

ROHAN KAPITÁNY

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Education

Doctor of Philosophy Experimental Psychology 2014 – Present

The University of Queensland

Bachelor of Psychological Science with Honours 2009 – 2012

The University of Queensland

Bachelor of Business 2003 – 2007

The University of Queensland

Present Appointment

Postdoctoral Researcher 2017 – 2020

School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford

This is a Post-doctoral research position funded as part of the Horizon 2020 European Research Council (ERC). The project is entitled 'Divergent modes of ritual, social cohesion, prosociality, and conflict'. My role is to design and conduct experiments, collect and analyse data, and co-ordinate research both domestically and internationally.

Research

2017

Kapitány, R., & Nielsen, M. (2017). Are yawns really contagious? A critique and quantification of yawn contagion. *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology*.

2016

Kapitány, R., & Nielsen, M. (2016). The ritual stance and the precaution system: the role of goal demotion and opacity in ritual and everyday actions. *Religion, Brain & Behavior*.

Wilks, M., **Kapitány, R., & Nielsen, M. (2016).** Preschool children's learning proclivities: When the ritual stance trumps the instrumental stance. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*.

2015

Kapitány, R., & Nielsen, M. (2015). Adopting the ritual stance: The role of opacity and context in ritual and everyday actions. *Cognition*, 145, 13-29.

Nielsen, M., **Kapitány, R., & Elkins, R. (2015).** The perpetuation of ritualistic actions as revealed by young children's transmission of normative behavior. *Evolution and Human Behavior*.

In preparation

Kapitány, R., Nelsen, N., & Goldstein, T. (*in prep*). Santa, Spongebob, & Spacemen: An exploration of reality status attributions in Children and Adults.

Kapitány, R., & Nielsen, M. (*in prep*). Object directed rituals and the Ritual Stance: A cross-cultural and developmental examination.

Kapitány, R., Watson-Jones, R., Nielsen, M., & Legare, C. (*in prep*). Does ritual fidelity predict in-group directed behaviour in Children?

Teaching

Guest Lecture in PSYC3282 (*University of Queensland*). 2014, 2015, 2016

The Evolution and Development of Religion.

Guest Lecture in PSYC2030 (*University of Queensland*). 2014, 2015, 2016

Children, Religion, and Supernatural Belief.

Psychology Support Student Tutor (*University of Queensland*). 2015, 2016.

Tutor for PSYC2050 (*University of Queensland*). Learning and Cognition. 2014, 2015.

Tutor for PSYC2030 (*University of Queensland*). Developmental Psychology. 2014, 2015.

Tutor for PSYC3282 (*University of Queensland*).

Developmental Perspectives on the Origins of Human Cultures. 2014, 2015.

Research in Progress

'Santa, Spongebob, and Spacemen'. We followed 150 children over the course of one year tracking the degree to which they endorse as real various natural, supernatural, and fictional agents. We question Children's epistemological understanding of these agents. I am examining how such beliefs change over the course of one year of development, and with respect to cultural influences (e.g., Christmas and Easter). *Manuscript 1 in preparation; Data analyses underway for manuscript 2.*

The cognitive memory advantage of rituals (two studies). In which I examine the relationship between causally opaque and goal demoted actions as being salient deviations from expectancy, and thus facilitating a memory advantage for sophisticated motor procedures. This research will inform the relationship between rituals and the evolution of cumulative culture. Research was conducted online (study 1) and among children in South Africa (study 2). *Data analysis underway.*

'The Friendly Professor'. We examine the degree to which children's tendency to over-imitate – to perform ritualistic actions – is influenced when they believe they are being watched by a morally concerned supernatural agent. We also examine their tendency to cheat when being observed by such an agent. This research will inform our understanding of how rituals emerged and how they are sustained, culturally, and in development. *Data collection due to be completed in May, 2017.*

Differential Learning strategies of Children in acquiring instrumental and normative knowledge. We examine the contexts in which children are likely to learn different kinds of knowledge, and from whom, and how this can inform our understanding of the evolution of culture and coherency of groups. *Data collection to begin April 2017.*

Ritual Modes in 20 communities. In which we examine the cognitive pathways of doctrinal rituals (low arousal, high frequency) and imagistic rituals (high arousal, low frequency) as they bind groups, and commit individuals to perpetuating group values. *Data collection to begin end of 2017*

Field Work

Vanuatu, April 2016

This research lasted 3 weeks and was conducted on the island of Tanna. Several Indigenous ('Kastom') villages were involved. Data collection was a success (N = 107) and an associated manuscript is in preparation on the development of ritual cognition in childhood.

South Africa, August 2016

This research lasted 4 weeks and was conducted among the San people (Khwe, !Xun, and Khomani san) in Kimberley and the Kalahari. Data collection was a success (N = 98) and analyses and manuscript are underway.

Awards and Science Communication

Post-Graduate Excellence in Research (University of Queensland)	2016
3-Minute Thesis University Finalist	2015
Invited Speaker Brisbane Skepticamp	2015 (June)
Flame Challenge Finalist	2015 (May)
Flame Challenge Editor's Selection	2014 (July)
3-Minute Thesis (Undergrad) People's Choice	2012 (Sept.)
Psychobabble Podcast Online Project	2011 – 2013

Academic References

Professor Harvey Whitehouse (PI)

Oxford University. Email: harvey.whitehouse@anthro.ox.ac.uk

Associate Professor Mark Nielsen (PhD Supervisor)

University of Queensland. Email: nielsen@uq.edu.au

Professor Virginia Slaughter (Head of School – UQ)

University of Queensland. Email: hos@psy.uq.edu.au