Psychology News -- Week of February 29, 2009

PUBLICATIONS

Elliot Tucker-Drob had a solo authored paper accepted for publication: Tucker-Drob, E. M. (in press). Differentiation of cognitive abilities across the lifespan. Developmental Psychology.


MEDIA MENTION

The Spring issue of the UVa Magazine has an article on happiness featuring Jon Haidt, Shige Oishi and Tim Wilson:


QUESTION of the WEEK

We asked graduating student Colin Tucker Smith "What did you wish you knew when you were a first year?" Colin has just accepted a post-doc position with Jan De Houwer at Ghent University in Belgium.

I’m not particularly great at life, so me giving advice is a little strange. That said, here are some things I wish I knew when I was a first year. The first, and most important, is that it’s going to be fine. Maybe it already feels that way for you (and that’s great), but it definitely didn’t feel that way to me. The second thing is once it starts feeling fine (sometime during 3rd year or so), make sure you start learning something new. I’m not sure that academia is something where you’re supposed to feel like you’ve got everything under control. I think you’re supposed to learn how to juggle three balls then keep adding balls (theories) and flaming things (computer programs) and knives (statistical procedures) all the time. (Sorry, that metaphor was ridiculously handled...). Even if things are going “well” it’s probably still going to feel fairly uncomfortable, but each year that thing you can barely handle is going to get larger and larger. For example, during my first year I’d get very nervous before meetings with my advisor. I’d work almost the whole day before to prepare. I practiced my first-year social lunch talk about 45 times and I made sure I knew what my plan was in case I needed to throw up during my talk. Maybe my advisor wishes I still spent the day preparing for my weekly meetings with him, but now I look forward to speaking in front of my area (well, kind of).
Thirdly, I would say that if your work isn’t something that interests you, then you should definitely find something that does. That could be another area within psychology or another advisor within your area, but it might not be. Don’t leave without your Master’s degree (and don’t leave without trying to work with another advisor), but I think if we’re doing good work then it’s something we live, not something we do. On that note, try to make sure you have a way to get away from it. Personally, I don’t know how you go about having a balance in your life (my parents hid my laptop from me on Christmas morning this year), but just make sure that you keep in touch with the family and friends you came in with. I live with the constant feeling that this week is a little too busy, but things are sure to calm down and I’ll have time to write my grandmother a letter “next week.” I’m pretty sure next week never comes though, so set aside some time aside for those things. They’re important.

Other than that, there’s not a whole lot to say. Help the people around you whenever you can, because they’re the people who help you. Even if all the help you feel comfortable giving early on is looking for typos and checking references, it’s all practice, and it’s all help. Find some people you look up to and ask them questions. They’ll be happy to feel like they know something. Make sure you have a support group of people who are going through the same struggles you are. Trust them. Put your head down and work hard and, like I said, it’s going to be fine.

EVENTS of the WEEK

There are no events this week due to Spring Break.

Friday, March 6th is a university holiday and all administrative offices will be closed.