



Current Programs

- Aggression Research Program
- Analyzing Pathways from Childhood to Adulthood
- Contingencies of Self-Worth Research Program
- Culture and Cognition Research Program
- Culture Identity & Social Contexts Program
- Evolution and Human Adaptation Research Program
- Gender and Achievement Research Program
- Program for Research on Black Americans
- Program on Teaching, Learning, and Technology
- International Collaboratives for Research & Training
- USA/Max Planck Lifespan Development Program
- USA/Poland Program on Social Dynamics

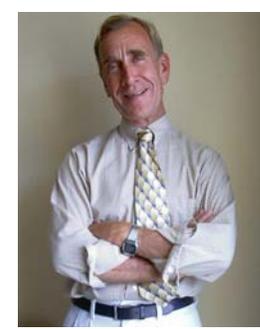
From the Director's Desk

This is the first edition of what I hope will be a long series of yearly reports on RCGD activities for friends and alumni of the Center. As has been true for all of RCGD's almost 60-year history at Michigan, exciting things are happening, and I want to share the excitement with you.

When I took over as the 8th Director of the Center last fall, I was pleased to find that we seemed to be doing quite well. Our Primary Research Staff are publishing at a high rate and having a substantial impact on their fields. Our disciplinary boundaries have broadened over recent years, and we are having impacts in areas beyond traditional experimental social psychology. We are currently in very good financial shape. We have almost \$5,000,000 in grants coming in this year and expect to have about the same number next year, and we have a significant reserve to draw upon in emergencies. Our own success is helped by the fact that ISR as a whole is doing very well and also is in good financial shape.

In this newsletter we highlight some of the research that has made news headlines

this year and some of the awards our faculty have received. Some current RCGD research reflects quite new directions – for example, Brad Bushman's research on religion and aggression which has just been funded for three years by the Templeton Foundation. Other research reflects the continuation of long standing research programs—for example, Jacque Eccles research on racial self-identity and healthy psychological development in adolescence which has recently been funded for 5 years by NICHD.



However, this year has also been highlighted by a number of other events that deserve mention. First, we opened the completely renovated experimental laboratories in the basement and renamed them as the

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Robert B. Zajonc Experimental Labs Undergo Renovation

Major renovations to the newly named Robert B. Zajonc Experimental Labs were completed in 2006. The labs now feature technology that provides more flexibility in designing experiments as well as reducing the time needed to run them. The new configuration creates a more functional workspace while the updated design makes it more pleasant for both researchers and subjects.

The complex houses two larger waiting rooms, two focus group rooms and four labs with computer workstations. Three of the computer labs have a control room where researchers can monitor

their experiment.

Mary Rigdon, RCGD Assistant Research Scientist, who uses the labs extensively in her work comments that she has found running experiments in the new space comfortable even while five other researchers are running simultaneously. The labs have attracted researchers from many areas around the University including the School of Information, Psychology and Economics.

The former space offered only small rooms containing 4–9 computers each. So when running more than eight subjects multiple rooms were necessary.

The largest of the new labs can accommodate about twenty subjects which reduces overall time to run experiments.

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Zajonc labs under construction

RCGD in the News



March 2007

Scott Atran's work is highlighted in the March 4, 2007 *New York Times Sunday Magazine*. The article, "Darwin's God", discusses his and other leading scientists' study of the evolution of religion. This inquiry explores questions such as how has religion served the adaptive needs of mankind and if not, why has it survived?



January 2007

"This is Your Brain on Alien Killer Pimps of Nazi Doom," said the headline on the Dec. 11 *Newsweek* story about violent video games and their impact on adolescents. The article quoted ISR psychologist **Brad Bushman**, who said "In general, violent media increase aggressive thoughts and there's good reason to believe participatory violent videogames have a stronger effect than violent TV programs of films."



December 2006

More U.S. Blacks attempt suicide than previously thought, the Associated Press reported on Oct. 31, based on an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* by U-M researcher **Sean Joe** and colleagues. The study analyzed data from the National Survey of American Life, directed by **James Jackson**, which is the first to look at mental health among African Americans and Caribbean Americans.



October 2006

In an ABC World News interview with Charlie Gibson, **Jacque Eccles** discussed children's activities based on a PSID (Panel Study of Income Dynamics)/CDS (Child Development Study) study.

Recent Publications & Awards

James S. Jackson ▶2007 James Jackson, director of ISR, Director of the Center for AfroAmerican & African Studies and RCGD Research Scientist received the Association for Psychological Science's highest honor, the James McKeen Cattell Fellowship Award. Each year, four scientists are selected to receive this honor, in recognition of their lifetime achievements in basic science and applied psychological research.

Brad Bushman with Roy F. Baumeister ▶*Social Psychology and Human Nature* (Hardcover - Jan 2, 2007), comprehensive textbook exploring the field of social psychology.

Jennifer Crocker ▶2006 Claude M. Steele Collegiate Professor of Psychology

Jacquelynne Eccles ▶2006 John Hill Award for Distinguished Life Career, Society for Research in Adolescence (SRA) ▶ 2006 Distinguished Mentor Award, Division 7, American Psychological Association (APA).

Rowell Huesmann ▶2006 Appointed Director of RCGD.

Norbert Schwartz ▶2006 Fellow, Society for Consumer Psychology ▶2006 Rackham Distinguished Graduate Mentor Award

Robert Zucker ▶2006 Merit Award from NIAA (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism) for his projected titled "Family Study of Risk for Alcoholism over the Life Course"

Sean Joe ▶2006 along with RCGD co-authors **James Jackson**, **Woody Neighbors**, and **Ray Baser** have published their research on lifetime suicide attempts among blacks in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA)

When God sanctions violence, believers act more aggressively

By Diane Swanbrow/University News service

Reading violent scriptures increases aggressive behavior, especially among believers, a new study finds. The study by University of Michigan social psychologist Brad Bushman and colleagues helps to illuminate one of the ways that violence and behavior are linked. "To justify their actions, violent people often claim that God has sanctioned their

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behavior," said Bushman, faculty associate at the U-M Institute for Social Research and lead author of the article published in the March 2007 issue of *Psychological Science*. "Christian extremists, Jewish reactionaries and Islamic fundamentalists all can cite scriptures that seem to encourage or at least support aggression against unbelievers." Bushman, who is also a U-M professor of psychology and communications studies, and colleagues at Brigham Young University and at Vrije University in the Netherlands, found the same relationship in two separate experiments detailed in the article. The first study involved Brigham Young University students, 99 percent of whom believed in God and in the Bible. The second study involved Amsterdam students, 50 percent of whom believed in God and 27 percent of whom believed in the Bible. After reporting their religious affiliations and beliefs, participants read a passage adapted from the King James Bible that described a woman's brutal murder and her husband's revenge on her attackers. Half the participants were told that the passage came from the Old Testament, half that it came from an ancient scroll found by archeologists. Half the participants from each of these groups read a version of the passage that included a sentence in which God commanded

his followers to take arms against others. After reading the passages, participants were paired with confederates of the experimenters for a simple reaction task. They were told that the winner would be able to "blast" the losing partner with noise as loud as 105 decibels, about the level of a fire alarm—a common experimental measure of aggression. The researchers found that both the religious and secular students were more aggressive, delivering louder blasts of noise to their ostensible partners, when told that the passage they read came from the Bible. Aggressive responses also increased when participants read that God directly sanctioned violence. The increased level of aggression was greater among believers than among secularists, however. "Our results further confirm previous research showing that exposure to violent media causes people to behave more aggressively if they identify with the violent characters than if they do not," Bushman said. The work also supports the view that exposure to violent scriptures may induce extremists to engage in aggressive actions. "It's important to note that we obtained evidence supporting this hypothesis in samples of university students who were, in our estimation, not typical of the terrorists who blow up civilians," Bushman wrote. "Even among our participants who were not religiously devout, exposure to God-sanctioned violence increased subsequent aggression. That the effect was found in such a sample may attest to the insidious power of exposure to literary scriptural violence." According to Bushman and colleagues, this does not mean that reading the scriptures leads to aggression. "Violent stories that teach moral lessons or that are balanced with descriptions of victims' suffering or the aggressor's remorse can teach important lessons and have legitimate artistic merit. But taking a single violent episode out of its overall context, as we did in these studies, can produce a significant increase in aggression."

From the Director's Desk (cont'd from page 1)

Robert B. Zajonc Experimental Labs. These labs provide state of the art computer-controlled facilities for experimental studies of individuals and groups as the newsletter article describes. Second, we held two RCGD seminar series that diverged in somewhat different directions. The fall Monday afternoon seminars were devoted to "Experimental Economics" research examining the social dynamics of decision making in economic settings. The winter the seminars were devoted to "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Alternatives to Self-Interest" and examined the bio-social basis of altruistic behavior. We also experimented with a slightly different format in which multiple speakers presented sometimes divergent and sometimes complementary ideas on the same day. Third, breaking with the 'unwritten rules' tradition of RCGD, we actually formalized some of our procedures for the role of the RCGD executive committee and its election.

As the academic year draws to a close, we are heavily engaged in one more important activity— our ten-year self-assessment. All of ISR is engaged in this evaluation and planning activity which will culminate next year in an external evaluation of all the ISR Centers. I am confident that in our second edition of this newsletter next spring, I will be able to report very positively on that evaluation.

Rowell Huesmann, Director, RCGD

About RCGD:

RCGD was established in 1948 by Kurt Lewin's friends and colleagues—Dorwin Cartwright, Leon Festinger, John R. P. French, Ronald Lippit and Alvin Zander. In 1949, when this group associated themselves with the co-founders of the Survey Research Center (SRC), Rensis Likert, Angus Campbell, George Katona, Charles Cannell, and Leslie Kish, the

RCGD Executive Committee

The RCGD Executive Committee represents Center faculty and advises the RCGD Director on important matters of policy and decisions relevant to both the Center and at times, the Institute for Social Research. Executive Committee Members are elected on an annual basis by the faculty at large. Current members include Jennifer Crocker, Richard Gonzalez, Rowell Huesmann (Chair), Shinobu Kitayama, and Mary Rigdon. Over the past year the group has established procedures for the election process of the RCGD Executive Committee, reviews a variety of institute issues, reviewed and recommended new RCGD faculty appointments, and have worked extensively on the RCGD 10-year Self-Assessment.

University of Michigan established the Institute for Social Research. The two new research Centers continue this relationship and have been joined by three additional centers.

GOAL

For almost six decades the Research Center for Group Dynamics (RCGD) goal has been to advance the understanding of human behavior in a societal context. Toward this end, RCGD has evolved a large portfolio of research programs examining sociological, psychological, economic, and political and cultural facets of human

existence and behavior.

Although diverse in topics, RCGD continues to advance the understanding of human behavior in a societal context, making clear the linkages between an individual's psychological life and the life of the society in which the individual belongs.

RCGD strives to retain the best research scientists in the country to produce the best research in the world.

CURRENT RESEARCH

Research currently underway includes studies concerned with group decision making and social judg-

ment; conformity and interdependence; violence and aggression; achievement and self-esteem; contingencies of self-work; scholastic achievement; delinquency and alternative schools; social relationships and social support of African American communities; studies focusing on the effects of educational television, computers, and other novel technology; stereotyping and social judgment; culture and cognition; cognitive anthropology; the psychology of suicide terrorism; and the development of notions of race in young children.

Zajonc Labs Renovation (contd. from page 1)

It helps subjects understand the size of the research group of which they are a part. Mary Rigdon explains that this can be important in some experiments and groups that were divided into small separate rooms would have difficulty thinking of themselves as part of a larger group. Now they need only look around the room. When an experiment requires privacy a movable screen is positioned along the middle of the room protecting workstations from questioning eyes of other respondents.

In the older facility, the data from these networked experiments were captured on a computer in the same room as the subjects. Now a new separate control room offers servers to capture

data discreetly.

Two labs offer six completely private workstations.

Again, researchers have a control station where they can monitor the experiment's progress. A unique feature in one group of these labs is the addition of technology that allows each researcher the ability to run subjects on either a Mac or Windows platform by merely the flip of a toggle switch.

One of the focus rooms offers video technology. With two ceiling mounted cameras the discussion between as many as ten people can

be monitored in "real time" from the control room or video taped for later study.



Large 20 subject laboratory space used here for training during May 2007 Center for Analysis of Pathways from Childhood to Adulthood (CAPCA) conference.

In order to ensure the long-term vitality of the Lab, RCGD will soon begin a multi-pronged fundraising effort to raise money to enable faculty and graduate students to recruit subjects and to upgrade facility and equipment on an ongoing basis.