

flourish

the quarterly newsletter of the
center *for* neuroeconomics studies

FALL 2008

www.neuroeconomicstudies.org

CAN oxytocin cure shyness

CNS Research has surprising answers pg. 3

What do **ABC**, **TIME**
and **The Economist**
have to say about our
research? pg. 2

Who Is Paul Wheeler?
pg. 6

Is there a
connection
between
compassionate
love and
volunteerism?

Read about it in CNS
researchers' new book!

PLUS!
share
YOUR Story!

pg. 5



Letter from the Director

“Oh, oxytocin makes people *good*,” my nine year old daughter Alexandra said after I described new research at CNS. She captured the essence of what we do: we use neuroscience to understand why people are and feel good. If we understand why, we can reverse-engineer what. By this I mean we can effectively design organizations and policies to achieve greater trustworthiness, increased generosity, or heightened moral cognition; all

these make people feel—and do—good.

In July and August, I explored new applications of our research by teaching a course at Claremont’s Peter F. Drucker and Masatoshi Ito School of

Management called “Moral Leadership and the Brain”. My goal was to teach students a set of tools using the neuroscience of morality so they could better address the moral dilemmas they will

face as business leaders. I believe the class achieved this goal as student response was strongly positive.

My summer travels took me

to a conference at the Australian National University where I exposed our research to a group of philosophers. They provided critical feedback on several subtle issues on the philosophy of mind that will improve our work. Being at an event in a field far from my training brought to mind a quote from one of our funders, Sir John Templeton, who recently passed away at age 95, “If we become increasingly humble about how little we know, we may be more eager to search.” This is the approach we take, which keeps us moving forward in researching the big questions of life.

I hope you will enjoy this edition of *Flourish*,

Paul J. Zak



IF WE BECOME
INCREASINGLY
HUMBLE ABOUT
HOW LITTLE WE
KNOW, WE MAY BE
MORE EAGER TO
SEARCH.

- Sir John Templeton



We wish to thank the John Templeton and Kauffman Foundations, as well as the National Institutes of Health for their generous support as well as contributors, collaborators and reviewers of our ongoing and new neuroeconomics research.



Recent Publications & Media

The Economist

August 14th, 2008

Economist.com

A Touch of Generosity:

Touch Can Inspire Munificence Towards Those You Trust

A recent CNS experiment shows that touch is a powerful primer for oxytocin release after one is trusted. This research reveals the power of touch.

Time Magazine

July 21st, 2008

MONDAY, JULY 21, 2008



Can Oxytocin Ease Shyness?

Oxytocin plays a role in human social interactions. But how central is that role? Discussion includes a “reality check” from Dr. Zak along with suggestions for the endogenous and intentional release of oxytocin.

ABC News

June 25th, 2008



Trust Drug “Oxytocin Unbelievable For Now

An extensive foray into the “oxytocin craze” as well as the rise and fall of market-oriented “therapies” resulting in part from FDA intervention.

The Science of Compassionate Love: Theory, Research, and Applications

Compassionate acts: Motivations and correlates of volunteerism among older adults

In this chapter, CNS researcher Jorge Barraza and his co-author seek to connect research on volunteerism and the Volunteer Process Model to recent theorizing on compassionate love. Throughout the chapter the conceptual and empirical analyses suggest important implications for expressing compassionate love through volunteerism.

Omoto, A. M., Malsch, A. M., & Barraza, J. A. (2008).

Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing 2008

For a complete listing of all publications and media with live links and full downloads, please visit www.neuroeconomicstudies.org



TABLE of CONTENTS



Letter from the Director.....	1
Recent Publication & Media.....	2
Can CNS cure shyness?.....	3
Board Member Closeup: Paul Wheeler.....	6
Upcoming Events.....	Back

Chief Editor:
Amos Nadler

amos.nadler@
cgu.edu

Will CNS RESEARCHERS CURE

and other interesting
questions we often get asked



Probably because of the media attention oxytocin research is receiving (see pg. 2), we have been flooded with inquiries from researchers, medical doctors and the public about applications of our work to problems people face. From claims that spraying oxytocin on clothes will make a person more trusting, to the hope that it can lift paralyzing anxiety and cure autism, much has been going around about this now popular neurochemical. No wonder this ancient peptide has launched into popular science stardom. And with all the claims made by for-profit companies with oxytocin related products, it seemed necessary to present what we do and do not know about the role of oxytocin in humans.

Social anxiety
affects millions of
Americans in every
age group.

Research from CNS published this month in the journal *Evolution and Human Behavior* has shown that receiving a massage primes the brain to release oxytocin when the massage is followed by a safe social interaction. This research also indicates that massage may help reduce anxiety for those who are anxious in social settings because of the boost in oxytocin. The lab-proven relationship between touch and social interactions got a real world test recently when *The Times of London* ran a lead article on oxytocin and shyness quoting Dr. Zak. Not long after the article appeared, Dr. Zak received a call from a British woman whose daughter was suffering from crippling social anxiety and was, consequently, unable to continue her corporate employment. The woman was hoping to get help for



her daughter. Dr. Zak related to her the CNS research, and summarized the practical applications of the results: connect with friends and family, get a dog, or give or receive massages. The woman was instantly relieved, saying that her daughter recently enrolled in massage school and now experiences deep peace and connection to others especially when giving massages. Take home lesson: *Safe and nurturing physical contact boosts oxytocin and reduces anxiety.*

Shyness is not a disorder yet in extreme forms it causes significant problems such as difficulty initiating and sustaining social interactions, finding a mate, attending school, and working with people. Oxytocin alone cannot undue personality traits, yet in both animal and human studies oxytocin motivated a desire to interact socially. It does this by reducing anxiety involved when interacting with others, including strangers. Oxytocin by itself cannot “cure” autism, either, although preliminary studies have shown that oxytocin can increase social contact and increase other-centered perception (such as empathy and social cues). Socializing with close friends and family is often easier because of familiarity, and can be a step toward reducing social anxiety in general. Take home lesson: *Be social.*

Preliminary CNS research shows that oxytocin levels spike when a person receives a “signal of trust”, such as someone giving money; donating to worthy causes can do the same thing. Go ahead and donate to the Center for Neuroeconomics Studies or another non-profit organization, and experience the magic for yourself. This will not only cause a release of the pro-social neurochemical for you and for us, it will also fuel more research in this crucial area. Take home: *Donate to worthy causes.*

Humans, being social creatures, are “programmed” to release pleasurable neurochemicals in the presence of other humans during positive social interactions. Positive social experiences motivate us to increase our social interactions

Continued on pg. 5



Taking care of a pro-social animal (such as a dog) boosts oxytocin levels for people and pets.

Massage has been shown to be an effective primer for oxytocin release in humans.



share YOUR Story!

If you have a story you'd like to share about how massage, having pets, being consciously more social, or donating your time or money has improved your life, we'd love to hear it!

Please email us at

info@

neuroeconomicstudies.org

(don't worry, all email is confidential).

and allows us to extract value from others by cooperating. Negative social contact leads to anxiety or fear and motivates us to avoid people. So is touch a cure for shyness? Safe touch like hugs are pervasive during social interactions, yet physical interactions must be genuine and not forced to cause oxytocin release; people are highly sensitive to inauthenticity. Dogs are open to petting and grooming at almost any time as are some cats, making them excellent companions and oxytocin boosters for people.

In summary, oxytocin has not been shown to be a panacea for curing social problems, yet the activities themselves that increase oxytocin in the body include the positive elements of social life and self-affirming experiences that make up a full and complete life.



Board Member CLOSEUP



Paul Wheeler



We continue our profiles of those associated with the Center for Neuroeconomics Studies with this feature about our friend and supporter Mr. Paul Wheeler. He is the source of many of the ideas for CNS development and his enthusiasm encourages and energizes us; we are thrilled to profile Paul in this issue of *Flourish*.

Paul Wheeler is a well-known southern California architect, fourth generation Claremont native, and the person who designed many of buildings on the Claremont Consortium campus and in the city of Claremont. For example, Paul designed the recently built Trader Joe's store on Foothill Boulevard in Claremont which incorporates art from Claremont's past, much of it recreated from Paul's own collection of historical photographs.

We recently had the opportunity to speak with him and learn more about why CNS research matters to him.

A former Boy Scout leader and ardent believer in transmitting values through the generations, Mr. Wheeler sees the central role trust plays in his work as a designer of

living spaces and learning communities.

Paul mentioned how fascinating it is that architecture, contracting and building projects take place with little or no oversight or control from outside agencies and how honest the building industry is on the west coast. He said that most of his work depends on the values of the people involved and that is reassuring to know that his collaborators are trustworthy. This is why Paul appreciates the applicable research on the biology of human virtue and flourishing done at CNS.

When asked why he cares about the type of research we do at CNS he answered "You don't see people getting together to talk about physics, it isn't as engaging; CNS research is both interesting and important work." Paul is encouraging us to think about how the design of environments

create a sense of community and transmit values, especially to young people, a form of positive institutional design. We are extraordinarily grateful to Paul Wheeler for his friendship, energy, and support for CNS.

You don't see people getting together and talking about physics, it isn't as engaging; CNS research is both interesting and important work.

Calendar of Events FALL 2008

SEP 2-5

USC Law School Distinguished Visitor

USC Law School

19

VoiceAmerica Radio Interview

www.voiceamerica.com

25-28

Psychosurgery Conference

Cleveland, OH

25-28

Society for Neuroeconomics

Park City, UT

OCT 4

Fielding Institute Lecture: The Neurobiology of Trust

Claremont, CA

6

Tarzana Hospital Grand Rounds: The Neurobiology of Trust

Tarzanza, CA

20

Transdisciplinary lecture on experimental methods

Claremont, CA

22*

GNS Advisory Board Meeting

Prof. James Konow of Loyola Marymount Univ. on

fairness and justice

Claremont, CA



26-28

Visiting Scholar in Economics

Winston-Salem, NC Wake Forest University

*

Prof. Konow's lecture *Is Fairness in the Eye of the Beholder* will clarify the notion of fairness and propose a reconciliation based on objective criteria.

flourish

the quarterly newsletter of the
center for neuroeconomics studies

Center for Neuroeconomics Studies

160 E. 10th St.

Claremont Graduate University

Claremont, CA 91711-6165

www.neuroeconomicstudies.org



Claremont

GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

