What is your current position and area of research?
Currently, I am a Professor at Cornell University, with appointments in Human Development, Psychology, Cognitive Science, Neuroscience, and Weill Cornell Medical School (Public Health). I also serve as co-Director of both the Center for Magnetic Resonance Imaging at Cornell University and the Center for Behavioral Economics and Decision Research. My research encompasses memory, judgment, and decision making from childhood to old age, with an emphasis on risky decision making and the brain (see a list of Valerie's publications).

What led you to this field/area of research?
My interest began with books on psychology and then Psychology Today, which I devoured in high school. The cognitive revolution was firmly established by that time, but the behaviorists' legacy of rigor remained, providing the best of both worlds: rich hypotheses about mental life without the vacuous vagaries of unscientific speculation. This blending of traditions is reflected in the name of our Board: Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences. Fascinating phenomena accompanied by deep theory led me to psychology because, together, these helped explain the people around me—and because they offered hope for many of the world's worst problems, which are often the result of human limitations. In my own work, I have tried to show how these human limitations are the "flip side" of strengths in memory and meaning-making, such as the reliance on gist representations in judgment and decision making.

What in your opinion has been the greatest achievement in the field of behavioral, cognitive and sensory sciences?
From gestalt psychology (with applications to perception, problem solving, and psychotherapy), to (Neal) Miller and Dollard's operationalization of Freud, to (George) Miller's magical memory number, to Piaget's demonstrations of illusions and illogic, to Estes' counterintuitive hypotheses about probability judgment (e.g., election winners are predicted not by their past margins of victory but simply by whether they won or lost), to Tversky and Kahneman's heuristics and biases, to Roediger and McDermott's false-memory effects, who could not be fascinated by psychological science? Of all of these, the greatest achievement is probably Tversky and Kahneman's work because of its fundamental contradictions of the powerful economic theory of expected utility, its illuminating demonstrations of human nature, and its deep lessons about human fallibility.

Where do you see this field progressing over the next 10 years?
Clearly, neuroimaging and neurobiology will continue to be influential, but the emphasis on theory and hypothesis testing is growing as the field progresses from demonstrations to mechanisms. Neuroscience research is prompting integration of ideas about mental representation, emotion, motivation, and cognitive control, which is facilitating inter-area influences, such as memory approaches to decision making. There is some retracing of steps in which neuroscience is recapitulating experimental psychology (and at a less differentiated level), but this redundancy will sort itself out as neuroscientists increasingly appreciate the constraints placed on their models by rigorous behavioral research. In addition, research on decision making in adolescence and aging will continue to be hot topics as basic theory and applied problems intersect; the potential of this research to reduce human suffering and economic costs is enormous. Finally, risk communication, medical decision making, and violence prevention are poised to achieve greater prominence in research as the press of problems of aging, healthcare, and mass violence demand scientific approaches.

What is the best part of being on the BBCSS board?
The best part of being on the BBCSS Board is the opportunity to interact with some of the finest minds in behavioral science, with the goal of service to society.

If you could meet anyone from History who would it be and why?
It would be terrific to meet Bertrand Russell to talk about logic, set theory, meaning, politics and...
history (e.g., two world wars and nuclear disarmament). Seeing Celia Cruz sing live would also be terrific (in a different way).

**What was the last great book you read?**
The last truly great book I read was Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, not an entirely surprising answer for a psychologist. An epileptic himself, Dostoyevsky provides riveting insights into that neurological condition and into the human condition.

*Read biographies of all BBCSS Members*