



Primals Project Post-Doctoral Fellow

Social Media Announcement:

Dr. Jer Clifton and Dr. Martin Seligman at UPenn seek post-doc to study the wellbeing/personality implications of primal world beliefs (e.g., *the world is dangerous*) building on key 2019 article (<https://tinyurl.com/y4m62r7k>). Job Ad: <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/opportunities/postdoc-opportunity>

Context:

Dr. Jeremy D. W. Clifton and Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania seek a Post-Doctoral Fellow to join the Primals Project in the Summer or Fall of 2021 for one year, with renewal up to three years depending on performance.

Primal world beliefs ('primals') are beliefs about the basic character of the world, such as *the world is dangerous* or *the world is abundant*. Historically, only one primal has been widely studied—belief in a just world—and it is thought to have a cascading influence across personality and well-being variables because it informs the interpretation of ambiguity, leading in this case to increased productivity, prosociality, and well-being. What about other primals? University of Pennsylvania researchers recently conducted the first broad-based systematic effort to empirically derive all major primals humans hold, resulting in a taxonomy of 26 primals including one primary primal (Good world belief), three secondary primals (Safe, Enticing, and Alive) and 22 tertiary primals, and called for further research in key topic areas.

Clifton, J. D. W., Baker, J. D., Park, C. L., Yaden, D. B., Clifton, A. B. W., Terini, P., Miller, J. L., Zeng, G., Giorgi, S., Schwartz, H. A., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2019). Primal world beliefs. *Psychological Assessment*, 31(1), 82–99. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0000639>

The aim of the Primals Project, housed in the UPenn Positive Psychology Center, is to foster foundational research in some of these topic areas. Project activities include hosting a by-invitation research conference and a research awards contest involving 3-4 awards totaling \$500,000. Project leaders are Dr. Jeremy D. W. Clifton and Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman. Advisors are Dr. Crystal Park at the University of Connecticut, and Dr. Alia Crum and Dr. Carol Dweck at Stanford University.

The Primals Project Postdoctoral Fellow will explore primals' potential impact on well-being and character strengths. Applicants with different areas of methodological expertise are welcome—make your case in your statement of interest—though we are especially interested in backgrounds conducive to experimental approaches that can perhaps shed light on causation. Though some topics centered on well-being and character strengths must be studied to satisfy funding requirements, those intrinsically motivated to study primals who bring their own ideas/passions to the role are especially welcome. We are looking for an initiative-taker who can work independently. The Fellow will work most closely with the Primals Project

Director (Clifton).

Key Responsibilities and Tasks:

- Serve as first author for top-tier, peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings, with all that entails (study design, study implementation; data analysis; manuscript writing; journal submission management, etc.)
- Contribute meaningfully to research collaborations as needed, often as co-author
- Give presentations on primals research at conferences and other venues
- Attend the Primals Project research conference
- Assist Primals Project leaders in judging the scientific merit of proposals for Primals Research Awards
- Pursue additional primals research in connection with one's interests and expertise
- Participate in the intellectual environment at UPenn Positive Psychology Center

Qualifications:

- Ph.D. from an accredited university in psychology (e.g., clinical, social, personality) or related discipline
- A strong publication record demonstrating relevant experience and expertise
- Very strong interest in exploring the psychological role of primal world beliefs and otherwise encouraging further research in this area, especially in relationship to positive psychology variables
- Active life of the mind
- Collegiality; interest in collaborative efforts
- The ability to work quickly and efficiently

Process

Interviews will be conducted until position is filled. The position can start August 1st, 2021 or later. To apply, submit a letter of interest (2-page max), CV, names and contact information for three references, and two full-text exemplar articles (reprints/preprints only). Send application materials and position inquiries to Dr. Clifton at this email address: [primalsresearchawards\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:primalsresearchawards(at)gmail.com). Salary will be commensurate with credentials and experience. The position is remote work until the pandemic lifts and then the Fellow will often need to come to work in person on UPenn's main campus in Philadelphia. Position-related travel is also dependent on the pandemic lifting. The University of Pennsylvania is an EOE/Affirmative Action Employer.

Job First Announced: January 2021

Status: As of February 2021, the first round of applications is not yet reviewed. Review is expected to start mid-March.