

APS Janet Taylor Spence Award for Transformative Early Career Contributions

April 30, 2013

The APS Board of Directors is pleased to announce the 2013 recipients of the APS Janet Taylor Spence Award for Transformative Early Career Contributions, in recognition of the significant impact their work is having in the field of psychological science. The award recognizes the creativity and innovative work of promising scientists who represent the future of psychological science. It places these recipients among the brightest minds in our field.

This award is a fitting tribute to its namesake, Janet Taylor Spence, the first elected President of APS. Whether in the field or in the laboratory, Spence's distinguished career is characterized by both its empirical rigor and its innovative theoretical approach. Her willingness to question the accepted led her to develop assessment techniques that continue to be widely used.

The awards will be conferred at the 25th APS Annual Convention in Washington, DC, in May. For more details on the convention, visit www.psychologicalscience.org/convention.

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Daniel Casasanto

The New School for Social Research



What is the focus of your award-winning research?

My lab explores the mind in context: how linguistic, cultural, and bodily experiences influence the ways people think, feel, learn, and make decisions. To find out how experience shapes our minds, we test for systematic differences in brain and behavior caused by different patterns of interaction with the physical and social environment; that is, we test for linguistic relativity, cultural relativity, and what I call by

analogy bodily relativity. Relativity research can provide new leverage on ancient questions about the nature and origins of knowledge. Our work demonstrates the diversity of the human cognitive repertoire, and at the same time it seeks to clarify how cognitive universals can emerge that transcend variation across individuals and groups, reconciling the apparent incompatibility between “universalist” and “relativist” views. The experiential relativity of the mind arises – inevitably – as a consequence of processes of learning and inference that may be universal, but which operate in distinctive physical and social contexts.

How did you develop an interest in this area?

In graduate school at MIT, I was determined to deal a coup de grâce to the Whorfian hypothesis: the idea that people who speak different languages think differently as a consequence. I failed: the experiments I ran only showed how deep the effects of language on cognition and perception can go! In exploring how language affects thought, I realized we need to expand the notion of relativity to include the body. The languages we speak, the cultures we inhabit, and the bodies we use to interact with the world are ever-present aspects of the context in which we use our minds. Since thinking depends on context, it depends on the specifics of our languages, cultures, and bodies.

Who are your mentors and/or biggest psychological influences?

My PhD advisor Lera Boroditsky has been a huge inspiration. So have Herb Clark, my post doc advisor, and my other thesis advisors Molly Potter, Josh Tenenbaum, and Susan Carey. I owe a special debt to Steven Pinker whose books made me drop what I was doing, and who decided to give a 30-year-old opera singer the chance to become a cognitive scientist. The people who influence my thinking about the mind the most, though, on a day-to-day basis, are my amazing students.

What unique factors have contributed to your early success?

When the young Ernest Hemmingway arrived in Paris for the first time, the suitcase containing all of his early writing was stolen; he later wrote that this was the best thing that could have happened to him as a writer. I had a similar curse-blessing experience. A former collaborator was found to have fabricated results, which meant that to be safe I had to throw away nearly all of the data I had collected for about three years — dozens of experiments, thousands of subjects, all of the papers I had in press — crushing. Recovering from this loss taught me three things: 1) I really love doing cognitive science, no matter what, 2) Good data practices are paramount, and (3) Retracing the steps you take along a theoretical path can be invaluable, leading to new insights.

What does winning this award mean to you both personally and professionally?

It’s a tremendous honor to have our research recognized by APS. Gratifying to know that the work my lab and I find so exciting is of interest to others, too.

Brian M. D’Onofrio

Indiana University



What is the focus of your award-winning research?

My research explores the mechanisms through which environmental risks, such as pregnancy-related, parental, and neighborhood factors, influence child and adolescent morbidity and mortality. Researchers have identified risks that predict subsequent antisocial behavior, depression, neurocognitive problems, severe mental illness, and suicide. The underlying causal mechanisms through which many risk factors come to be associated with mortality and morbidity are not known, however. Because researchers will only be able to identify causal risk factors by using multiple perspectives, I am currently utilizing three general approaches to study the processes that underlie the associations between risk factors and numerous indices of mortality and morbidity: 1) quasi-experimental approaches, such as sibling, co-twin, and offspring of siblings/twins comparisons; 2) longitudinal analyses; and 3) intervention studies.

How did you develop an interest in this area?

I have always been intrigued by family relationships and psychological development. I first became fascinated with psychological science, however, as an undergraduate student at the University of Virginia. Pursuing clinical science, in particular, enabled me to combine my passion for serving others with the intellectual stimulation of applying the best scientific methods to better understand the causes and treatments of mental disorders.

Who are your mentors and/or biggest psychological influences?

I have had the privilege to work with a group of phenomenal researchers in multiple disciplines as part of my training. While I was an undergraduate student, Mavis Hetherington introduced me to the scientific study of family systems, and Steve Nock instilled in me a great appreciation for the necessity of using the best sampling strategies when studying families. While working as a post-baccalaureate research associate, Lindon Eaves stressed the importance of thoroughly testing competing scientific hypotheses. My main research advisor in graduate school, Eric Turkheimer, always encouraged me to never be satisfied with the accepted “facts” in psychological or behavior genetic research, and he continues to inspire me by his use of sophisticated approaches to answer important psychological questions. As a graduate student, Robert Emery taught me the importance of spanning various scientific disciplines, especially when studying familial risks. I now have the tremendous opportunity to work with several outstanding research collaborators, such as Jack Bates, Ben Lahey, and Paul Lichtenstein, whose work is inspiring and groundbreaking. And, my colleagues at Indiana University provide countless examples of how interdisciplinary research and training can advance psychological science. Finally, my graduate and postdoctoral students continue to open up exciting avenues of research for me.

What unique factors have contributed to your early success?

My early success is due to the confluence of many factors. First, my mentors and research colleagues have greatly facilitated my research program by unselfishly providing me opportunities for growth and collaboration. I am indebted to their generosity. Second, I have received unparalleled support from my

colleagues at Indiana University, especially in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. My colleagues have worked hard to break down the barriers between traditionally disparate areas of study to foster interdisciplinary research, which provides an incredibly collaborative environment. The university and the department have generously provided me exceptional resources and protected time to focus on my research. Last, but certainly not least, my family has continually encouraged and supported me to pursue my research and career goals.

What does winning this award mean to you both personally and professionally?

I am honored and humbled to win the award, especially as I join such a prestigious group of previous recipients. On a personal level, receiving this award validates my dedication to clinical science, as I try to answer important questions about the etiology and treatment of mental disorders. The award is also an acknowledgement of the dedication and support of my mentors, collaborators, colleagues, and family

Lea Rose Dougherty

University of Maryland, College Park



What is the focus of your award-winning research?

My research interests lie broadly in the field of developmental psychopathology and focus on the examination of the phenomenology, etiology and course of depression from a developmental, lifespan perspective. Within this domain, I focus primarily on three areas: 1) an examination of the developmental origins of risk for depression, with a particular focus on early neuroendocrine functioning, individual differences in affect and temperament/personality, and examining associations between potential endophenotypes for depression and specific genotypes; 2) investigating the phenomenology and validity of preschool mental health problems; and 3) investigating the neural basis of emotion regulation and the effects of early experience and stress on brain development.

How did you develop an interest in this area?

During my undergraduate studies at the University of Delaware, I pursued training in clinical psychology, biological sciences, and mathematics, which provided a strong foundation for my future interdisciplinary research. In addition, I developed a strong interest in developmental psychopathology and the study of children's emotions by working with Julie Hubbard at the University of Delaware. I was lucky to continue and expand upon this work with Daniel Klein at Stony Brook University.

Who are your mentors and/or biggest psychological influences?

My biggest influence has been my graduate advisor, Daniel Klein (Stony Brook University). He has taught me the importance of broadening one's training across several domains of psychology and incorporating rigorous methodological and statistical approaches. I am also indebted to Marv Goldfried, at Stony Brook University, for providing invaluable clinical training in psychotherapy. As an assistant

professor, I am grateful to be in a department that supports my interdisciplinary and collaborative interests. At the University of Maryland, Andrea Chronis-Tuscano has provided me with much encouragement and mentorship. In addition, I have been lucky to collaborate with several neuroscientists at the University of Maryland, including Luiz Pessoa, Tracy Riggins and Elizabeth Redcay. These collaborations have allowed me to develop projects that bridge neuroscience, clinical science, and developmental psychology. My research would not have been possible without these collaborations and the University of Maryland's internal funding mechanisms that support collaborative and innovative research across the university. Finally, I am thankful to my parents, siblings, and friends for their continual support and encouragement.

What unique factors have contributed to your early success?

An amazing mentor, persistence, and teamwork. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with amazing collaborators who make science and the scientific pursuit fun and exciting. I am particularly grateful to Elizabeth Hayden (University of Western Ontario), Sara Bufferd (California State University, San Marcos), Thomas Olin (University of Pittsburgh) and John Pachankis (Yeshiva University). I am also passionate in my pursuit to uncover the etiology and developmental pathways of psychopathological disorders. Many adult patients with chronic depression report feeling depressed as long as they can remember. This observation ignited me to investigate mechanisms of risk and emerging mental health problems in early childhood — with the hope of developing effective interventions with lasting effects.

What does winning this award mean to you both personally and professionally?

I feel extremely honored to receive this prestigious award and to be recognized by APS. My work would not have been possible without my collaborators. I view this award as an acknowledgment of strong collaborative research.

Yulia Kovas

Goldsmiths, University of London



What is the focus of your award-winning research?

The focus of my research is to understand the processes of gene-environment interplay in shaping individual differences in learning, ability, academic motivation, and achievement. My research and the research of my colleagues all over the world has demonstrated that all educationally relevant cognitive and behavioral traits are influenced by both genetic and environmental factors. Genetic effects stem from many genes of small effect. Moreover, the same genes may have different effects in different environments, such as different cultural setups and different curricula. I believe that through understanding these mechanisms we will be able to optimize educational practices by individualizing them to the needs of each learner.

How did you develop an interest in this area?

When I was still a student at the State Pedagogical University in St Petersburg, Russia, I was teaching at a primary and secondary school. Faced with incredible individual differences in learning, I became curious about the sources of this variation. Later, I studied psychology at the University of London, and then was lucky to get into a PhD program at King's College, University of London, under the supervision of Prof. Robert Plomin, a leading expert in behavioral genetics. This PhD program equipped me with new interdisciplinary tools, as well as access to the unique twin sample — Twins Early Development Study (TEDS) — a longitudinal, representative, large-scale twin study that focuses on understanding the complex genetic and environmental influences on child development.

Who are your mentors and/or biggest psychological influences?

My mentor and biggest psychological influence is Professor Robert Plomin. I admire his scientific curiosity, his interdisciplinary expertise, the support he gives to his students and colleagues, and his generosity. I owe my success to him. I have also been incredibly lucky with my numerous international collaborators. Several leading scientists involved in running twin studies in Russia, the United States, and Canada have become very close collaborators and friends.

What unique factors have contributed to your early success?

Professor Plomin's mentorship, my fascination with individual differences, and incredible luck.

What does winning this award mean to you both personally and professionally?

Professionally, it means that the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research into individual differences in learning, ability, motivation, and academic achievement is acknowledged as important by the prestigious society. Personally, I am honored and extremely happy to receive this award, not just for myself, but acknowledging all the collaborators, without whom this achievement would not be possible.

Sari van Anders

University of Michigan

**What is the focus of your award-winning research?**

My social neuroendocrinology research program focuses on hormones and socially intimate behavioral contexts alongside gender/sex and sexual diversity. I am interested in the social modulation of testosterone (T) via sexuality, partnering, and nurturance, as well as bidirectional links with phenomena like sexual desire and orgasm. I ask hormonal questions that have evolutionary theory and social construction in their answers, and that have implications for health and immunity. I also ask phenomenological questions about sexuality, intimacy, gender/sex, and T itself.

Much of my work uses the Steroid/Peptide Theory of Social Bonds, a theoretical framework we developed to delineate the utility of T and other hormones for disentangling the evolved systems that jointly and separately contribute to contextualized intimacies. My work puts forward a biological model of human work that is non-biologically deterministic, socially situated, and rooted in feminist science. It sidesteps nature/nurture debates and demonstrates the malleability of biologies. In a more humanistic layer to my research program, I study hormones as sociocultural agents.

I use interdisciplinary methods like hormone assays, experiments, questionnaires, group differences, correlations, content analysis, and interviews; our lab is focused on creative, non-invasive, feminist, and enfranchising methodologies. We have exciting cross-disciplinary collaborators from nursing/midwifery, theater, immunology and infectious diseases, sexual health medicine, biological anthropology, social work, and beyond.

How did you develop an interest in this area?

I was long interested in the ‘slash’ between gender/sex and, because social neuroscience wasn’t on my horizon and a biological foundation seemed to proffer more authority to explore outside of home territory than social training would, I pursued biopsychology. I became interested in hormones because they were seemingly so deeply implicated in gender/sex; I then became interested in sexuality because it was so deeply implicated in hormones (this sounds like a pyramid scheme!). Perhaps ironically, at first I couldn’t see how to mesh my interests in feminist science studies and socialization with my interests in hormones, gender/sex, and sexuality. A lot of reading, supportive colleagues, time, and my own missteps and realizations provided a positive feedback loop between these domains, or perhaps a sort of osmotic pressure that helped move ideas from these two domains into one research program. Now, I wonder how I could ever not have seen the exciting richness and breathtaking potential of this unified approach.

Who are your mentors and/or biggest psychological influences?

I have been extremely fortunate to have ‘spot-mentoring’, where people (who might not know I think of them as mentors!) have been incredibly generous with answering questions, providing guidance, and supporting my work. This has been invaluable because it would be unrealistic to expect mentorship at the junction of all my interdisciplinary foci. Here at Michigan, Abby Stewart and Jill Becker have really been amazingly gracious sources of sustained navigational support and there are others (truly too many to name) in our incredible Psychology Department, Women’s Studies Department (where I am jointly appointed), and many other locations on campus who have provided sustained or spot mentoring at critical junctures. I have gained so much from collaborators and my PhD supervisor, Neil Watson — both mentorship and influence; it would be hard to articulate how paradigm-shifting their contributions have been here.

A number of scholars have deeply affected both the way I think about specific topics and the way I do scholarship, and/or shared important insights: from behavioral neuroendocrinology (e.g., Elizabeth Adkins-Regan, Melissa Hines, Ellen Ketterson, Rui Oliveira, Kim Wallen, John Wingfield), gender/sexuality (e.g., Meredith Chivers, Lisa Diamond, Leonore Tiefer, Suzanne Kessler), feminist science (e.g., Anne Fausto-Sterling, Donna Haraway, Sandra Harding, Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, Helen Longino, Elisabeth Lloyd). I wish I could provide a longer list of mentors and influences. Finally, my partner now knows more about the junction of feminist bioscience, sexuality research, and social neuroendocrinology than any physicist should have to know, and continues to be my main sounding

board.

What unique factors have contributed to your early success?

I once read another scientist's attribution of their success and was struck by the similarity of experience. Namely, holding two specific beliefs that are completely contradictory is strangely compelling and motivating: 1) the overwhelming belief that one truly has no valuable insights or hope of succeeding, and 2) the sincere faith that one's contributions are valuable and exceptionally right. And by 'one' I mean 'me'. I will leave the obvious explanations to our social-cognitive colleagues.

Also, I read feminist work on gender, science, and academia very early, and this (often truly depressing) body of work helped crystallize the social situatedness of science in a formational way. Knowing that social locations affected judgments was a push because I knew that, as a woman, I might be held to a different set of standards. This literature ended up being a very pragmatic (sur)realist map to navigate by, as well as an incitement to consider how I wanted science to be practiced (by me; in general).

Also, and I'm far from unique in this, I just honestly love the things I get to think about all day, and would rather get closer to a truth than somehow be innately right. This investment in a situated truth means that my lab members contribute diverse perspectives to vibrant research debates, and any successes we have owe a large debt to this.

What does winning this award mean to you both personally and professionally?

I found this award incredibly meaningful on personal and professional levels for a number of reasons. First, many scholars including myself try to avoid relying on external recognitions to validate our work because these can be infrequent at best; I was not ready for how sincerely validating this award actually felt, especially when I thought about the past recipients, many of whom I have long admired. Second, this very exciting recognition of my scholarship paradoxically has been bittersweet as I can't seem to help thinking on the would-have-been, should-have-been, and could-have-been scholars whose work pushed at disciplinary boundaries that pushed back. Finally, doing work that is seen to be definitionally oxymoronic — feminist science — certainly inheres challenges, especially in conjunction with doing work on intimacy and sexuality (which is often seen as illegitimate or idiosyncratic). So, it feels like an exciting time for feminist science, as well as sexuality research, and psychological approaches that, at their core, expand our notions of what it means to create knowledge in ways that honor the interconnectedness and richness of human complexity.

Felix Warneken

Harvard University



What is the focus of your award-winning research?

I am interested in the origins of human cooperation. What are the social-cognitive and motivational processes that underlie cooperative behaviors such as helping, sharing, and collaborating with others? What are the origins of these behaviors in human evolution? By combining studies with children and comparative studies with great apes, I try to address these questions by examining both their ontogenetic origins and development in human children, as well as similarities and differences with our closest evolutionary relatives. My research demonstrates that young children already display altruistic motivations to help others, and that even chimpanzees share some of the basic capacities for altruistic behaviors that we find in humans.

How did you develop an interest in this area?

My first interest was actually in epistemology, and I was fascinated by Piaget's writings because he showed how we can investigate the processes of knowledge construction and change by studying the development of children. I then became persuaded by approaches which highlight that to understand how children's thinking develops, it is essential to look at their emerging social cognition as a fundamental capacity to acquire cultural knowledge from others and co-construct new knowledge with others. A significant moment for me was to read Michael Tomasello's book *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition*, which not only best articulated the notion that social cognition is at the core of human-unique cognition, but also showed how we can investigate fundamental questions about human nature by studying nonhuman primates. I am grateful that he took me on as a doctoral student and allowed me to further investigate the relationship between cognition and cooperative behavior, giving me the opportunity to learn the rules of the trade from, and co-construct new knowledge with, him.

Who are your mentors and/or biggest psychological influences?

When I was a young student in Berlin, Martin Hildebrand-Nilsson from the Freie Universität Berlin created a wonderful intellectual environment in which we extensively discussed developmental psychological literature. In addition, Kurt Kreppner from the Max Planck Institute for Human Development taught me the observational and statistical methods to analyze and interpret social interactions. During my time as a doctoral student and post doc at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, I cannot thank Michael Tomasello enough for his guidance, enthusiasm, and willingness to turn his office into an ad-hoc playground to test out new child apparatuses during our weekly meetings. Staying true to my conviction that peer interaction fosters the generation of new knowledge, I also want to highlight how much I have learned through discussions and collaborations with my colleagues, especially Alicia Melis, Colin Bannard, Hannes Rakoczy, and Alexandra Rosati. Now at Harvard, I feel lucky to be able to discuss ideas and seek advice from Mahzarin Banaji, Peter Blake, Susan Carey, Joshua Greene, Paul Harris, Jason Mitchell, Steven Pinker, Elizabeth Spelke, and Richard Wrangham. This diversity of perspectives and breadth of knowledge has led me to pursue avenues of research that I could never have anticipated to follow.

What unique factors have contributed to your early success?

I believe that one important aspect was that by investigating the development of cooperative behavior, I selected a research topic that sits at the intersection of different disciplines. The necessity to draw upon a variety of methods, learn a diversity of theoretical approaches, and translate these ideas for different audiences has helped me to shape my thinking and come up with novel ways of doing research.

What does winning this award mean to you both personally and professionally?

I am honored to receive this award along with this group of highly distinguished colleagues. As a

representative of the field of developmental and comparative psychology, I find it encouraging that this line of work receives recognition. I view this as an appreciation of the idea that we can address important questions about human nature by studying young children and nonhuman primates.