

Robert Thorstad

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RESEARCH OVERVIEW

People spend a lot of time on the internet: we interact with other people, write on blogs, buy products, and search for websites. These seemingly everyday interactions create a large-scale, naturalistic record of human psychology. I test psychological hypotheses in this natural laboratory using computational techniques from machine learning and natural language processing. I have applied these methods to study decision-making, mental illness, and how people think about the future.

EDUCATION

Emory University 2014-present
PhD student in Psychology
Advisor: Phillip Wolff

University of North Carolina Chapel Hill 2012-2014
Research Assistant in Psychology
Advisor: Neil Mulligan

Haverford College 2012
BA in Philosophy with high honors

AWARDS

Travel Award: Association for Psychological Science Annual Meeting 2019

*Emory College Collaborative Research Catalyst Award in
Neural and Behavioral Mechanisms of Learning* 2016-2018
2 year funded research fellowship, total \$3,500 for research and travel on big data approaches to psychology.

Travel Award: Cognitive Science Society Annual Meeting 2016

Phi Beta Kappa 2012

Departmental Prize in Philosophy 2012
Haverford College

Magill-Rhoads (Merit) Scholarship 2009-2012
Haverford College

JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (In press). Predicting Future Mental Illness from Social Media: A Big Data Approach. *Behavior Research Methods*.

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (2018). A big data approach to future thinking and decision-making. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(8): E1740-E1748.

Wolff, P. & **Thorstad, R.** (2017). Force dynamics. In M. Waldman (Ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Causal Reasoning*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

**REFEREED
CONFERENCE
PROCEEDINGS**

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (2018). Using Big Data Methods to Identify Conceptual Frameworks. In T.T. Rogers, M. Rau, X. Zhu, & C. W. Kalish (Eds.) Proceedings of the 40th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society. Austin, TX: Cognitive Science Society.

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (2016). What causal illusions might tell us about the identification of causes. In A. Papafragou, D. Grodner, D. Mirman, & J.C. Tieswell (Eds.), Proceedings of the 38th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society. Austin, TX: Cognitive Science Society.

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (2016). Temporal horizons and decision-making: a big data approach. In A. Papafragou, D. Grodner, D. Mirman, & J.C. Tieswell (Eds.), Proceedings of the 38th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society. Austin, TX: Cognitive Science Society.

Thorstad, R., Nie, A., & Wolff, P. (2015). Representations of time affect willingness to wait for future rewards. Proceedings of the 37th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society. (pp. 2392-2397). Austin, TX: Cognitive Science Society.

MANUSCRIPTS

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (In Prep. and submitted conference paper). Using Big Data to Understand Memory and Future Thinking.

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (In Prep.). What causal illusions might tell us about the identification of causes.

TALKS

Thorstad, R. "Does culture 'get in the head?' determinants of the emotional arc of narratives." Presentation at Emory University Graduate Research Team of Interdisciplinary Scholars (GRITS). October 2018. Atlanta, GA

Thorstad, R. "Predicting Mental Illness from Social Media." Presentation at Emory University Quantitative Methods Chalk Talk Series. October 2018. Atlanta, GA

Thorstad, R. "Mental Disorders and Natural Language: A Big Data Approach." Presentation at Emory University Graduate Research Team of Interdisciplinary Scholars (GRITS). February 2018. Atlanta, GA

Thorstad, R. Combining Big Data and the Lab to Study Future Thinking and Decision-Making. Presentation at Emory University Institute for Quantitative Theory and Methods. March 2017. Atlanta, GA.

Graci, M., **Thorstad, R.**, Waters, T., Fivush, R., & Wolff, P. Insights into narrative coherence and wellbeing using neural networks. Symposium presentation. January 2017. SARMAC, Sydney, Australia.

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. Temporal horizons and decision-making: a big data approach. Presentation at the 38th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society. August 2016. Philadelphia, PA.

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. What causal illusions might tell us about the identification of causes. Presentation at the 38th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society. August 2016. Philadelphia, PA.

Wolff, P., Shepard, J., & **Thorstad, R.** Social media and people's representations

of the future: a big data approach. Presentation at the International Conference on Thinking & Reasoning. August 2016. Providence, RI.

POSTERS

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (2019) Using Big Data to Understand Memory and Prospection. Poster accepted for presentation at 31st Annual Meeting of the Association for Psychological Science, Washington D.C.

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (2018) Using Big Data to Understand Memory and Prospection. Poster presented at 59th Annual Meeting of the Psychonomics Society, New Orleans, LA.

Graci, M., **Thorstad, R.**, Haardoerfer, R., & Fivush, R. (2018). Extracting Emotional Arcs from Distressing Memories Using Deep Recursive Sentiment Analysis. Association for Psychological Science, San Francisco, CA.

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (2017) Predicting future behaviors from social media: the effect of time horizon on decision-making. Poster presented at 4th Annual Mechanisms of Learning Forum. Queretaro, Mexico.

Graci, M., **Thorstad, R.**, Waters, T., Fivush, R., & Wolff, P. (2017). Deriving semantic coherence of personal memory using neural networks. Poster presented at 4th Annual Mechanisms of Learning Forum. Queretaro, Mexico.

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (2016). Temporal horizons and decision-making: a big data approach. Poster presented at Emory University Psychology Department Research Festival. Atlanta, GA.

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (2016). The Temporal Dynamics of Causal Illusions. Poster presented at 3rd Annual Mechanisms of Learning Forum. Atlanta, GA.

Graci, M., **Thorstad, R.**, Fivush, R., & Wolff, P. (2016). Extracting Coherence of Trauma Memories Using Neural Networks. Poster presented at 3rd Annual Mechanisms of Learning Forum. Atlanta, GA.

Wolff, P., Copley, B., Agichtein, E., **Thorstad, R.**, Nie, A., & Kilgore, R. (2015). Future Orientation and Wellbeing at the Population Level: A Preliminary Analysis based on Twitter Posts. Poster presented at Atlanta Computational Social Science Workshop. Atlanta, GA.

Thorstad, R. & Wolff, P. (2015). The Temporal Dynamics of Causal Illusions. Poster presented at the Psychonomics Society Annual Meeting. Chicago, IL.

Thorstad, R., Nie, A., & Wolff, P. (2015). Representations of Time Affect Willingness to Wait for Future Rewards. Poster presented at Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society. Pasadena, CA.

PUBLIC WRITING

Thorstad, R. (2019). People's tweets predict their decisions. *Atlas of Science*.

TEACHING

Guest Lectures

Fall 2018

EXPERIENCE

Brain and Language, 2 guest lectures. Emory University.

Graduate Co-Instructor

Fall 2016-Spring 2017

Mechanisms of Learning Graduate Training Grant Seminar

	<i>Lab Instructor</i> Research Methods. Emory University	Fall 2016
	<i>Teaching Assistant</i> Introduction to Psychology. Emory University	Spring 2016
	<i>Teaching Assistant</i> Perception and Action. Emory University.	Fall 2015
SERVICE	<i>Undergraduate Research Grant Review (Emory SIRE program)</i> 3x/year review of undergraduate research grant applications.	2018-present
	<i>Undergraduate Research Poster Judge</i> Emory University undergraduate research presentations. Emory University STEM Symposium (Fall 2017)	2015, 2017, 2018
	<i>Undergraduate Research Poster Judge</i> Spelman College undergraduate research presentations.	2017
	<i>Abstract Review</i> Emory University STEM Symposium for underrepresented undergraduate students.	2017
	<i>Graduate Research Talks Organizing (Emory GRITS program)</i> Emory University. Graduate student committee to organize interdisciplinary graduate student lecture series.	2016-present
	<i>Ethics Committee</i> Emory University. Psychology department ethics committee.	2016-present
OUTREACH	<i>Python Programming Group</i> Founder and leader. Scientific programming group for graduate students and postdocs at Emory University.	2018-present
	<i>Software Carpentry Workshop</i> Volunteer at Emory University scientific programming workshop for graduate students.	2018, 2019
	<i>Data Fest</i> Volunteer at Emory University undergraduate festival for computer-oriented data analysis.	2018, 2019
PEER REVIEW	<i>Reviews for:</i> Journal of Economic Psychology, Cognitive Science Society Annual Meeting.	
NON-ACADEMIC WRITING	<i>Contract Bridge Articles</i> Assistant Editor for District 7 Bridge Bulletin, a bimonthly newsletter on the card game contract bridge with roughly 12,000 readers.	2018-present