

Multidisciplinarity in Information Behaviour: Expanding Boundaries or Fragmentation of the Field?

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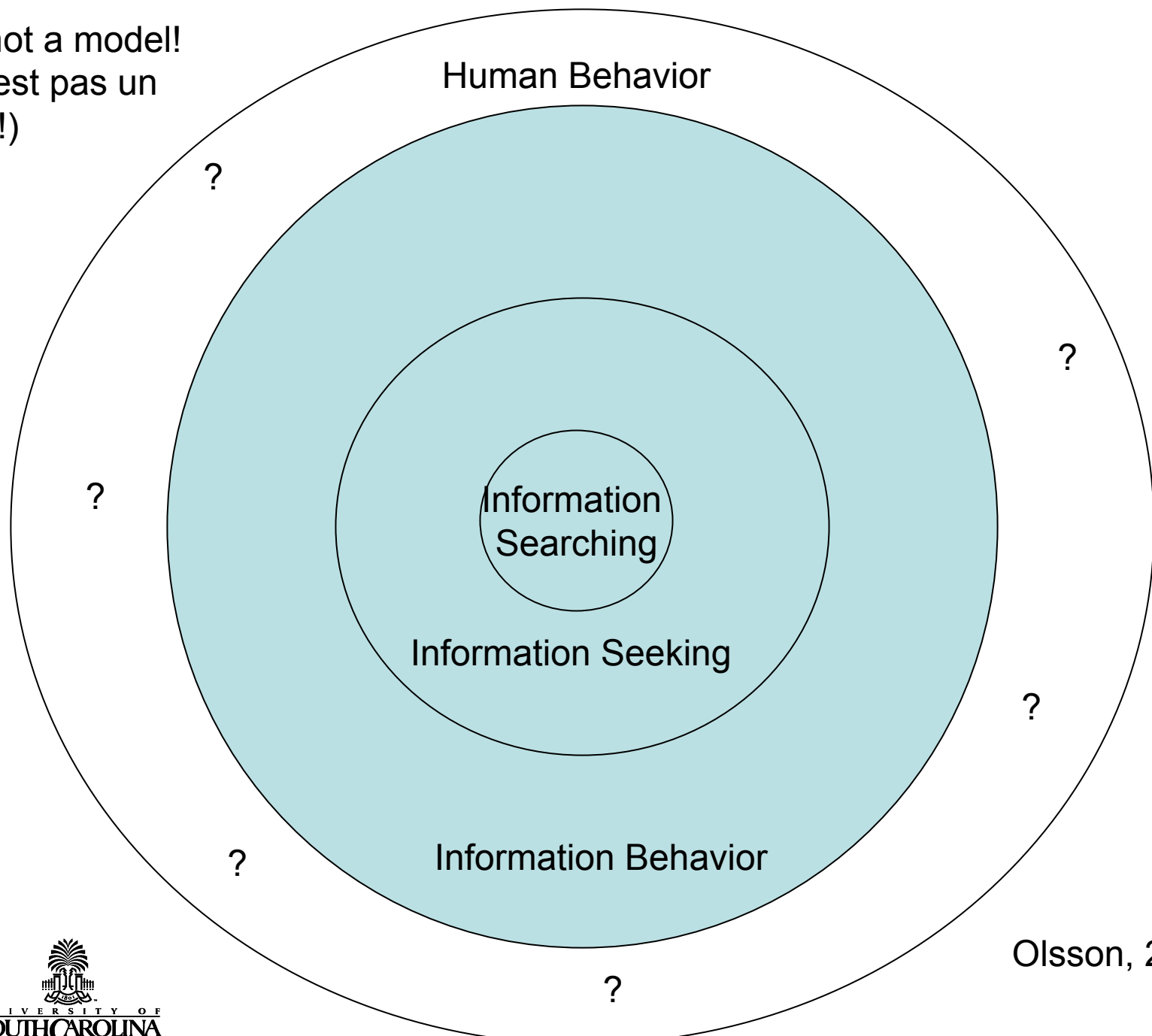
University of South Carolina

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Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen Scotland
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The Big Questions

- Does LIS research help to answer the big or important information questions of our time? What are they?
- By what criteria might we measure the value of our work? Does it advance theory?
- Does our work lead to a better, deeper understanding of human behavior?

This is not a model!
(Ceci n'est pas un modèle !)



Olsson, 2009



Our Journey Today

- Multidisciplinarity in LIS
- Using information behaviour as the context, we will explore the importance of multidisciplinarity in LIS to determine if we are:
 - Expanding boundaries...or
 - Fragmenting the field

On this journey...

- No core definitions (information seeking, searching, behavior) except as needed
- Presentation of new (?) material
- No new models; just food for thought
- Taking a broader/narrower view

Limitations of Information Behaviour

- Fewer IB models than those of information seeking or information searching
- Little focus on information *use*
- Individually focused
- Cognitively focused
- Atomistic, transactional approaches
- Less work in areas of:
 - Social context
 - Power relations
 - Affect
 - Embodiment

Summary of Primary Themes

- Shift from information-seeking to information behaviour
- Information use is not well understood
- Cognitive approaches alone are inadequate
- LIS has not sufficiently considered the cultural, collective contexts

Background

- My work centers on the impact of information on behaviour
- Information *use* is largely ignored by our field, if what we mean is how it impacts users
- But to understand information needs and seeking, we must understand how users ***use*** information
- Multidisciplinary approaches can advance our knowledge of the interaction between information and human behaviour

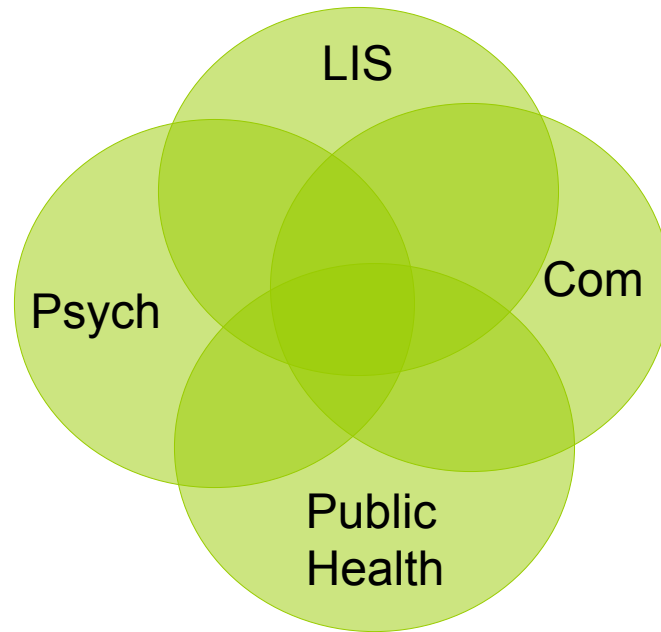
HIV/AIDS Information in Uganda

- Interviewed 300+ organisations across 22 districts
 - Governmental, Non-Governmental Organisations
 - Faith-Based Organisations
 - Community-Based Organisations
- Type of disseminated information differed by type of organization
- Radio and drama are most widely used formats for dissemination

A Big Question

- What does information have to do with human behavior?
 - We are proceeding nicely as a field, establishing our own theories (evidence of a *maturing science*)
 - Particularly in areas of information retrieval, information searching, information seeking, and information behavior
- In what ways does information affect behavior change?

Core Areas



Case Study 1

- “After filing for divorce from my abusive husband, he challenged me on custody for my two young daughters. Suspecting he would become abusive to them and knowing that there was a chance the court would give him custody, I was desperate for information about what to do. Just looking for answers kept me busy and kept me from going crazy...”

Relationship History

- Verbal abuse, mild physical abuse during marriage
- Post-divorce stalking
- Vandalism
- Public humiliation
- Personal safety/security
- Emotional protection of children
 - Violation of Parent's Bill of Rights
- Legal harrassment

Information Use

- Information seeking as coping strategy
- Information use:
 - Legal strategizing
 - Attorney
 - Psychologist
 - Social support network (family)
 - Physical protection
 - Security guard consultation
 - Configuration of complex motion-activated video recording security system
 - Legal information
 - Child support
 - Ongoing defense from his prosecution

Case Study 2

- “It’s like an out-of-body experience - when they go into a phase like that they don’t remember it. You tell them that they hit you last night and they deny it and they don’t remember it. I think he’s psychotic and did that. I know that he was abused physically and probably sexually by his father. I don’t know that. Then how do you convince someone that they do something when they’re doing it – you can’t.”

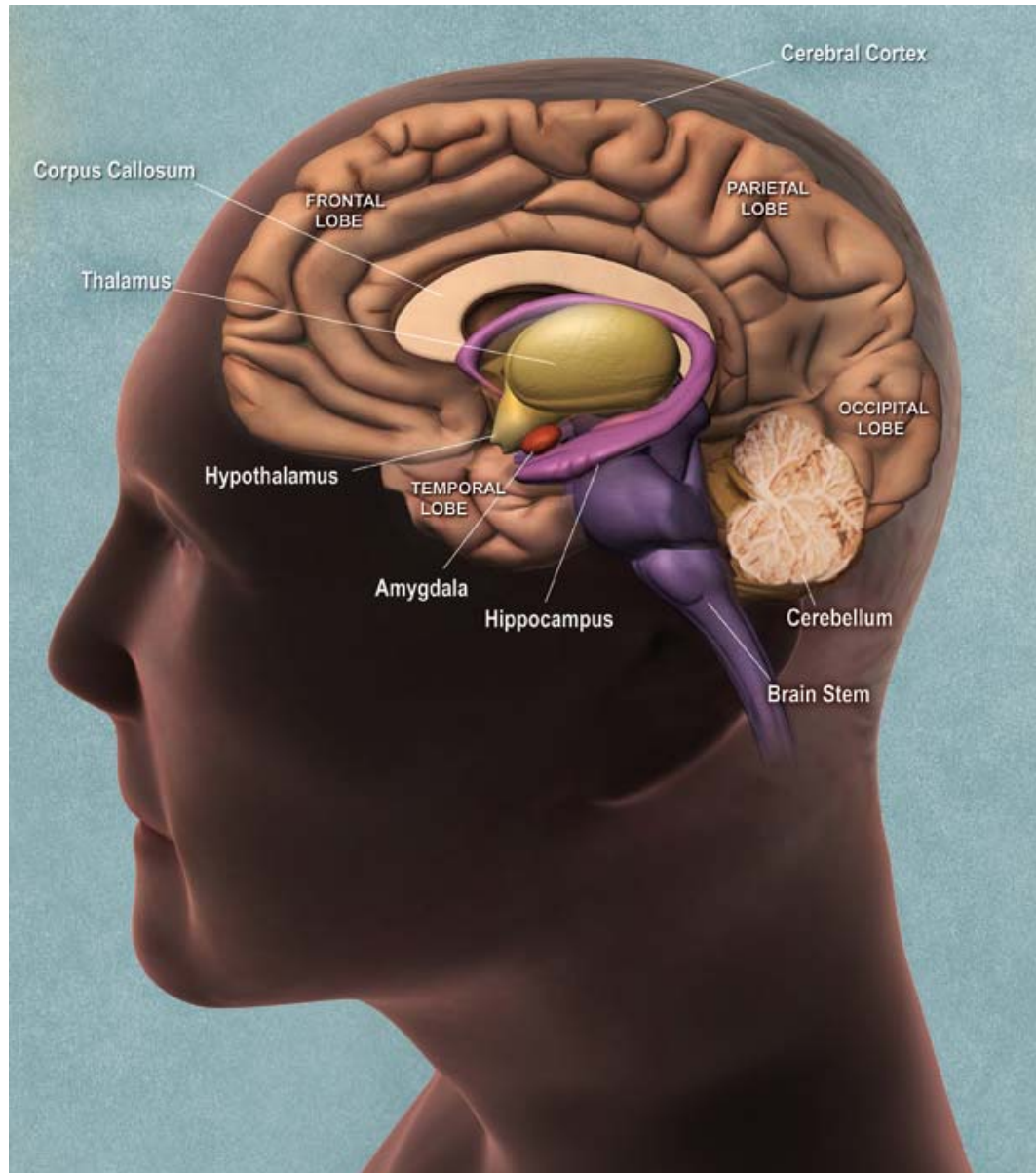
Relationship History

- Physically abusive during marriage
- Damage to child at birth from abuse
 - No way to prove
- Allegedly sexually abused daughter
- Post-divorce stalking
- Post-divorce threats to physical safety
- Both mother and daughter diagnosed with Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Information Problems (Both Cases)

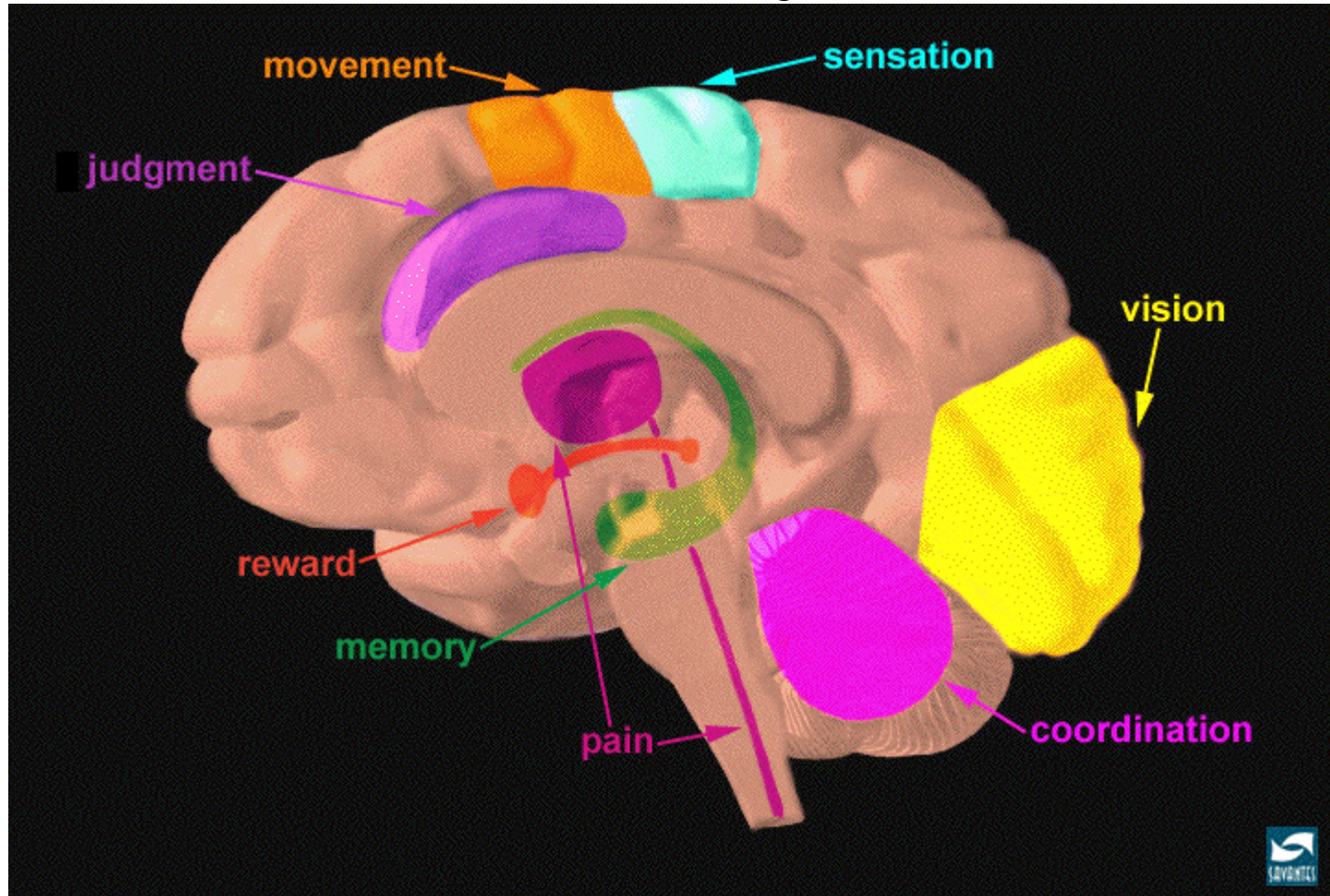
- Physical safety
- Legal protection
- Emotional safety/security

Psychology and Information

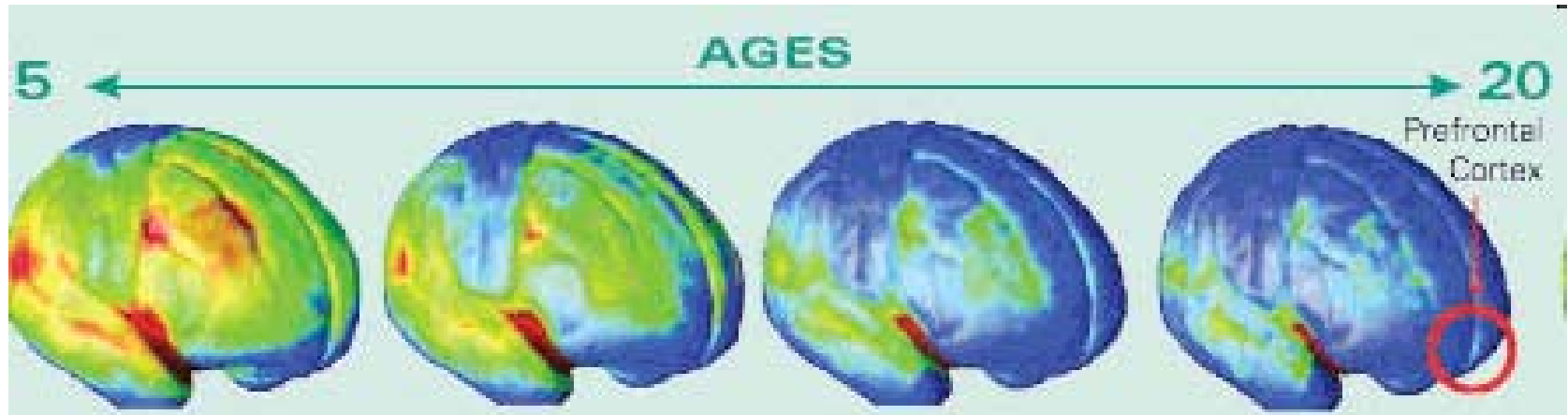


Source: http://www.nia.nih.gov/NR/rdonlyres/BBE13E37-7E47-4391-9D77-F8B344253950/10886/01_brainside_lg1.jpg

Brain Regions and Neuron Pathways



Brain Development



Blue represents maturing of brain areas.



Two Theoretical Perspectives in Psychology

- Cognitive science: focuses on development of language and thought, essentially ignores *emotion*
- Psychoanalysis: attempts to bring about change in emotion and thought
 - The domain of psychoanalysis concerns private meanings rather than examining symptoms and behaviors (requires translation)
 - Psychoanalysis is hermeneutic rather than scientific, requiring interpretation rather than explanatory theories
- Paradigm shift: integration:
 - Cognitive psychology can change the way we understand psychoanalytic concepts
 - Psychoanalytic can bring better understanding of content and methods

Cognitive Perspective

- Cognitive psychology is concerned with how information received from our senses is processed by the brain and how this processing directs how we behave.
 - memory
 - perception
 - thinking
 - language
- Based on rational thought
- Considers emotion:
 - Concurrent
 - Anticipated
 - Remembered
- Does not consider the unconscious

Psychoanalytic Perspective

- Much of our mental life (thoughts, feelings, motives) is unconscious
- Mental processes (including affective and motivational) operate in parallel
 - i.e., we can have conflicting feelings
 - Motivates people in opposing ways which leads to compromise
- Stable personality patterns begin in childhood
- Mental representations of our self, others, and relationships guide our interactions
- Personality development involves learning to regulate sexual and aggressive feelings
 - Leads to maturation and interdependent social state (rather than dependent)



And now, a word about method...

- The use of quantitative methods – are they the only/best choice to study human behaviour?
 - If we study the human mind, how can we only study the rational/objective?
- Are interviews the preferred/best ways to collect qualitative data about human behaviour?
- Psychology:
 - Psychometrics (MMPI)
 - Projective Tests
 - Rorschach
 - Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

Projective Tests – Rorschach Example



General Effects (Impacts) of Emotions on Behaviour*

- Affective attitudes are stronger predictors of decisions than cognitive attitudes (Lawton et al., 2009; Westen, 2007)
- Attitudes have both a cognitive and affective component
- Emotional reactions to risky situations often depart from cognitive assessments of risk
- Affective attitudes dominate the prediction of intention *and* behaviour
- In general, the greater the affective response, the more likely the decision will be based on emotion
- Decisions are not always based on rational considerations of costs and benefits
- Emotional information is often better remembered than neutral information

*Affective attitudes referred to here comes from the psychoanalytic perspective

Brookes' Fundamental Equation (1977) (Modified)

$$K[S] + \Delta I + E = K[S + \Delta S] \rightarrow \Delta B$$

K[S]	Knowledge structure (existing)
ΔI	New Information*
E	Emotion
ΔS	Modified knowledge
K[S + ΔS]	New knowledge structure
ΔB	Behavior change

Practical Applications for Uganda

- Information use may contribute to the decline of HIV in Uganda...
 - Making people more aware of their mortality leads them to respond defensively even though they are not aware of either the trigger or its effects on their conscious decisions or behavior (Pyszczynski et al., 1998)
- Linking HIV information with mortality could deter people from either actively seeking or passively assimilating information that could save their lives.

Domestic Violence

- Three affect regulation factors (Westen, 1997):
 - Adaptive regulation
 - Externalizing defenses
 - Avoidant defenses
- Adaptive regulation - When people anticipate problems they fall on this continuum:

Impulsive
e.g., alcohol abuse



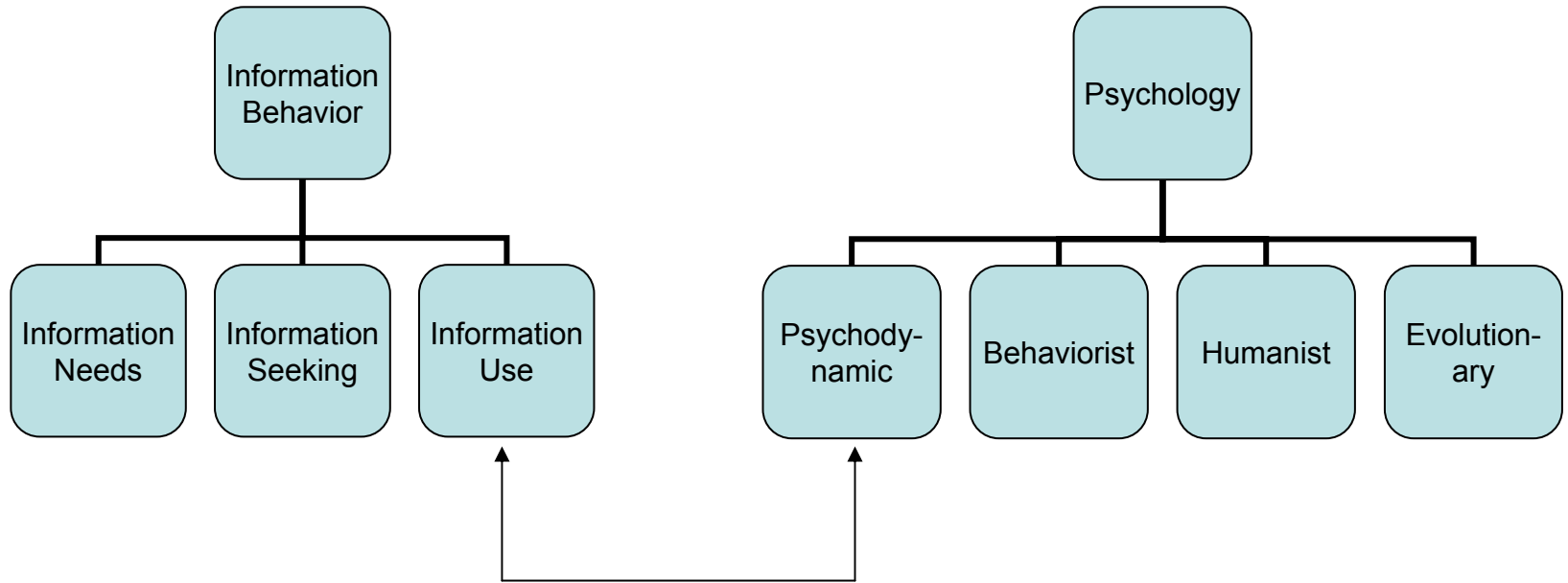
Coping
e.g., info seeking

Summary

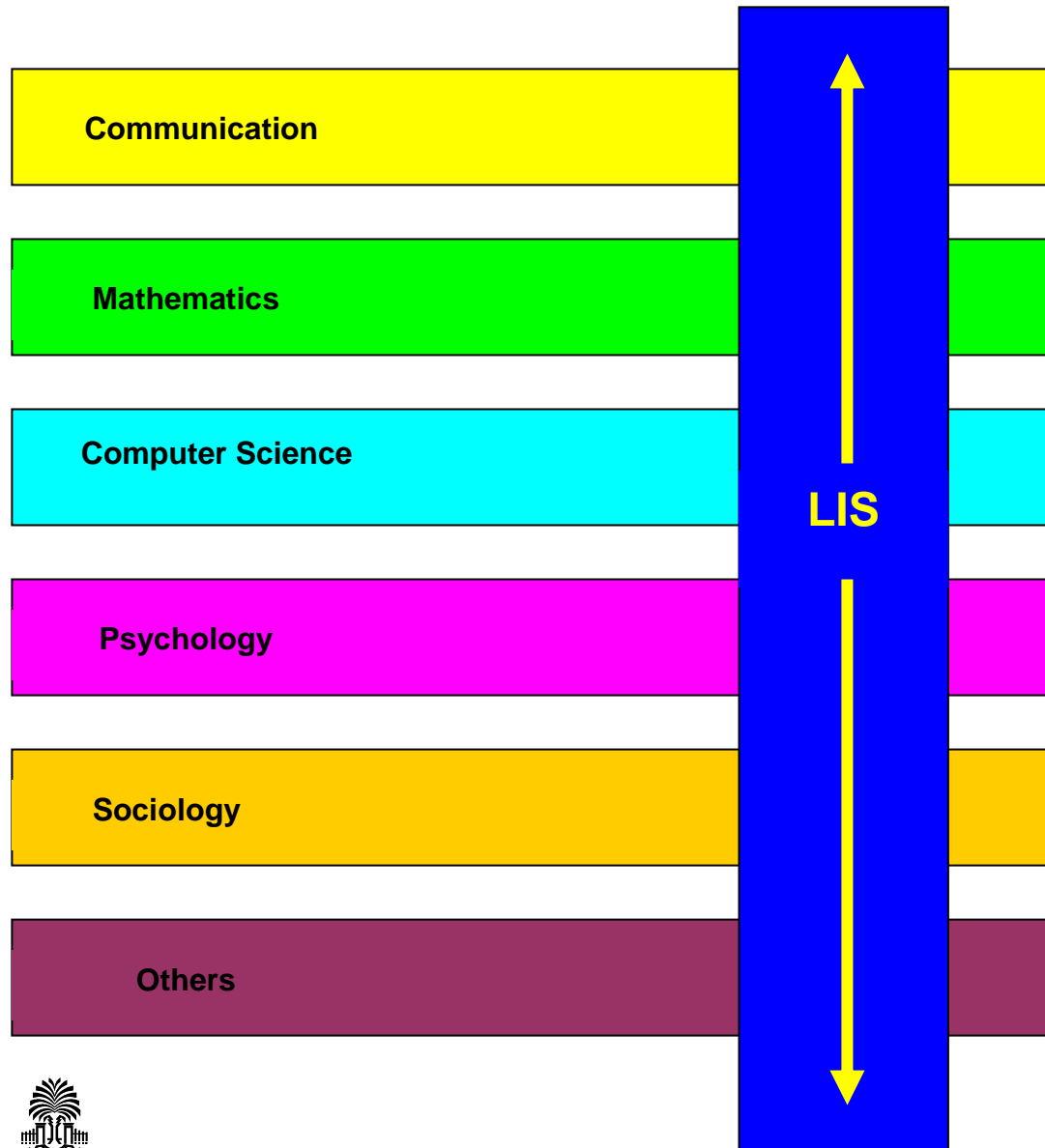
- Expands methodology to study human behavior
- Information seeking and use itself increases coping ability, empowerment, healthy emotional processing
- Provides insight into deeper, important meaning of human behavior
- Practical applications could result in improved communications

Cursory Review of Information Behaviour Articles Citing Psychology Research

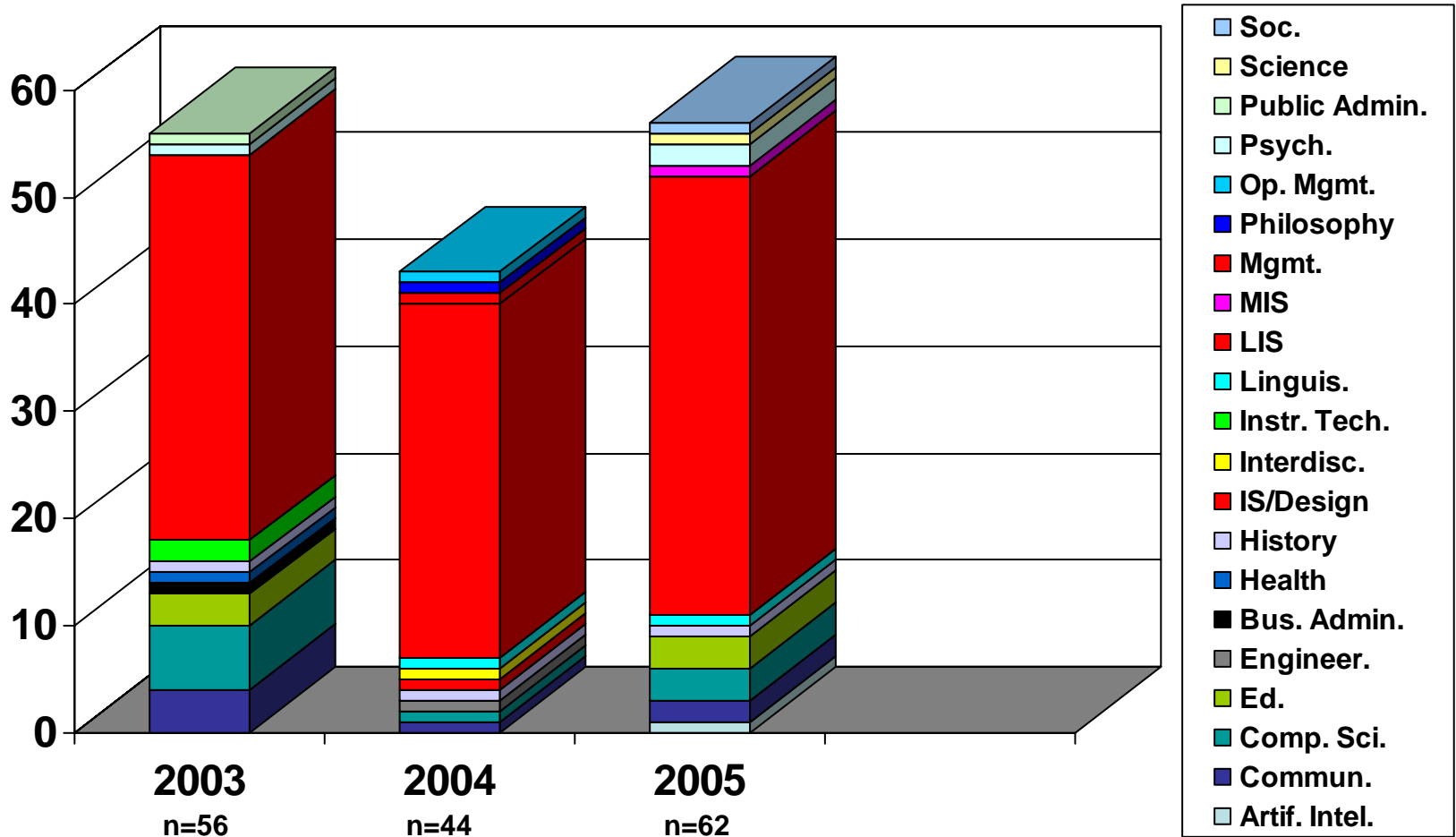
- Using *Web of Science*, examined references of most often cited works in information behavior
 - Dervin, Wilson, Kuhlthau, Nahl, Bilal
- Compared results from psychology journals in cognitive psychology, social psychology, psychoanalysis, clinical psychology, neuropsychology
- Findings: Only Wilson and Nahl referenced psychology journals:
 - Nahl: 2 in Social Psychology; 2 in Cognitive Psychology
 - Wilson: 8 in Social Psychology



Who Are We?

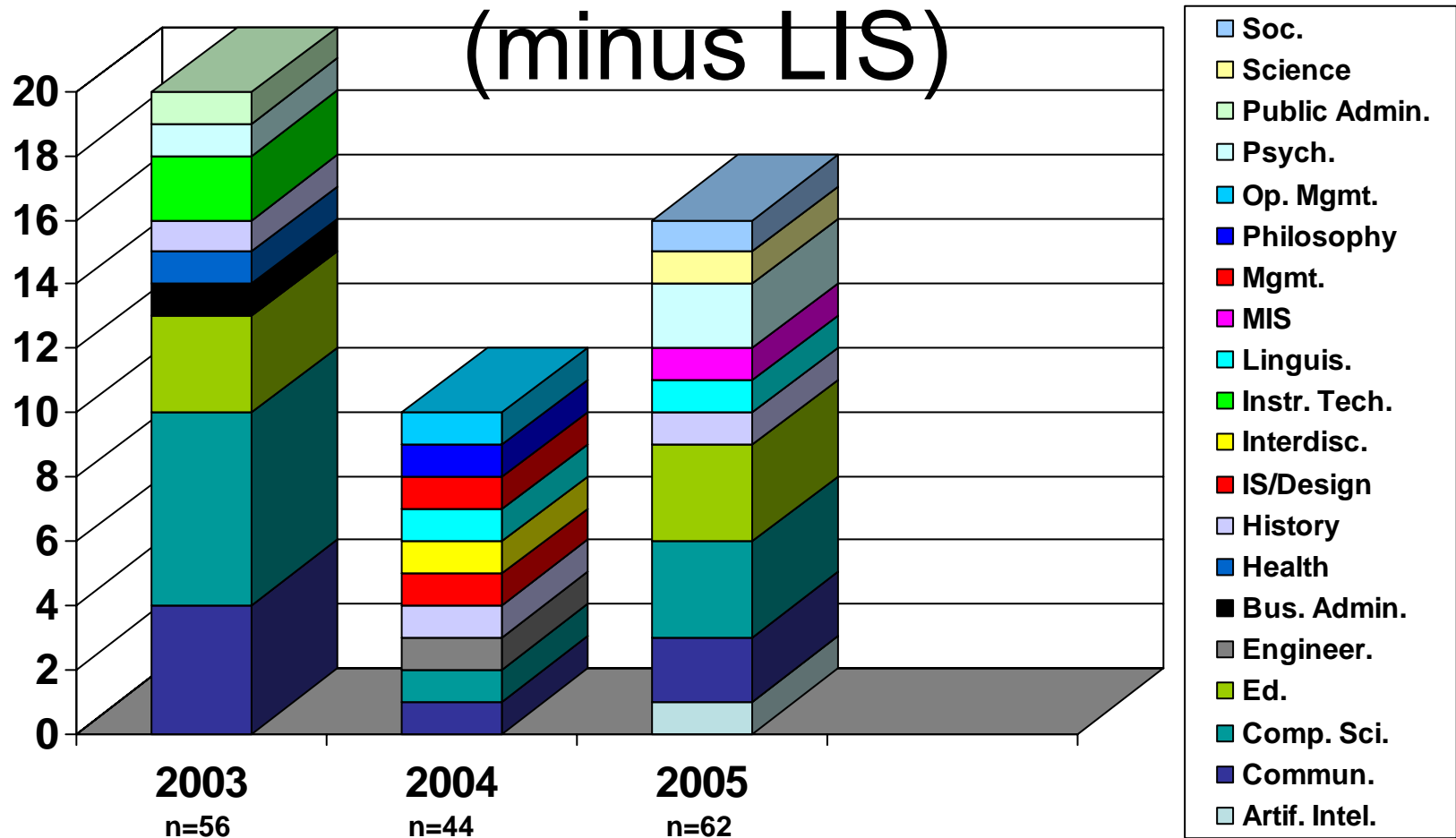


Doctoral Disciplines – New Assistant Professors, 2003-2005

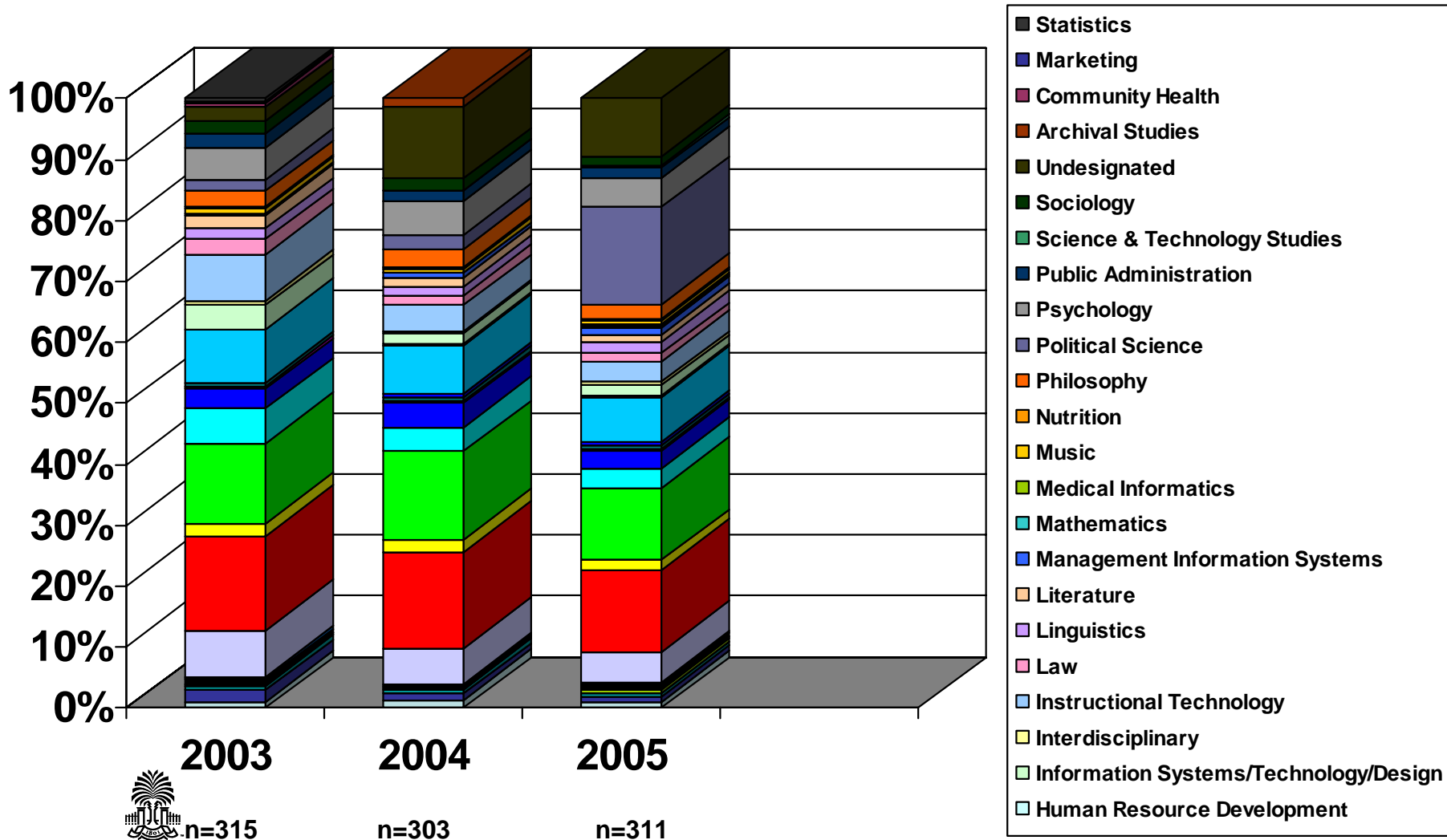


Doctoral Disciplines – New Assistant Professors, 2003-2005

(minus LIS)



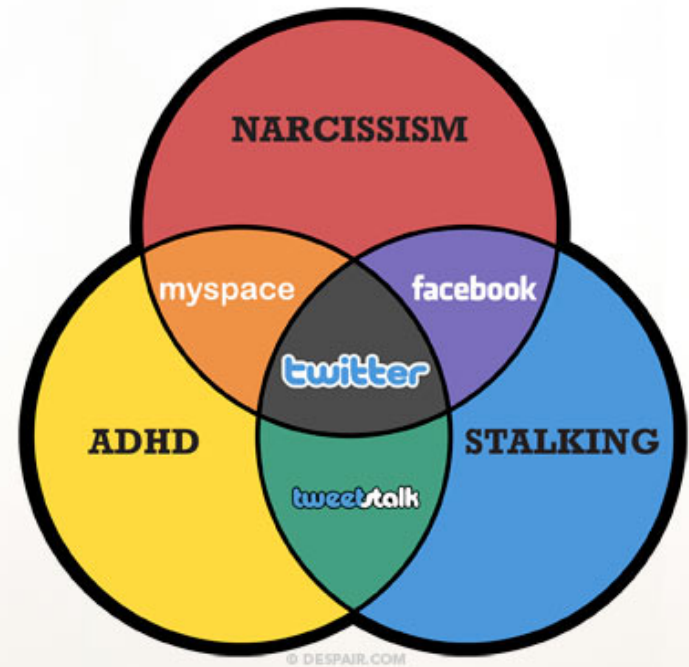
Earned Doctorates Outside LIS Held by Full-Time Faculty, 2003-2005



The Intersection of Psychology and Information Science

SOCIAL MEDIA

UNLOCKING THE AWESOME POTENTIAL OF BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS



The Social Media Tee - \$19.95
(Women's version also available)

Intersection between Psych and IR

Welcome to the Psychology Hotline. If you are...

- Obsessive-compulsive: Please press 1 repeatedly.
- Co-dependent: Please ask someone to press 2.
- Paranoid: We know who you are and what you want. Just stay on the line so we can trace the call.
- Schizophrenic: Listen carefully and a little voice will tell you which number to press.
- Depressed: It doesn't matter which number you press. No one will answer.
- If you have multiple personalities: please press 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Conclusion

- Are we looking at the big questions?
- Do we need to draw from multiple disciplines to answer these questions?
- Are we at risk of fragmenting the field and to what degree?

Thank you!

Questions?

