protagonist. The viewer-identification nexus, as it concerns attitudes about race and self-esteem, is a provocative and compelling. Given the strident depictions of comic book heroes like Tarzan, that presented black characters as overwhelmingly subservient or savage, makes comic book superheroes easy fodder for critique as highly-racialized even propagandistic texts that reflect and promote a social matrix of racial inferiority and possibly the internalization of racial prejudice. I view race, type of super heroes, age, time devoted to the activity, self-esteem, family status, G.P.A., and attitudes about race as the variables central to the psychological impact of black adolescents identifying with white superheroes. Students will acquire skills in qualitative social-psychological research and function as secondary researchers (input on research design, literature review, fieldwork, interviews).

Juana Mora, Chicana/o Studies. Her current work (including the publication of a book titled: Latino Social Policy: A Participatory Research Model) focuses on the promotion of participatory research methods in low-income Los Angeles Communities of color. In 2003, I received a grant from the First 5 Los Angeles Commission to implement a two- year initiative. The purpose of the NDUC Initiative is to establish demonstration research partnerships with community organizations for the development of community level data related to the health, well-being and school readiness of children in Los Angeles County 0-5. My role is to provide training and technical assistance to five non-profit community based organizations with the design and implementation of their research projects related to the health and wellbeing of children. Last week, the five non-profit groups presented their preliminary findings at the First 5 Statewide conference.

Bradley McAuliff, Psychology. Two projects in my research lab evaluate efforts to minimize the negative impact of criminal justice system involvement on child victims' mental health. Project #1 examines the effects of support person use on children's stress, accuracy, and perceived credibility. Are children who are accompanied by a support person less stressed, more accurate, and perceived more favorably than those who are not? Project #2 investigates the role of expectancy violation theory in explaining why jurors view children who use procedural innovations less favorably (despite their decreased stress and improved accuracy) than those who do not. Students will use quantitative (survey, experiment) and qualitative (interview) methodologies and will participate in all stages of the research from hypothesis development and testing to data collection and analysis to conference presentation and publication. Students also will learn relevant mental health concepts, including self-efficacy, social support, and psychological states accompanying physical/sexual abuse.

Gina Masesquesmay, Asian American Studies. I propose to work with a research assistant to review and analyze the recent literature on the less researched (e.g., Sino-Laotians, Vietnamese-Laotians, Mien Laotians) Southeast Asian refugees. Sorting through their major issues and comparing them to the more abundant studies on Vietnamese, Hmong, and Khmer Cambodians, the research assistant will provide me with analyzed information to produce a syllabus on Southeast Asian refugee communities with a framework that provides a more balanced representation of voices and issues of these interconnected communities. The dominant paradigm either discusses them discretely or generally as an Asian American group that defies the model minority stereotype. Moreover, a Vietnam-war-centric perspective of the reason for the refugees renders a distorted view of agency for these ethnic groups and a warped history of the Southeast Asian wars and their aftermath. A transnational lens on these diasporic communities also enhances our examination of current dynamics of these communities.

Judith Marti, Anthropology. *Immigration and Agency* seeks to explain why and when immigrants do, or do not, take agency (take power or "go public."). Factors examined include social networks, level of education, gender, class, and legal status. Preliminary findings point to the importance of psychological factors, and bring into question some well established assumptions. For example, feelings of shame and loss of status, rather than a high level of education, as previously assumed, may explain why middleclass immigrant men do not seek help. There are important policy implications--if policies are to effect change, underlying factors need to be well established. Students involved in this ongoing project will learn anthropological methodology including participant/observation and anthropological interviewing, to analyze data cross-culturally and the importance of understanding behavior in the context of cultural diversity, They will hone these skills by inputting and analyzing collected data and conducting their own original fieldwork projects.

Daisy Lemus, Communication Studies. *Communication and Retirement Planning.* Retirement research suggests that health, financial, social, and psychological factors influence people's intentions, decisions, and plans to retire, as well as retirees' adjustment, satisfaction, and psychological well-being after retiring. My research investigates the role of communication in these processes. Variables include: uncertainty reduction, information seeking, self-efficacy, retirement satisfaction, propensity to retire, and psychological well-being. I employ survey research to collect information via closed-ended questionnaires. I also use focus

groups and semi-structured interviews. Students will work with quantitative and qualitative data. Students will be exposed to the following activities: 1) reviewing interdisciplinary research, 2) traveling to research sites, 3) moderating focus groups, 4) constructing questionnaires, 5) conducting interviews, and 6) analyzing data. This experience will help students understand the steps involved in conducting research from understanding the use of theory to exploring methodology and data. Students will learn how to develop various research instruments.

Luciana Lagana, Psychology. *Adult Behavioral Medicine Laboratory.* The primary objective of this lab is to investigate the psychological needs of cognitively high-functioning elderly women of all ethnic backgrounds, and to decrease depression and anxiety among older men and women by training them in computers/Internet use for informational and social purposes. COR students acquire several skills through participation in this lab by collecting mental health outcome data, conducting literature searches and qualitative and quantitative data analyses, as well as coding and verifying data. They are also involved in publication-writing and co-authoring several presentations at national conferences. Furthermore, they have the responsibility of functioning as research mentors and role models for several junior research assistants, who often turn to them when they need guidance concerning meeting the multiple deadlines of the lab, such as preparing posters and coding data of a complex nature.

Ellie Kazemi, Psychology. To investigate possible causal mechanisms for increased emotional problems (i.e., anxiety and depression) in adolescents with learning disabilities (LD), I recruited 43 students with LD between academic grades of 6-11 (i.e., in middle or high school). Students and their parent(s) attended UCLA for two days of assessments that entailed neuropsychological testing, normed self-report measures, semi-structured interviews, physiological measures, as well as observational measures. The primary variables of interest are academic achievement, self-concept (or self-esteem), self-efficacy, attributions, social competence, depression, anxiety, parenting styles and values, and more. At this time, student responsibilities will include data-entry and database revisions, organization of participants' files and data, coding descriptive material, and making APA tables based on certain results and analyses. The student research assistant will learn about psychological assessments and protocols, how to work with a large database, how to enter, organize, and code data and how to depict study results for publication.

Gary S. Katz, Psychology. *Auditory Binaural Beats and ADHD* examines the effect of a unique auditory stimulus - Auditory Binaural Beats - upon individual's attention, vigilance, and impulsivity measures in ADHD and non-ADHD individuals. Auditory binaural beats are formed when two tones of slightly different frequencies constructively and destructively interfere, creating standing waves of neural impulses corresponding to the difference of the two frequency bands. This is a psychophysiological study using electroencephalography and a standardized computer-administered test of attention and impulsivity. COR students will learn basic electroencephalographic techniques including data acquisition and analysis, statistical techniques for psychophysiological data, as well as how to work with pediatric populations in a research setting. Additional training and expertise will be gained in presenting research findings at conferences and preparing data for publication. Students will gain first-hand knowledge of how to critically-examine a nonpharmacologic treatment regimen for a common childhood psychological disorder that frequently persists into adulthood.

Sun-Mee Kang, Psychology. The concept of social intelligence emerged from the observation that high IQ does not necessarily guarantee social success or successful interpersonal relationships beyond academic achievement. Besides verbal and spatial intelligence, psychologists suspected there might be a third type of intelligence that explains people's social functioning. This research project explores critical factors contributing to social intelligence, focusing on the role of emotion in interpersonal sensitivity (i.e., the ability to sense, perceive accurately, and respond appropriately to one's interpersonal and social environment), which is considered one of the important aspects of social intelligence. To identify the major factors involved in interpersonal sensitivity, multiple assessment methods in various social settings will be employed: focus group, in-depth interview, computer simulation, mailing survey, and behavioral observations. Students will learn how to design studies to address specific research questions, conduct interviews, moderate discussion groups, conduct behavioral coding, write computer programs, and make survey questions, enter data into computer, analyze the data, write a publishable manuscript, and present in a professional conference.

John Holden, Psychology. *Cognitive Performance Laboratory* is exploring the use of statistical techniques capable of characterizing patterns of variability in laboratory reading performance. Variability patterns have the potential to inform a range of mental health issues. For instance, acquired dyslexic's lexical-decision times are more variable than unimpaired controls (Colangelo et. al, 2004; Moreno et al., 2002). Lexical decision measures the time required to discriminate legitimate words from pseudowords like 'glurp'. It is used widely to evaluate language skills in normal readers and patient populations. Thus, understanding performance variability may broaden our knowledge of proper and impaired cognitive functioning. COR students (1) gain experience conducting laboratory reading experiments, (2) collect data from research participants using computer based laboratory protocols and manage large data sets, and (3) participate in regular lab meetings where they are trained to conduct appropriate the statistical tests, receive guidance in understanding relevant background literature, and develop more effective scientific writing skills.

Sheila K. Grant, Ph.D., Department of Psychology. *Maximizing Academic and Personal Success (MAPS) Project... Exploring Pathways to Actualize Student Potential.* This project is a formal, systematic educational research program, exploring the differences between the resilient and the at-risk student. Exploration of various social and psychological factors is conducted to

ascertain which variables or sets of variables contribute to this lack of academic and personal success. This research involves a large database with over 50 psychological assessment scores on 1000+ ethnically diverse college students. Research Interns will be trained in all aspects of research (e.g., development of research questions, hypotheses testing, and conducting comprehensive literature reviews, basic and applied research principles, drafting assessments, conducting experiments, data coding, entry, and statistical analysis of results, and practical interpretation of outcomes). Motivated students will have the opportunity to prepare and present posters at professional conferences (both regional and national) and to co-author journal articles.

Rosemary Gonzalez, Child & Adolescent Development & Chicano Studies. *Ethnic Identity Encounters and Achievement Motivation among 10th grade adolescents in a Diverse High School Setting.* This project is based on data that examined how children respond to threats to their identity. How youth cope with ethnic encounters and how the school mediates these relations is critical. Given the changing demographics in California, this data can provide insight into how students cope with being or becoming "minorities." The data was collected in a school with a population of over 60% Latinos. Over 200 tenth-grade students completed a questionnaire that assessed achievement motivation, school-level practices, ethnic identity, other-group orientation, and other coping responses. In addition, interviews were conducted with thirty students with a range of academic and cultural experiences. Students who work on the project can become involved in transcription of interview data, development of coding schemes, quantitative data analysis, and presenting data at national conferences.

Gabriela Chavira, Psychology. *Pathways to College.* Despite many ways that parents can become involved in their children's education, for Latino families, variables such as parents' education and their immigration status, can influence the degree and extent of their involvement. The purpose of this study is to examine the roles of adolescents' education and career goals and their families' involvement in home, school, and community settings among Mexican-descent students living in low-income communities. We will eventually expand to include families of diverse ethnic backgrounds, including African Americans and Asian Americans. Students in this longitudinal research project will interview adolescents, learn qualitative and quantitative methods, code and enter data, and be co-authors in conference presentations and journal submissions.

Alex Bierman, Sociology. The ASH study examines mental and physical health of older adults (age 65+) from Washington, DC and two adjoining counties in Maryland. Observation was begun between 2000 and 2001, with follow-ups approximately 1, 2, 4, and 5 years later. Initial sample size was 1,167. The following were measured: depression, anxiety, and anger, stressors (e.g., neighborhood conditions, marital strains, health strains, parental strains) and resources (e.g., social support, self esteem, and mastery). Data from a second longitudinal study, the MIDUS, were originally gathered in 1995 and comprise a nationally representative sample of 3,032 adults aged 25-74. The intentions of the MIDUS were to gather a wide-ranging portrait of adults at midlife (e.g., mental health, family, religion, social connections, discrimination, and childhood experiences such as child maltreatment). Approximately 10 years later, respondents were followed up and the same questions were repeated, allowing for an opportunity to examine a wide variety of influences on trajectories of mental health.

Jose Abara, Psychology. *The Neuroscience Lab* is devoted to examining brain and behavior relationships using electrophysiological techniques and psychometric instruments. Our research interests include the study of attention, working memory and emotion. We use various components of the event-related potential (ERP) such as N170, N250 and P3, and the contingent negative variation (CNV) to study cognitive and emotional functioning and related processes. There are currently three teams working on different projects. Team PFC is studying the allocation of neural resources relating to expectation and preparation during attention and working memory tasks. Team Psi Chi is studying brain electrical activity patterns relating to psychopathy and narcissistic characteristics. Team Dr. Sergi is examining brain electrical activity patterns during face emotional recognition tasks. COR students are encouraged to participate in all phases of research. The lab provides opportunities for students to engage in literature review, formulate research questions and hypotheses, data collection (e.g., electrode placements), data analysis (e.g., evaluating brainwaves, identifying ERPs), conference presentations, and publications.