

NEWS

Spectrum Launch: Neuropsychology's diversity problem; the true cost of a postdoc; a bevy of job posts

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Hello, and welcome to *Spectrum* Launch. We're always aiming to provide guidance and resources for early-career autism researchers. This month, we explore how two groups are trying to recruit more researchers and clinicians of color into neuropsychology to better serve their communities.

The first time **Courtney Ray** attended the annual conference for the International Neuropsychological Society, she was struck by the lack of diversity. Ray, then a postdoctoral researcher at Positive Outcomes Psychological Services, in Athens, Georgia, spied only a few other Black neuropsychologists as she wandered the conference halls.

"There were very, very few people who looked like me," she says. "It was really shocking." And she couldn't help but wonder how that lack of representation affected the communities she worked with.

Clinical neuropsychologists who specialize in autism can have a range of roles, from running studies to making clinical assessments, says **Annette Richard**, a neuropsychologist and clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. In essence, she and her colleagues serve as a bridge between the world of autism research and clinical practice, she says.

But that bridge might not serve all autistic people equitably, because the field is predominantly white. Only 12.9 percent of clinical neuropsychologists report being from a racial or ethnic minority, and those who do tend to be early in their career, according to a 2020 **survey**.

"If you don't have an understanding of culture, you might wind up assessing and evaluating and diagnosing people in ways that aren't necessarily accurate," Ray says.

One barrier to increased diversity in neuropsychology is a lack of understanding of what neuropsychologists do — or that the job even exists, says **Taylor Schmitt**, a neuropsychologist and clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Michigan, where she works with Richard.

Schmitt recently launched **New2Neuropsychology** to raise awareness among undergraduate students and recent graduates, particularly those from groups that have been historically underrepresented in the field. She and her colleagues run information sessions at historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions and community colleges, and invite neuropsychologists from those communities to talk about their experiences. They also organize networking events and provides resources for students interested in applying to graduate school.

“There needs to be a more systemic approach to solving this,” Schmitt says about the lack of diversity in her field. “And that means actively getting out there and telling people how awesome neuropsychology is.”

After returning from her conference, Ray also began thinking about how to support Black neuropsychologists and encourage more to join the field. She started a WhatsApp message group with the Black colleagues she knew, which eventually grew into the **Society for Black Neuropsychology**. The group provides mentorship opportunities and professional development resources for neuropsychologists of all levels.

Black clinicians are more likely to stay in the field when they have a support system and role models who look like them, Ray says. “I think that that goes a long way to making the field seem more inviting and open and approachable for people.”

The group is also working to serve the Black community in other ways. At the start of the pandemic, for example, they launched webinars about COVID-19’s impact on cognition and raised awareness about how the condition might disproportionately affect people of color.

Ray is now a clinical neuropsychologist in the greater New York City area. After establishing her practice, she noticed a need for more support for autistic children in her community, so she became certified to administer the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule.

“Being able to be a conduit in my community and a resource in my community is really important,” she says.

Jobs and funds:

- Plenty of job listings have popped up in recent weeks. The Northeastern University Center for Cognitive and Brain Health in Boston, Massachusetts, is hiring **faculty in human neuroscience** at all levels. “I’m biased, but I think you’ll find great, collaborative

colleagues,” tweeted **Laurel Gabard-Durnam**, assistant professor of psychology at the university.

- The Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, is searching for an **assistant or associate professor** focusing on infant and early childhood development, early intervention and early childhood education. The hiring committee plans to begin reviewing applications on 21 October.
- **Armin Raznahan**, chief of the Section on Developmental Neurogenomics at the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health, tweeted about two open postdoctoral positions:

???? !! WE'RE HIRING !! ???? Check out these 2 fully-funded postdoc openings **@NIMHgov @IRPatNIH**: one in imaging transcriptomics, the other in functional genomics of rare disorders. Please RT. Wld love to hear from you if you're interested in learning more - just email/DM me. **pic.twitter.com/RT5bnKUpl2**

— Armin Raznahan (@bogglerapture) **September 10, 2022**

- Potential postdoctoral researchers with an interest in “combining imaging and proteomics to explore vertebrate development” can apply to work with **John Wallingford**, professor of molecular biosciences at the University of Texas at Austin, he **tweeted**, noting that “the position is very generously funded.”
- **Maria Diehl**, assistant professor of psychology at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas, is hiring a full-time research assistant for her lab. Applicants should have at least two years of animal research experience, she **tweeted**.
- Cell Press is accepting applications for its **Rising Black Scientists Award** essay competition from Black undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral researchers. Winners receive a \$10,000 award plus \$500 in travel funds. Applications are due 11 November.

Recommended reads:

- The majority of academic faculty hired across the United States were trained at a minority of elite institutions, according to a new **study** in *Nature*. The finding highlights the inequalities entrenched in academia, the authors write.
- It isn't always easy to fit in at a lab as a postdoc, but building a strong relationship with your principal investigator can help, as discussed in a recent **webinar** from the Society for Neuroscience.
- Researchers struggling with their academic writing may find inspiration in this **Twitter thread** from **Julien Cayla**, associate professor of marketing at Nanyang Business School in Singapore:

10 academic writing skills I wish I had learned as a PhD student (with updated links) A thread ?? ???? for PhD students and junior scholars:

— Julien Cayla (@juliencayla) **September 27, 2022**

- Ph.D. students in the United Kingdom are getting a 10 percent raise. But with current inflation, some argue that more needs to be done to ensure students can meet the high cost of living, according to a *Nature* **report**.
- Speaking of cost of living, is taking a postdoctoral position an expensive mistake? That's the question that haunted **Alexis Ceasrine**, a postdoctoral researcher in psychology and neuroscience at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, after she received an email alert about her lack of contributions to a retirement plan. Ceasrine wrote about the high cost of doing a postdoc — and how institutions can help — in a recent **blog post** for *scientificRESEARCH*, a research funding database. (The author of this newsletter previously worked with one of the co-founders of *scientificRESEARCH* but is not involved with the site.)
- Organizations and universities can choose to sign a new agreement to stop using impact factors and other publication metrics when assessing researchers' work, according to a **Career News column** in *Nature*.

Any suggestions for how to make this newsletter more useful, or recommendations for what topic we should cover next? Send them to **angie@spectrumnews.org**.

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