Spotlight on Faculty

Dr. Keith Maddox is an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department. He is a social psychologist specializing in social cognition. His research interests include the use and measurement of stereotypes.

TPS: Where did you go to undergrad/grad, etc?
I went to University of Michigan in Ann Arbor for undergrad., and then I went to University of CA at Santa Barbara for a masters and PhD – both in Social Psychology.

TPS: When did you become interested in social psychology?
I became interested in social psychology as an undergraduate during my junior year. I was taking a cognitive psychology class along with a class in attitudes and behavior. On the first day of the course in attitudes and behavior the instructor said, “This course title has changed to Social Cognition.” Along with cognitive psychology there was a lot of parallels and cross-fertilization between the two classes that really interested me. I’d recommend social psychology students to have a grasp on cognitive psychology. “The more you learn about what different types of psychologists do, the better understanding you’ll have of the big picture.” Focusing too narrowly prevents you from seeing the big picture.

TPS: What specific area is your specialty?
I specialize in Social Cognition. Specifically I study stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination.

TPS: What research did you do as an undergrad. - what do you do now?
None. So it’s not too late. I didn’t decide to go to graduate school until the middle of my senior year. I realized there wasn’t much I could do with an undergraduate degree in Psychology. So my senior year I was taking courses in different areas of psychology to see what I wanted to specialize in. The year after I graduated I worked at the University of Michigan.

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Psychology in the News...

"Images of war and terrorism are everywhere," U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona said in a keynote speech at the at the annual convention of the California Psychological Association on April 3rd. "When people are constantly exposed to war images and there is no respite, fear builds up until it becomes an individual's primary emotion."

Carmona said that while many people feel fear and anxiety, members of the military are particularly vulnerable and may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder after the war ends. In a culture that often stigmatizes emotional difficulties as a sign of weakness, he said, psychologists need to help people understand that their problems can be treated and they do not need to suffer.

One key to helping people cope, Carmona said, is teaching them how to be resilient. He noted that the American Psychological Association has posted a list of ”tips for resilience“ on its website. Among the tips: Maintain a daily routine. Volunteer. Take a break from the news.

Jana Martin, a clinical psychologist in Long Beach and president of the California Psychological Association, said she advises her patients to concentrate on the things they can control in their lives -- limiting the amount of TV they watch and spending more time with friends and family, for instance.

For more information on the American Psychological Association's tips on resilience, go to

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Interested in attending conferences and lectures about current Psychology topics?

- April 24, 12-1:30PM. Harvard University, William James Hall Rm. 765. Cory Miller (Harvard University)-TBA.
- April 25, 12 Noon. Boston University, Psych. Seminar Rm. 150, 64 Cummington St. Amy Janes & Janet McGraw-Fisher (Boston University)-TBA.
- April 29, 12 Noon. Harvard University, William James Hall Rm. 1305. Lorraine Chen Idson (Harvard University, Graduate School of Business)-TBA.

All of these lectures are free and open to the public.

The American Psychological Association’s annual convention will be held in Toronto, Canada on August 7-10. Registration for attendance is now open. For more information, visit their website at http://www.apa.org/convention/

Professor Keith Maddox

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I had a part-time job and I got a little bit of research experience – basically just coding dissertation data. It was helpful because I spent time getting to know professors, which helped when I needed letters of recommendation. But it’s important to keep in mind that even after you graduate you still have options.

TPS: How do you view the relevancy of social psychology to the rest of the psychology continuum; with all of the advances in brain imaging neuroscience are there still many advances to be made in social psychology?

I think a student still needs to be focused and versed in the basis of social psychology. One needs to understand human interactions: stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. We still need to figure out ways to get along more effectively. Neuroscience shows us how psychology and biology are more intertwined than we think about or are capable of understanding. It also make inferences about how they feel helps address the mind/body problem.

A Tufts professor, Lisa Shin – along with colleagues at Amherst – studies how people react to faces in terms of arousal and to what extent people get information about feelings from their state of physiological arousal. If people are aware of these guys.” All of the new advances draw a closer link between biology and psychology. There is the whole perception of the mind as a black box. We can only get indirect inferences about what’s going on in the black box. With neuroscience it is still indirect but you get more direct measures with imaging, photos, etc. The more direct you get the closer you are to learning about the basic processes. You literally get to look inside the black box.

TPS: What is your favorite devious social psychology experiment?

I guess my favorite is an experiment by Schachter and Singer about arousal. Specifically the misattribution of arousal, and to what extent people get information about feelings from their state of physiological arousal. If people make paper airplanes, jumping around trashing the place. When they get the “excitatory” pill they attribute their arousal to the pill instead of the person. It translates into how they feel about the person. You don’t feel emotions directly but instead it’s context based. We have cognitive mediation of arousal. So back to the experiment if we make them excited and make them think that their excitement is due to the pill they just feel kind of neutral. But if they think the pill was supposed to make them mellow, and they’re getting angry at this guy even with the pill, they get more upset and more angry at him for causing such a ruckus. Basically the cool thing is cognitive mediation of emotional states. It’s also a cool thing with the deception of the pill because the pill did nothing.

TPS: Any hobbies?

Hah, good question, really I should have more hobbies but I don’t have too much free time. I used to love to watch movies especially when I was in college. I also like basketball, baseball, football, and scuba diving.

April 30, 4PM. Harvard University, William James Hall. Gregory A. Miller (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)-TBA.

May 1, 2-1:30PM. Harvard University, William James Hall Rm. 765. Jason Mitchell (Harvard University)-The representation of social knowledge in the brain.


May 6, 12 Noon. Harvard University, William James Hall Rm. 1305. Rebecca Norwick (Harvard University)-Improving the accuracy of affective forecasts & Anne Hwang (Harvard University)-Yours, mine, ours:the role of joint personal projects on close relationships.
The Tufts chapter of the Psi Chi National Honor Society in Psychology had an addition of 18 members this semester. The induction ceremony was held on Wednesday, April 16 in the Remis Sculpture Court. According to the Society’s advisor, Professor Joseph DeBold, many more applications were received this year than in previous years. In addition to the eighteen inductees, there are 15 other members currently enrolled at Tufts.

Eligibility criteria for the Tufts chapter include completion of at least 4 Psychology courses and an overall GPA of at least 3.20, and Psych. GPA of 3.50 or higher. Students who do not meet this last requirement can also petition to join Psi Chi.

Students interested in joining this Honor Society can submit their application before October 1st, for induction in the fall semester. For more information visit http://ase.tufts.edu/psychology/Undergrad_Program/psychi.htm

More Psych. News

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♦ “Those who believe they can function well on six or fewer hours of sleep every night may be accumulating a "sleep debt" that cuts into their normal cognitive abilities, according to research conducted at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.” For more information read the whole article online at: http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2003/03/030314071202.htm

♦ According to a major 13-year study involving over 13,000 participants, mental health problems have significantly risen. The incidence of depression doubled; suicide tripled; and sexual assault quadrupled. For more information read the whole article online at: http://www.apa.org/releases/student_problems.html

♦ According to a recent study, stereotypes often lead participants to incorrectly identify African Americans suspects as perpetrators of violent crimes. Furthermore, the same group, albeit to a lesser degree, was more likely to link white suspects with nonviolent crimes. For more information read