Psychological Research Labs across UVa Grounds  
2015-16

(With possible undergraduate Research Assistant positions for PSYC-3590 credit)

Research opportunities for undergraduates are available in the Department of Psychology, the Curry School of Education, the Darden School, Medical School and others. As a Research Assistant, students learn important skills not easily taught in the classroom, such as operating technical equipment, speaking to and teaching study participants, coding and analyzing data, and designing experiments. For 3 research credits through PSYC-3590, RAs typically work 10 hours per week.

RA experience is strongly recommended for students considering a Distinguished Major Project. It is often a great enhancement of qualifications for graduate school, including for medicine, law and other professional schools.

On the following pages, each lab has articulated the qualifications it seeks in an RA. Each has its own selective application process.

Steps to earning academic credit (PSYC-3590) for an RA:

1. Contact the lab(s) in which you would like to participate and follow their application advice. If you are accepted for a position, then...

2. Add yourself to the SIS permission list for PSYC-3590 under the section for the lab professor*

   *If the lab professor is in a department other than Psychology (e.g., Curry School of Education, Medical School), add yourself to the SIS permission list for psychology professor Frederick Smyth (Director of Undergraduate Studies).

3. When John Rudder, Undergraduate Coordinator for Psychology, has received word from your lab coordinator that you have been accepted, he will invite you to complete the registration via SIS, including the number of credits you have agreed upon with the lab (2 or 3).

Direct any questions about the process to John Rudder, jbr8d@virginia.edu
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Psychological research increasingly cuts across traditional sub-discipline boundaries, so classification of a lab under any one sub-discipline is often inadequate. With that limitation in mind, the following list is ordered only roughly according to dominant themes, and many other groupings would be just as valid.

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Developmental Themes

Early Steps Lab
Melvin Wilson

The Early Steps Project is a multisite, longitudinal study of 731 ethnically-diverse families from urban (Pittsburgh, PA), suburban (Eugene, OR), and rural (Charlottesville, VA) sites. Families with a child between ages 2.0 years and 2 years, 11 months were recruited from WIC stations at each site on the basis of their ability to meet eligibility criteria for child, family, and sociodemographic risk. As children are now entering into adolescence we propose to test the hypothesis that periodic, tailored, and adaptive interventions delivered to caregivers of children from toddlerhood to school entry: (a) will have long-term preventive effects on alcohol and drug use, high-risk sexual behavior, and other types of problem behavior; (b) will show intervention effects that are mediated by increases in parents’ use of positive behavior support and prosocial peer affiliation; and (c) will test whether intervention effects are moderated by genetic and contextual risk.

Eligible students should have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00, be psychology major or intend to be psychology major, completed 9 hours of psychology courses (ideally completed PSYC 3005/3006), be 2nd or 3rd year (4th year students sometimes considered). Research assistants must be available at least two days a week between 1 PM–8 PM, and being available on weekends is also desirable because they are involved in data collection in participants’ homes. Research Assistants must feel comfortable working with children/youth and to working with a very diverse population. We encourage students to consider working with us for at least 2 consecutive years. Fluent Spanish speakers also are encouraged to apply.

Responsibilities for Research assistants may include conducting reviews of empirical articles, support project staff in data collection by filming assessments or providing childcare in participants’ homes, as well as lab-based tasks such as preparing materials for assessments, data entry, phone interviews with parents and children, filing, copying videos, and other similar lab support tasks.

Contact: Margarita Caldentey mcc9c@virginia.edu

Early Development Lab
Angeline Lillard

We study how children’s pretending, fantasy, imagination and interactions with media influence their cognitive and social development. Student research assistants help recruit participants, test children in the lab, and help with coding and data entry. Students will work closely with one or two graduate students on their current research projects. Applicants should have some experience working with children. The Early Development Lab is in Gilmer Hall.

Contact: earlydevlabcoordinator@gmail.com
Website: faculty.virginia.edu/ASLillard/home.html
Early Social Development Lab
Amrisha Vaish

The research in our lab focuses on the social, emotional, and moral development of children. In particular, we focus on the early development of the moral emotions, cognitions, and behaviors that make children successful cooperators. This includes the emergence of social emotions such as sympathy and guilt, of moral evaluations, and of moral behaviors such as prosocial behavior and the enforcement of moral norms. Of particular interest are children’s understanding of and responses to third-party moral situations as these are the litmus test for impersonal morality, which may well be unique to humans. We are also interested in how children understand others’ internal states, such as their emotions and desires.

RAs will have the opportunity to help out with study design, recruiting families, running the experiments, and analyzing data. As RAs become more experienced in the lab, there will be opportunities to take a more advanced role in the research process.

Contact: Shannon Savell (Lab Manager) - sms4dg@virginia.edu

Child Language and Learning Lab
Vikram Jaswal

Our research focuses on how children learn about the world, and how learning language changes how they think and reason about objects, events, and people. A new line of work addresses parent-child interactions in autism. RAs are involved in designing new studies, recruiting participants and entering and analyzing data.

Because RAs interact with children and their parents, it is crucial that you enjoy being around young children. Students interested in cognitive development or cognitive science are encouraged to apply. A year-long commitment is required.

Contact: Marissa Drell mbd8zm@virginia.edu  Website: www.learningtothink.org

Child and Family Studies Lab
Robert Emery

Our broad research interests include children, families, family relationships, family conflict, and various psychological processes of special importance to families such as the genetic vs. environmental contributions to development and psychopathology. Special consideration is often given to ways in which research findings are applicable to legal/policy issues. Currently, our research specifically addresses the “marriage benefit,” the physical and mental health advantages associated with being married. This work tackles the basic but essential question of whether marriage actually causes benefits well-documented to be correlated with it (such as less depression, greater longevity, and increased income) or whether these marriage benefits result from nonrandom selections into marriage. We predominantly use the twin design to pursue a variety of specific questions related to the marriage benefit.

RA duties include conducting literature searches, data entry and checking, facilitating studies, and other administrative tasks. Contact: Prof. Emery ree@eservices.virginia.edu
Sexual Orientation, Human Development, and Family Lives Lab
Charlotte J. Patterson

Our research focuses on issues related to sexual orientation, human development, and family lives. How does sexual orientation influence family formation and family lives? How is this affected by the legal and public policy climates in which children, youth, and families live? These are some questions under study in our group. Several studies are underway now.

In one current study, we are working with a group of adoptive families, in which parents are lesbian, gay or heterosexual couples. We are interested in learning more about family processes, contextual factors, and child development in these families. They were studied when the children were preschoolers, and they have just been revisited when the children were in elementary school. We hope to learn how the lives of these parents and their children unfold over time.

In another set of projects, we are investigating the sexual and reproductive health needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals. This research aims to understand sexual minority experiences with reproductive health services, infertility, and assisted reproductive technologies. Future work in this area will involve interacting with sexual minority-identified adolescents, so as to determine psychosocial influences on their reproductive health and family planning over time.

We welcome the involvement of motivated, organized, efficient, and friendly undergraduate students as part of our research team. Research assistants usually work closely with a graduate student, and their duties may include reading original research studies, preparing materials for new studies, recruiting participants, transcribing and coding data, and assisting in data analysis. There are also opportunities for advanced RAs to develop their own projects.

Contact: Bernadette Blanchfield  bb5sp@virginia.edu
Website:  http://people.virginia.edu/~cjp/application.html

Preschool Relationship Enhancement Project
Amanda Williford

The Center for the Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning is seeking students who are interested in being involved in an educational research project testing an intervention focused on teacher-child relationships. RAs will be asked to help in many aspects of the project such as: scoring assessments, entering data, cleaning data, coding videos, and preparing materials for participants. Preference will be given to students who are interested in working for credit the entire year. Scheduled hours are flexible and opportunities for work over breaks and summer exist.

Website:  http://curry.virginia.edu/researchcenters/castl/project/prep
Social Development Lab
Sara Rimm-Kaufman

Are you interested in learning about what occurs inside classrooms? Would you like to find out more about service-learning in schools? Are you curious about how teachers support children's social and emotional skills? If these questions pique your curiosity, you may be interested in joining the UVa Social Development Lab. Sara Rimm-Kaufman and her team are conducting a series of studies on elementary school classrooms. RAs in the Social Development Lab work with the team to observe and code classrooms (live and on video), support development of new approaches to teaching service-learning and environmental science, transcribe and code teachers talking about their teaching experiences and help with data entry, basic descriptive data analysis and other miscellaneous tasks. RAs must be clear-thinking, responsible, reliable and detail-oriented. Further, we require at least a one year commitment to the lab. We encourage students in our lab to also consider the one-year masters program in Educational Psychology-Applied Developmental Science to extend their knowledge and engagement in research.

Contact: Julia Thomas jbt4u@virginia.edu or Sara Rimm-Kaufman serk@virginia.edu
Website: www.socialdevelopmentlab.org

Foundations of Cognition and Learning (FOCAL) lab
David Grissmer

The Foundations of Cognition and Learning (FOCAL) lab based at the University of Virginia’s Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), includes more than 30 scholars from several universities. Using multiple methods such as secondary analysis of large-scale databases, intervention and measurement development, and randomized control trials (RCTs), we study the cognitive processes that underpin learning throughout the school years. These processes are fundamental to adaptive school performance and achievement in the traditional areas of mathematics and literacy achievement, and as such, are situated within students’ social contexts. The cognitive foundations that are central to our studies include motivation, executive function and self-regulation, sensorimotor and visuospatial processing, phonological skills, and general knowledge of the world.

Opportunities for RAs in the FOCAL lab include a range of research activities, including video coding, assessment scoring and data entry, literature reviews, and assisting lab members to prepare research projects for presentation at UVA or other conferences. We are especially interested in working with motivated students who are comfortable working independently and who have strong communication skills.

FOCAL lab contact: Julie Thomas, jbtomas@virginia.edu
MyTeachingPartner – Math/Science Research
Ryan D. Kiley

MyTeachingPartner—Mathematics/Science offers innovative curricula and embedded on-line teacher supports aimed at supporting school readiness for pre-kindergarten students potentially at risk of early school failure. We are engaged in a two-year field trial of the curricula and teacher supports in 140 classrooms, collecting outcomes such as children’s knowledge and skills and teacher quality, fidelity, and concept knowledge. We are looking for students interested in mentored research experience for college credit. An undergraduate research assistant could be involved in coding and analysis of data, reviewing the literature, writing reports, and developing presentations. Experience with SPSS, Excel, and Microsoft Word/PowerPoint is desirable. Our lab is located in Ruffner Hall.

Contact: Ryan Kiley rdkokm@virginia.edu
Website: www.mtpmathscience.net/

Influences of Classroom-level Social Settings
Amanda Kibler

Our research, supported by the W.T. Grant Foundation, focuses on understanding classroom-level social settings in which English language learners and fluent English speakers learn alongside each other in “mainstream” middle school classrooms. Our mixed-methods project uses classroom observations, interviews, and surveys to explore: how peer interactions and relationships in the classroom influence learning and development, and whether certain classroom level features help to support beneficial social network dynamics in classrooms.

RAs will attend regular lab meetings and assist with tasks such as data collection, cleaning, coding, and social network analysis, depending on areas of interest and previous experience. After gaining experience with the project, RAs often have the opportunity to pursue more personalized research questions.

Contact: Prof. Kibler, akk2v@virginia.edu

Promoting Healthy Adolescent Development Lab
Noelle Hurd

We study factors that contribute to the healthy development of disadvantaged adolescents. Foci of the lab include the promotion of mental health, the prevention of health-risk behaviors, and the encouragement of positive educational outcomes. In addition, we are interested in the development of skills that will help youth to be successful in life, such as leadership and interpersonal skills. One particular area of interest is the relationships that youth form with non-parental adults. Supportive adults in youths’ lives may help them to navigate and overcome challenges they face and encourage adolescents’ healthy development. Understanding how to promote these intergenerational relationships and the mechanisms through which these relationships may facilitate more positive youth outcomes are core areas of this lab’s research.

Responsibilities for undergraduate researchers may include 1) conducting reviews of empirical articles, 2) survey administration both in the lab as well as in youths’ homes or schools, and 3) data management. It is important that RAs feel comfortable working with diverse populations. RAs will work closely with graduate students. In addition, RAs will also have opportunities to develop their own projects and present findings at conferences.

Contact: Aly Ladd, phadlab@virginia.edu
Virginia Institute of Development in Adulthood
Joseph Allen

The VIDA Project is a longitudinal study following adolescents from age 13 into adulthood (ages 27-32) examining the influence of peer relationships, autonomy, and attachment processes on long-term psychosocial development and mental and physical health outcomes. We are exploring how young adults develop and manage friendships with their peers, and how family relationships influence qualities of these peer relationships and mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, alcohol and substance use and externalizing behavior. Most recently, we have begun examining the ways that social relationships predict physical health outcomes, and we now examine our participants’ heart rate variability under stress, as well as markers of inflammation and immune functioning. We use a variety of measurement methods, including self-reports, semi-structured interviews, parent-reports, peer reports, and observations of family and peer interactions and physical health assessments. We have now been following our original sample of 184 participants for over 15 years and have 98% of them still active in the study.

RA tasks include conducting interviews with participants, data entry and checking, transcribing, and other administrative tasks. We train RAs in physical health assessments (e.g., EKG assessments of heart rate variability), and to use computer programs and protocols for conducting interviews with participants. RAs who work on the project for multiple semesters often have the opportunity to take on higher level responsibilities (such as coding data, scheduling participants, and writing a thesis) and may apply for paid positions.

Contact: Project Coordinators at vidaatuva@gmail.com Phone: 434 982 5789
Website: www.teenresearch.org

Project DATE
N. Dickon Reppucci

Project DATE is a research project examining the quality of romantic relationships among adolescents in our community. Specifically, this project is intended to provide local information about (a) the frequency of teen dating violence and victimization among at-risk adolescents in our community, (b) the risk factors related to experiencing relationship violence, and (c) the protective factors which predict positive relationship outcomes. This study has concluded data collection, therefore RA duties will primarily include: coding data, assisting with basic data cleaning, reviewing and summarizing articles relevant to the study, and tracking adolescents enrolled in the study for future possible data collection. Contact: Alison Nagel agn3f@virginia.edu
Relationships, Ecologies, and Activities for Developing Youth (READY) Lab
Nancy L. Deutsch and Valerie A. Futch

We are interested in how settings and interactions can be optimized to best meet adolescents’ developmental needs. In particular, we are focused on the role that relationships (with peers, mentors, non-familial adults) and activities play in adolescent development. We come from a youth-centered, promotive frame, grounded in the fields of positive youth development (PYD) and relational and developmental psychology. Our goal is to understand how adolescents themselves select, sustain, and are influenced by the important settings and relationships in their lives. We are particularly focused on out-of-school (OST) contexts and on how settings, such as after-school programs, can serve as spaces for youth to build positive relationships and identities. Further, we aim to understand these relationships in an ecological sense—exploring the connections between individual level factors and social conditions—and an applied lens, with a goal of working with and for local communities and programs. Current projects include a longitudinal, mixed methods study of youth-adult relationships (e.g. informal mentoring from coaches, teachers, etc.). This project includes a variety of survey and interview data as well as social mapping and network techniques. Recent projects include a youth participatory evaluation project with a local music-based after-school program.

RA tasks include data entry and cleaning (survey data), qualitative coding of interview data, literature reviews, assisting in conceptualizing and writing conference and journal papers. Depending on experience, RAs may potentially assist with data collection (survey administration, conducting interviews) and data analysis (mixed-methods).

Contact: Prof. Deutsch nancyd@virginia.edu or Prof. Futch vfutch@virginia.edu

Virginia Youth Violence Project
Dewey Cornell

We have two projects funded by the National Institute of Justice involving Virginia public schools. The first project examines several waves of school climate survey data from approximately 700 Virginia secondary schools. There are multiple studies being conducted with these data to help schools reduce bullying and improve school climate and safety. This project meets Monday mornings 9-11. The second project evaluates the use of threat assessment teams in approximately 1,900 K-12 schools. The goal of this project is to establish a national model for schools to use threat assessment as an alternative to zero tolerance suspension practices. This project meets Friday mornings 9-10.

Undergraduate RAs have opportunities to help analyze survey data on bullying, school climate, and student threats of violence. They can contribute to research presentations and papers. We also need help maintaining and expanding a website and Facebook page as a resource to schools and researchers. An advanced student could identify a project using one of our databases. Experience with SPSS, Excel, and PowerPoint is useful. Interest in quantitative analyses and survey measurement is desirable.

Contact: Prof. Cornell dcornell@virginia.edu
Website: youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu
Young Women Leaders Program
Edith Lawrence, Nancy Deutsch, Joanna Lee Williams

Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP) is a psycho-educational mentoring program that empowers at-risk middle school girls to be leaders by combining the benefits of one-on-one mentoring with targeted group activities. YWLP is currently investigating the processes that contribute to the program’s success in promoting healthy growth in girls and expanding part of its curriculum focused on building connections with girls internationally. We have an ongoing study of both the middle school girl participants and the college women mentors including ongoing survey data and archived interview and observational data.

RA responsibilities include the following tasks: 1) Working with survey data from girls, parents, and college women (coding, entering, checking, running statistical analyses, and organizing project files), 2) Working with interview and observational data from girls and college women (coding qualitative data) 3) Researching topics related to the project through literature reviews, 4) Attending weekly lab meetings, and 5) Helping team members prepare presentations and papers. Additional research hours may be available for assisting with quantitative or qualitative data collection, including surveys and observations of mentoring groups.

Contact: Prof. Deutsch nld7a@virginia.edu
Neuroscience Themes

Auditory Neuroethology Lab
Daniel Meliza

We are interested in neural mechanisms of pattern recognition in the auditory system. The lab has ongoing experiments in: 1) categorical perception in European starlings; 2) intracellular physiology and anatomy of the zebra finch auditory system; and 3) dynamical systems modeling of neuron biophysics.

Research assistant responsibilities include care and husbandry of animals, design and implementation of experiments, and data analysis. All members of the lab attend seminar series and lab meetings and are expected to present their results on a regular basis. Applicants must be responsible and self-motivated. Contact: Dan Meliza cdm8j@virginia.edu
Website: http://meliza.org

Behavioral Neuroscience Lab
Cedric Williams

Our research is designed to understand how hormonal changes in the body and the physiological changes they produce after exposure to meaningful or emotionally arousing events, influences neural circuits in the brain to encode these experiences into memory more effectively.

These types of questions are approached with 1) the use of a battery of behavioral learning tasks with laboratory rodents, 2) in vivo microdialysis to identify which chemical neurotransmitters are released in the brain while they are learning and 3) immunohistochemistry to reveal the brain regions activated by these experiences. The combined approaches will reveal the functional relevance of anatomical and chemical interactions that take place in the brain during the memory formation process. An understanding of how meaningful or arousing events influence neural activity in specific anatomical regions will provide a model of how the brain transforms representations of everyday experiences into permanent memories.

Contact: Prof. Williams clw3b@virginia.edu
Website: www.virginia.edu/psychology/people/detail.php?id=174

Neural Development and Organization Lab
Peter Brunjes

Our lab is involved in probing a number of issues surrounding the organization and development of sensory systems in the brain. Sensory systems are useful models for examining how the brain works: they often have clear cut circuitry, and it is relatively simple to manipulate the amount and type of information processed by the system. Our work centers around the olfactory system, which offers a number of unique features that make it an excellent model for studying the development and organization of the brain. Most of our recent work centers on studying the basic organizational features of the system, including understanding how odors are encoded in the olfactory cortex, and whether these representations change with olfactory experience.

When first joining the lab, RAs are usually responsible for participating in one aspect of an ongoing project as they are trained in various laboratory techniques. Once proficient, RAs often have the opportunity of developing more independent projects, many of which have become Distinguished Major projects. Contact: Prof. Brunjes brunjes@virginia.edu
Sensory Development and Plasticity Lab
Alev Erisir

Postnatal development of the brain is characterized by plastic stages during which abnormal sensory stimulation can lead to life-long changes in the organization of brain circuitry. Our lab aims to understand the biological mechanisms that enable this plasticity. What makes some young neurons lose their ability to respond to alterations in the sensory environment at the end of critical periods? What are the mechanisms by which sensitive periods of plasticity are initiated and terminated? What are the molecular and cellular players in processes that enable long-term structural changes in brain synaptic circuitry? Using anatomical techniques including immuno-electron microscopy, serial EM reconstructions, tract-tracing and confocal microscopy, we aim to reveal the changes that occur in visual and gustatory system connectivity, neurotransmitter receptor and other pre/postsynaptic protein localizations during and after sensitive periods of plasticity, and during the aging process of these model systems.

Upon joining the lab, RAs are assigned to an ongoing project. At the initial stages of the training, RAs learn tissue preparation techniques, light and electron microscope use, 3D reconstructions using connectomics approaches and digital image analysis. Typically after several months of active contribution, RAs start formulating a project that they may use as their Distinguished Major thesis. Attending our regular lab meetings is also recommended. At least two semesters of commitment is required.

Contact: Prof. Erisir erisir@virginia.edu

Social Neuroscience Lab
James Morris

Our lab focuses on the neural bases of normal and social function using a multimodal approach. By using such techniques as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), electroencephalography (EEG), scalp-recorded event-related potentials (ERP), and eye-tracking, we seek to understand how social behavior and brain processes interact. Past studies have focused on pretend play in adults, face recognition for in-group and out-group members, imitation, and self-transcendence.

Undergraduate RAs play an integral role in the lab. Duties include running subjects, data collection and analysis, stimuli creation as well as the opportunity to work alongside graduate students and create original research ideas. Experience with programming is preferred.

Contact: Brandon Ng bwn7zb@virginia.edu Website: uvasocialneuroscience.com

Virginia Affective Neuroscience Laboratory
James Coan

Our research focuses on the neural bases of emotional behavior, regulation, and experience, including a particular interest in the social regulation of neural processes underlying emotional responses. These interests integrate a variety of tools and methods, including observational behavior coding to electroencephalography (EEG) to functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

RAs are typically involved in a number of activities, including running experiments, entering and analyzing data, and completing literature searches. There tends to be an emphasis on learning about and utilizing psychophysiological methods.

Contact: Sara Medina-De Villiers sm5bf@virginia.edu Website: www.affectiveneuroscience.org
Laboratory of Cognitive Neurodynamics
William B. Levy

Our laboratory studies the biological bases of cognition and behavior using computational models. A large, and continuing project is to understand hippocampal function with simulations based on neurons and synapses. Another project seeks to understand the role of memory in PTSD and its symptoms, particularly hyper-reactivity and poor sleep. This work is building models of the brainstem systems controlling sleep and the peripheral stress reactions.

Reading courses are available for students who seek a strong background before entering the lab. Occasionally enough such work can culminate in a small review article which can be submitted for publication. Laboratory research consists of computer simulations and data analysis. Student who do exceptional research work during the year may qualify for a paid summer research position.

Contact: Prof. Levy wbl@virginia.edu
Perception and Cognition Themes

Perception Lab
Dennis Proffitt

Our research involves visual perception of the spatial layout and the environment. What people consistently see is not what is really out there. We conduct this research both in our labs and outside, on various hills and flat stretches on UVA grounds. We investigate how the perception of space can be affected by the internal states of the body.

We are interested in topics such as: 1) How effort/energetics can affect how long distances appear, and how steep hills look, 2) How social and emotional factors influence perception and cognition, 3) How we scale distances and sizes of objects to our body, and 4) How expertise, for example, proficiency in a particular sport, interacts with perception and cognition?

We seek fun, motivated RAs to help with various research projects. RAs attend weekly lab meetings, do data entry and analysis, and run experiments that could require the operation of virtual reality equipment, projection screens, and devices that measure physiological potential. Experiments are performed in rooms within Gilmer Hall as well as in outdoor fields around grounds.

Contact: uvaperceptionlab@gmail.com
Website: faculty.virginia.edu/perlab

Memory Processes Lab
Chad Dodson

Our research focuses on memory with an emphasis on the occurrence of false memories, overconfidence in one’s memories and changes in memory across the lifespan. For example, some of our research examines eyewitness memory. We have observed with a typical eyewitness suggestibility paradigm that older adults are much more likely than younger adults to assert confidently that they remember witnessing an event that was only suggested to them. Some of our current projects are examining whether this age-related effect generalizes to more naturalistic eyewitness settings and whether there are variables that can minimize the occurrence of these kinds of high confidence errors.

We are looking for engaging, thoughtful and motivated research assistants. RAs are involved in designing new studies, recruiting participants and entering and analyzing data.

Contact: Jacob Martin jam5ba@virginia.edu
Website: faculty.virginia.edu/dodson/
Cognitive Aging Lab
Timothy Salthouse

We study aging of cognitive functioning by administering a wide variety of cognitive tasks to participants ranging in age from 18-90+. The tasks assess different types of cognitive abilities, such as memory and spatial abilities. Among the questions that we are interested in are: 1) Which aspects of cognitive functioning are affected by aging? 2) When does age-related cognitive change begin? And 3) what factors affect the rate of cognitive aging?

Research assistants are primarily responsible for administering tests to participants in the project as well as scheduling appointments, scoring tests, and entering and checking data. Prospective RAs should have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, be mature and responsible, and have an interest in interacting with diverse populations from the community. Because the laboratory is located behind Barracks Road Shopping Center, reliable transportation is needed.

Research assistants can work for either credit or pay, and there are opportunities to work full-time for pay during the summer.

Contact: CognitiveAgingLab@virginia.edu
Website: www.mentalaging.com

Emotion and Cognition Lab
Gerald Clore

We are primarily interested in studying the effects of emotional experience on cognitive performance and behavior. Some of our research questions are: 1) Do emotions influence how we perceive our environment and ourselves? 2) Do emotions help us remember? 3) Do happy people think differently than sad people?

The small, cohesive atmosphere of our lab group provides opportunities for RAs to become intimately involved in all aspects of the research process. First-semester RAs are mainly responsible for scheduling participants, running experiments, and working with data. With increasing experience, lab members are encouraged to participate in the development of new research designs and the interpretation of results. Contact: Alex Schiller schiller@virginia.edu
**Social and Personality Themes**

**Personality and Genetics Lab**  
**Eric Turkheimer**

Our research interests are divided into two main areas of study: behavioral genetics and personality assessment. From a behavioral genetics standpoint, we attempt to understand and predict adolescent externalizing behaviors such as risk-taking and substance abuse using genetically informed designs and sophisticated statistical models. Our interest in personality assessment drives us to explore new methods of personality disorder measurement and classification using both self- and peer-report.

RAs will have the opportunity to gain valuable research experience. Their integration into the lab consists of working alongside graduate students and faculty on ongoing projects as well as new research ideas that may develop. Typical RA duties include data entry and analysis, literature searches, and information gathering. While not mandatory, strong quantitative skills are recommended.

Contact: Prof. Turkheimer [ent3c@virginia.edu](mailto:ent3c@virginia.edu)

**Social Psychology Lab**  
**Timothy Wilson**

Our lab invites motivated, sharp, and sociable undergraduates to help us prepare and run studies that explore people’s emotions and thoughts. We study people’s knowledge about their own feelings, behaviors, abilities and personalities. Our research focus is on emotional reaction to different events in life, and an individual’s ability to predict his or her own reaction.

RAs are involved in all parts of the research process. Their main responsibility is to run social psychology studies, process and analyze the results, and see how the results fit social psychology theories. There are also lab meetings where research issues are discussed.

Contact: Erin Westgate [ecw4za@Virginia.EDU](mailto:ecw4za@Virginia.EDU)  
Website: people.virginia.edu/~tdw/

**Culture and Well-Being Lab**  
**Shigehiro Oishi**

We are conducting experiments on the following projects: 1) Misunderstanding and understanding in interpersonal perception; 2) Cultural differences in happiness; 3) Residential mobility and its relation to prosocial behavior and consumer behavior; and 4) Physiological measures of well-being.

RA responsibilities include preparing experimental materials, conducting experiments, entering data, coding, and data acquisition. Applicants must be responsible and motivated about doing psychological research.

Contact: Hyewon Choi [hyewonchoi3@gmail.com](mailto:hyewonchoi3@gmail.com)  
Website: people.virginia.edu/~so5x/index.htm
Social Behavior and Decisions Lab
Benjamin Converse

Work in our lab revolves around goal pursuit and decision-making, across individual-, cooperative-, and competitive environments. For example, how do people evaluate their helpers and their rivals? Does the way people think about their rivals affect their style of competition or their motivation to win? What factors influence people’s emotional and behavioral responses to receiving help from others? More generally, we examine the consequences of motivation and decision-making in contexts as diverse as voting behavior, academic motivation, and consumer decision making. We conduct lab experiments, field studies, and online studies, and make an effort to extend our investigations beyond undergraduate samples to also include community samples and specialized samples such as professional organizations.

RAs will have the opportunity to participate in weekly lab meetings and many phases of the research process, including preparing and conducting experiments and surveys, managing study data, and working with the research team to refine experimental procedures. As RAs become more experienced in the lab, there will be opportunities to take a more advanced role in the research process.

Contact: Kyle Dobson kydobson@virginia.edu

Judgment and Decision Experimental Lab
Eileen Y. Chou

Our interdisciplinary lab focuses on the organizational, social, and psychological forces that regulate individual and group behavior. Our research approach integrates several behavioral regulators, including incentives (economics), structure (organizational theory), and person-context fit (social psychology). For instance, we investigate how people can (ironically) decrease their economic risks by putting themselves in a more rather than a less vulnerable position. Our other ongoing projects include 1) whether having superstars in the organization is an effective mechanism of social organization 2) can self-control boost creativity, 3) what are some of the unanticipated benefits to swearing, and 4) is it really “lonely at the top.”

As a research assistant of this lab, you will receive hands-on training in social psychology and business management. You will also partake in the development of theoretical discoveries and the advancement of scientific knowledge. Your role includes preparing and conducting lab experiments, coding videos, entering data, and attending lab meetings. We are looking for young scholars who are organized and responsible. Computer experience, analytical skills, and ability to work with a team preferred.

Contact: Marshall Hanbury Jr, Lab Manager: meh2fr@virginia.edu
Social Cognition and Behavior Lab  
Sophie Trawalter

In our lab, we study phenomena related to diversity. We are especially interested in how individuals develop competencies for life in diverse spaces. Some current lines of research examine 1) stress and coping responses to interracial contact, 2) prejudice detection, and 3) the social ecology of privilege. The goal of our research is to find ways to improve intergroup contact and intergroup relations so that all members of society may attain positive life outcomes.

We are looking for student research assistants to help with: collecting data (e.g., running studies in the lab, distributing surveys, coding nonverbal data), conducting literature searches, and entering data.

Contact: SCABL Lab Manager scabl.uva@gmail.com

Implicit Social Cognition Lab  
Brian Nosek

We are examining how conscious or non-conscious aspects of people’s attitudes can influence judgments and behavior. Although attitudes include aspects that they can report, we are particularly interested in the influence of automatic, non-conscious attitudes, especially when they differ from the attitudes people can directly report.

RAs are involved in running experiments, entering and analyzing data, and helping create new studies. Other duties might include data entry, literature searches, article reviews, and study design. Interested students can also assist in programming computer studies related to behavioral research. RAs attend lab meetings with faculty and graduate students to gain research experience and expertise.

Contact: Anup Gampa anup@virginia.edu  Website: www.briannosek.com/labgroup

Psychometric Lab  
Karen Schmidt

Our research involves item response theory (IRT) measurement, focusing on methodology to enhance construct validity and measurement of individual differences. Current and ongoing projects include objective measurement of a wide variety of topics, including personality and individual experiences of pain, faking good detection in personality inventory responses, self-efficacy, reasoning and spatial visualization, AIDS knowledge, and international learning experiences in varying age groups.

RAs gain experience in all aspects of the research process, including data management, and learn sophisticated statistical and measurement procedures such as multiple regression, item response theory modeling, and structural equation modeling. RAs learn how to search and summarize research articles, create internet design of surveys, extract data via the internet, and do data analysis via R Studio (including data coding, transformation, IRT analysis, and graphing), and creating reports and presentations. Reliable, independent, and creative assistance is strongly considered for co-authorship. Interested students should have completed PSYC 3005, and preferably PSYC 3006.

Contact: Prof. Schmidt kschmidt@virginia.edu
Behavioral Research at Darden (BRAD)
Morela Hernandez

The BRAD Lab is an interdisciplinary laboratory supporting behavioral research at Darden School of Business. We facilitate the study of organizational behavior, marketing, business ethics, judgment and decision-making, behavioral operations, and entrepreneurship. Research Assistants (RAs) contribute to faculty research, and use behavioral research to create knowledge that advances managerial and business practices.

We are looking for motivated RAs interested in working with faculty across research areas. RA positions entail running studies, conducting literature searches, entering data, working on annotated bibliographies, and attending meetings with BRAD faculty.

For more information, please contact Lab Coordinator, Ornuma Wawsri at BRAD-admin: Bradadmin@darden.virginia.edu  Website: http://www.darden.virginia.edu/web/BRAD/People/
Legal Themes

Reasoning and Law Lab
Barbara Spellman

We study how people reason and make decisions. These processes have important consequences in everyday life, and we keep an eye towards how they can inform the legal system. Questions we research include: How do people decide who or what caused a bad outcome? Do judges think differently than jurors? What kind of evidence is particularly influential? When do people purely follow the law, and when are they influenced by their own beliefs and morality? Do any of these processes work differently in other cultures?

This small, fun lab seeks dedicated, enthusiastic students. RA duties include gathering materials, running experiments, entering and analyzing data, helping create new studies, and adapting to and managing research issues as they emerge. RAs are expected to attend weekly lab meetings and give a 20-30 minute presentation at one of them. Senior RAs may be given the opportunity to design and run their own studies. Website: http://faculty.virginia.edu/spellmanlab/

Sexual Assault and the Law Project
N. Dickon Reppucci

This project focuses on an emergent problem of interest: sexual assault and the law. We are currently in the early stages of developing a series of studies relating to (a) university policies regarding sexual assault, (b) reporting behaviors, and (c) victims rights. RAs duties will include: coding data, reviewing and summarizing articles relevant to the study, and possibly assisting with online data collection management.

Contacts: Lucy Guarnera lucy.guarnera@gmail.com Tammi Walker tdw4wb@virginia.edu

Mental Health Law Lab
Richard Bonnie

The Institute for Law, Psychiatry and Public Policy is an interdisciplinary program in mental health law and forensic services that is engaged in academic programs, forensic evaluations, professional training, and public policy consultation and review. The Mental Health Law Lab is focused on researching effectiveness and implementation of policies and practices related to mental health care and/or forensic psychology.

The advance directives project relates to increasing self-determination and empowerment among people with serious mental illness by developing models to incorporate advance directives into mental health care service delivery systems. Other projects relate to the effects of recent changes to mental health laws in Virginia, including emergency evaluations and parental hospitalization of minors, as well as forensic psychology topics such as suspects’ understanding of the *Miranda* rights.

Contact: Heather Zelle, J.D., Ph.D. zelle@virginia.edu or Sharon Kelley, J.D., Ph.D. smk8n@virginia.edu
Behavioral Health Themes

Program for Anxiety, Cognition, and Treatment
Bethany Teachman

Our lab studies cognitive processes that contribute to anxiety the development and maintenance of psychopathology, with a particular interest in disorders. We evaluate cognitive processing, including biases in attention, interpretation, and memory, across the lifespan. We are especially interested in automatic cognitive processing, and in understanding how to change cognitive biases to improve emotion regulation.

We are looking for RAs interested in working on studies of cognition and psychopathology. RAs help with recruiting and running subjects and attend weekly lab meetings to gain general experience with conducting research. There are also opportunities for advanced RAs to develop their own projects.

Contact: Nauder Namaky nn2r@virginia.edu
Website: www.teachman.org

Addictions Lab
Karen Ingersoll and Jennifer Hettema

Our laboratory is located within the UVA Center for Addiction Research and Education, where Dr. Ingersoll’s team conducts clinical research designed to investigate treatments for substance related disorders. We currently have several research projects underway, including: 1) What treatments work best to increase medication compliance and decrease drug use among individuals who are HIV positive and use cocaine, 2) What treatments work best to decrease the risk of alcohol exposed pregnancies among women who drink and do not use proper contraception, 3) What in session therapist and client behaviors impact the outcome of addictions treatment, and 4) What are effective methods for encouraging doctors to talk with their patients about addictions issues. Many of our studies focus on a particular form of therapy called Motivational Interviewing.

Available activities for RAs include conducting participant interviews, coding tapes of therapy sessions, entering and analyzing data, reviewing literature, and participating in research team learning opportunities. Opportunities to author or co-author manuscripts or posters and conduct independent research projects are available for motivated students.

Contact: Dr. Ingersoll kareningersoll@virginia.edu

Behavioral Medicine Type 1 Diabetes Lab
Linda Gonder-Frederick

We have openings for RAs with an interest in interdisciplinary behavioral medicine. RAs work on a variety of NIH-funded, nonprofit, and pharmaceutical projects related to behavior and diabetes management. We make an effort to ensure that RAs get solid training experience on the many aspects of research in behavioral medicine.

RAs are a valuable and integrated member of an interdisciplinary research team, composed of psychologists, psychology fellows, graduate students, endocrinology fellows, statisticians, biomathematicians, and endocrinologists. We offer training experience and an opportunity for students to gain perspective on interdisciplinary behavioral research in a hospital setting. We are interested in students willing to commit to a two-year position, including possibly the summer.

Contact: Prof. Gonder-Frederick cef7u@virginia.edu
Behavioral Health and Technology Lab  
Lee Ritterband

Current projects include a large national trial to evaluate an Internet intervention for insomnia, a trial of an Internet Intervention for spinal cord injury patients, and a skin cancer prevention project and a game to reduce asthma attacks in children. Upcoming projects include an Internet intervention for pregnant women with Type I diabetes, and an Internet intervention to reduce alcohol exposed pregnancies.

RA responsibilities include pilot testing our Internet interventions, participating in multi-disciplinary meetings, conducting literature searches, helping with manuscript preparation, organizing and coding data, and more. Interested and motivated students can often work with a faculty member to analyze and present data through posters, conference presentations, or manuscripts. We prefer to recruit 2nd and 3rd year students, but will consider 4th year students with a strong interest in the eHealth field. Summer hours may be available (and sometimes for a paid position).

If interested: Email a brief letter of interest and include 1) your interest in this position, 2) your current year in school, 3) your major, 4) your cumulative GPA, 5) your work and research experience, and 6) the names of 2 references.

Contact: Christina Frederick  
cf7u@virginia.edu  
Website: bht.virginia.edu

Center for Behavioral Medicine Research  
Daniel Cox

Our laboratory investigates how best to assess and quantify risky driving of all types, and the possibilities for improving driving performance through the development of both behavioral and medical interventions. Specifically, our current projects include: 1) How diabetic hypoglycemia impairs driving and whether DiabetesDriving.com, an interactive internet intervention, can reduce driving mishaps; 2) Whether Virtual Reality Driving Simulation training can help rehabilitate individuals recovering from a traumatic brain injury; 3) How long-acting methylphenidate impacts driving performance of young adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); 4) Whether preparatory Virtual Reality Driving Simulation Training of novice drivers with Autism Spectrum Disorder will improve on-road driver performance; 5) Whether aerobic exercise improves executive functioning of adolescent drivers and whether executive function relates to adolescents driving safety. In addition, our multidisciplinary team of psychology, medicine and nursing are evaluating an innovative behavioral treatment program for adults managing type 2 diabetes.

We are developing a sophisticated acceleration-base, virtual reality driving simulator for testing, training and therapy- see photos. Research Assistants will be involved in data collection and coding, literature review, grant and manuscript preparation, research team meetings and future planning of grants and projects.

Offers potential RAs: 1) an innovative and cutting-edge virtual reality facility, 2) work that has immediate and significant implications, 3) an opportunity to interact and collaborate with people of varying levels of experience, including undergrads, recent college grads, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and various faculty (e.g., psychologists, psychiatrist, cardiologists, gerontologists, engineers) who have been in the field for many years.

Contact: Prof. Cox  
djc4f@virginia.edu
Integrative Medicine Projects
Justine Owens

Recent research projects are: 1) mindfulness-based stress reduction, 2) psychological factors in healthcare outcomes, 3) acupuncture treatment efficacy and mechanism of action, and 4) mapping and nurturing the path of wisdom in physicians and patients. This last project is a study of physicians who have made serious medical errors and chronic pain patients who have successfully managed chronic pain. The premise of this study is that physicians and patients who have successfully faced major life challenges are exemplars of finding wisdom out of adversity. All of our projects share a common interest in the measurement of stress and the development of life skills and treatments for successful stress management. We are working on a standardized medical evaluation of accumulated stress (allopathic load) using measures such as heart rate variability (HRV), EEG beta/theta ratio, cortisol, and immune function, toward the integration of alternative medical treatments into the conventional health care system.

RAs participate in projects at various stages from grant proposal, patient recruitment, data collection, literature review, data processing, manuscripts and presentations. RAs also help with a database and Website for a new non-profit organization. Contact: Prof. Owens owens@virginia.edu

Virginia Alcohol and Trauma (VAT) Laboratory
Erin Berenz

The Virginia Alcohol and Trauma (VAT) Laboratory is committed to conducting interdisciplinary, clinically relevant research that informs our understanding of the etiology and maintenance of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and alcohol use disorders in adolescents and young adults. We incorporate clinical laboratory paradigms, psychophysiology, and psychiatric genetics methods to study processes underlying risk for these disorders.

We are currently seeking highly motivated, responsible research assistants to help with a NIAAA-funded investigation of genetic and environmental influences on trauma and alcohol cue reactivity among college students exposed to interpersonal trauma (e.g., sexual or physical assault). Primary duties include: participant recruitment, participant screening, data entry, administrative tasks, literature reviews, and participation in weekly lab meetings. Highly motivated and dedicated students may gain the opportunity to participate in more advanced laboratory duties. Psychology majors are preferred. A minimum commitment of one year (i.e., two semesters) is required.

Contact: Salpi Kevorkian VATlab@hscmail.mcc.virginia.edu
Website: https://research.med.virginia.edu/chrc/clinical-research/vat-lab/
Communication Themes

Language Processing Lab
Beverly Colwell Adams

We study spoken and written language processing through syntactic ambiguity. Our current research examines how syntactically and semantically ambiguous sentences are comprehended. American, Dutch, French, and Korean students hear computer-generated speech in American English, Dutch, French, and Korean. We vary the amount of time between linguistic phrases of spoken language. The results will have important implications for instruction and bi-lingual communication. RA duties include 1) reading original research articles, 2) running the study/studies, 3) entering and analyzing data, 4) preparing experimental materials, as well as 5) preparing for conference presentations.

Contact: Prof. Adams bca5y@virginia.edu

Dynamics Lab
Steven Boker

Our research explores how people coordinate their movements and facial expressions during conversation. RAs will be involved in all parts of the project including learning to use state of the art computer software that tracks the body movements and facial expressions. We are looking for motivated students interested in the psychology of social interaction as well as the technical aspects of laboratory science in psychology.

The project is in collaboration with researchers at the University of Rochester, University of Zurich, and Max Planck Institute in Berlin, so RAs will also have a chance to meet faculty and graduate students from other institutions. Priority will be given to students who can commit to at least two semesters.

Contact: Prof. Boker boker@virginia.edu

Augmentative and Alternative Communication: Filip Loncke

We focus on processes that are involved when individuals communicate through non-standard modalities. We are running two major projects: (1) the development and field-testing of communication boards as an assessment tool for individuals without functional speech. Through picture-and-word communication boards, basic skills such as picture preference, choice making, categorization, memory, combinatorial awareness, and literacy are measured. The boards are being field tested in five countries (and three languages). We analyze and process the feedback from clinicians and educators, and measure validity and reliability of the instrument; (2) the use of graphic symbols by individuals with low literacy skills to navigate through websites. Do graphic symbols (pictures) make things easier to understand? Our data suggest that the answer to that question is not always so clear. We are running a number of simulation studies that address polysemy of graphic symbols as well as strategies used by individuals to interpret them.

Contact: Prof. Loncke filip.loncke@virginia.edu
Child Language Disorders Laboratory: LaVae Hoffman

Specific Language Impairment (SLI) is a communication disorder characterized by a failure to develop age appropriate language abilities despite normal hearing and vision, normal nonverbal intelligence, nurturing and interactive child care in a monolingual environment, normal gross neurological functioning and the absence of significant emotional or behavioral disturbance. Approximately 7% of school-age children meet the diagnostic criteria for SLI, and these children often struggle in school settings because of difficulty learning to read and establishing satisfactory peer relationships. The Child Language Disorder Lab is interested in the information processing abilities of school age children who have this difficulty, the efficacy of language interventions, and how we can improve their academic experiences to lead to greater success in their lives.

Current studies revolve around the assessment of narrative language abilities in children who have SLI, as well as typically developing children; exploratory analysis of clinical profiles of children who have good treatment outcomes following intensive language intervention; and analysis of parental engagement with school age children. RAs work closely with graduate students. Students must be available at least 2 mornings or afternoons a week. A weekly laboratory meeting will be scheduled.

Contact: Prof. Hoffman lmh3f@virginia.edu

Autism Studies Laboratory: Jane Hilton

Our current research interest is on the effectiveness of various popular intervention approaches for teaching young children with this diagnosis communication skills. We are examining specific communication skill sets to determine if a particular treatment approach facilitates these skills more than other approaches.

Additional ongoing research involves the use of gestures by young children. All typically developing children use gestures prior to using spoken words for communication. Gesture use in children diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder has also been examined and found to differ from gestures used by typically developing children. Ongoing research is looking at early gesture use in young children with autism and determining if any changes are noted following intervention during a 6-week communication program. We are located in the new Sheila C. Johnson Clinic in Bavaro Hall.

Contact: Prof. Hilton ich7b@virginia.edu or call 924-4625.