



# SMU Department of Psychology Newsletter

Fall 2019



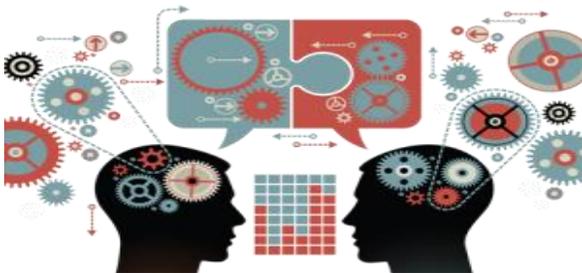
## **WELCOME!**

The SMU Department of Psychology faculty and staff welcomes you to the fall 2019 edition of our newsletter. The semester is well underway. In this newsletter, we are happy to introduce you to our newest faculty member and are looking forward to sharing with you the latest in departmental information, events, and noteworthy accomplishments.

## **DEPARTMENT NEWS**

### **The Organizational Psychology M.S. Program is now operational**

Seven students are currently enrolled in the inaugural class of the accelerated Master's program. Students apply during their junior years and, for those accepted, take two specialized classes during their senior year. After graduating with a B.A. or B.S., students then spend one additional year in classes and on internships. Upon graduating with a M.S. degree in *Organizational Psychology*, they become part of one of the fastest growing and lucrative areas of psychology.



## **★★ SAVE THE DATE ★★**

### **Buck Hampson's Retirement Party**

**April 23, 2020**

Buck Hampson, a pillar of the department for 42 years (and in his 85<sup>th</sup> semester)! has decided to retire. A celebration of his career will be held on Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>.



*Save the date and plan to join us in celebrating Buck!*

## NEW FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

### Stephanie Wilson, Ph.D.



We are pleased to welcome our newest faculty member, Dr. Stephanie Wilson. Dr. Wilson is the director of the SHARE Lab (Study of Health, Aging, and RElationships). Dr. Wilson's research investigates the biopsychosocial paths by which close relationships shape health and well-being across adulthood and older age. We recently asked Dr. Wilson to answer a few questions about herself.

#### Where are you from and where did you attend college?

I was born and raised in Memphis, TN—the home of Graceland, the blues, and all the best barbecue. I attended a small liberal arts college also in Memphis—Rhodes College—that joins SMU on many lists of 'most beautiful college campuses.'

#### What or who influenced you to study psychology?

I've been fascinated by human behavior for as long as I can remember. This led me to pursue a traditional path of taking AP psychology in high school and majoring in psychology as an undergraduate. At the end of my first undergrad year, one of the professors invited me to join her narrative development lab, where I first experienced the excitement of research. That mentor, Marsha Walton, gave me the courage to explore my curiosity and demonstrated how social science research could lead to a fulfilling career. Many additional mentors, friends, and colleagues have stoked that fire along the way.

#### What are your research interests and what makes you passionate about them?

My research interests boil down to two primary fascinations: 1) how social interactions shape the way we change and develop, and 2) how our social/psychological worlds affect our physical bodies. Perhaps you could summarize it as the *mind-mind-body connection*. The former interest took root early on as a member of the narrative development lab, where I quickly became enamored with social-constructivism through the works of Jerome Bruner, George Herbert Mead, and Rom Harré. Later on, I resonated with social-developmental applications of dynamical systems theories in part through the work of scholars like Alan Fogel. As for the latter, I have always had an intrinsic curiosity about physical health and biology, having been raised by a nurse. During a biomedical research internship, I entertained the idea of pursuing an MD/PhD, but at the time such dual-degree programs did not include a social science PhD option.

(cont.)

I knew I had clarity on my career choice and research interests when it came time to shadow a pediatric neuro-oncologist: as we rounded to see his patients, I was much more fascinated by the possibility that the family's dynamics affected the progression or regression of a patient's tumors than by the scans of the tumors themselves or the treatment protocols.

#### Tell us about SHARE Lab.

In the SHARE lab, we seek to understand how relationships affect health and well-being across adulthood and older age, as well as how social-emotional and biological changes in adulthood may impact these dynamics. We examine the proximal mechanisms that induce short-term changes in autonomic and immune activity, as well as social patterns that are associated with longer-term, clinically relevant outcomes such as lower-extremity physical function, i.e. the ease with which we stand and walk. Our samples focus on close, established dyads—e.g., healthy adult couples, as well as people with a chronic illness and their caregiving partners. Currently, aging research features a lot of exciting growth, both in terms of developmental theory and in step with demographic trends!

#### What has been your favorite thing about Texas so far?

My favorite thing about Texas is being surrounded by natural light. There are countless sunny days! After living in cloudy cities for 10 years, I will never take the sun for granted again. My dog Lula's favorite thing about Texas is having her very own fenced-in backyard.

#### What is your favorite hobby?

Aside from playing with Lula (whose immense joy for fetching the ball is contagious), I love all things music (ukulele and violin, partner dance, karaoke, live music), as well as needlecrafts (knit, crochet, embroidery), spending time with friends and family, and exploring new parts of the city.

#### If your students could have only one take-away from your class and/or research work, what would you hope that would be?

Our thoughts, feelings, and actions don't occur in a vacuum or without consequence: for better or worse, they can have profound effects on our loved ones, and on the health of our bodies. Some of my work suggests that these effects may grow larger as we age.

## IN THE COMMUNITY

### Project Support and International Implementation



Project Support is a program created by **Drs. Renee McDonald** and **Ernest Jouriles** to address mental health problems of children exposed to domestic violence and child abuse. Project Support counselors provide one-on-one services to caregivers and their children, to help caregivers gain skills to strengthen the parent-child relationship, promote positive child adjustment, and to respond more effectively to child misbehavior. Counselors also provide emotional and practical support to families in crisis, helping them to find additional community resources when needed.

In 2011, Sweden's National Board of Health and Welfare began a multi-year evaluation of several intervention programs designed to help children in violent families. They evaluated Project Support among families in the Swedish child welfare system because of domestic violence. Under the supervision of Dr. McDonald and in conjunction with Karlstadt University in Sweden, Swedish clinicians were trained to deliver Project Support. Results indicated improved parenting and child psychological adjustment, and the Swedish clinicians as well as the families believed Project Support was valuable to them. Upon completion of the evaluation, Project Support was identified as one of two programs the National Board of Health and Welfare recommended for implementation throughout the Swedish child welfare system. In April, 2019, Dr. McDonald and SMU hosted a cohort of Swedish service providers to discuss their experiences in working with Project Support and to expand their knowledge of U.S. programs offered to families that have experienced violence.



Swedish Ph.D. student, **Helena Draxler**, has joined the department this semester in order to expand her knowledge of Project Support and scientific research methods. She has been instrumental in the

implementation of Project Support in Sweden. Helena was in the first group of Swedish clinicians supervised by Dr. McDonald, and has since developed the Swedish manual for Project Support and teaches the Karlstadt University course that trains Swedish social service workers in Project Support. To date, Helena has trained 46 clinicians in Project Support.

## ALUMNI FOCUS

### Reggie Dupard, B.A.

**Reggie Dupard** ('99) and wife, **LaChanda**, are the founders of Fit & Faithful Living, a non-profit organization on a mission to make a difference by providing marginalized communities with programs designed to help them by offering with hope and vision create their best lives.



Through mentorship and life coaching, students learn what it means to have someone as a champion and learn how to clearly determine their goals, gain confidence, and determine a plan to assist them in reaching those goals. Community youth are also introduced to weekly fitness activities, classes on physical and mental health, setting boundaries, and developing healthy relationships. Students as young as eight years old take part in educational enrichment/vision trips and college visits that introduce ways that they can use to improve their lives. Fit & Faithful Living is also introducing communities to the Jonas Garden, a Tower Garden that allows students and adults to grow their food from beginning to end.

We thank Reggie and the Fit & Faithful Living team for their dedication to helping communities grow strong holistic families.

## ALUMNI - WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

**Paul Williamson**, Ph.D., Major USAF, is director of the Partial Hospitalization program for the 673<sup>rd</sup> Medical Group, at the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, in Anchorage, Alaska.

**Noelle Bassi Smith**, Ph.D. is currently Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychology at Yale University School of Medicine, where she continues to conduct research on post-traumatic stress disorders.

**Ana Trueba**, Ph.D., is Professor of Psychology at University San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador. She currently has 31 publications related to physiological effects of stress and related medical conditions.

**Victoria Mueller**, Ph.D., is a psychologist at C2Change in Austin, Texas. This is a group practice specializing in providing evidence-based interventions for children and adolescents for emotional and behavioral disorders.

**Lindy Fields**, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Neurological Sciences and a neuropsychologist at the University of Nebraska Medical Center focusing on her specialization in traumatic brain injuries and memory disorders.

*Alumni - Do you have an update for us? Please send your information to Lisa Ruano at [lruano@smu.edu](mailto:lruano@smu.edu).*

## COHORT CORNER

**Alison Krauss** and **Caitlin Rancher** (both mentored by Dr. Ernest Jouriles) competed in the SMU Three Minute Thesis Competition. Alison presented on “Measuring Teen Dating Violence Perpetration: A Comparison of Cumulative and Single Assessment Procedures” and won first place in the competition. Caitlin presented on “The Mediating Role of Trauma Symptoms in the Association Between Past and Future Teen Dating Violence Victimization.”

**Savannah Pham** (mentored by Dr. Priscilla Lui) has been chosen as a recipient of this year’s *Psi Chi* Junior Fellowship Award. The selection process for this award is highly competitive and only given to an estimated 9-12 students each year. Savannah has worked exceedingly hard for this, while working on multiple first and co-authored manuscripts.

**Natalie Tunnell** (mentored by Dr. Alicia Meuret) has had her first-author manuscript published in the *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Sciences*. The manuscript is based on her thesis, “Brief acceptance-based therapy for women with high-risk pregnancies: Uncontrolled pilot of an intervention for inpatients” focusing on research in the first intervention for pregnant women with preterm premature rupture of membranes.



## COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Throughout the semester, the department holds a series of colloquium talks highlighting research studies of faculty members, graduate students, and outside guests. Select presentations from the fall series have included:

**Dr. Alejandro D’Brot** (SMU Department of Biology, Lecturer) presented “Using CRISPR-Cas9 in an undergraduate lab course to generate mutations for the research community.” He discussed the CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing system that is allowing biologists to easily edit the DNA sequence of living organisms.

**Dr. Chrystyna Kouros** (SMU Department of Psychology, Associate Professor) and graduate students, **Chelsea Carson** and **Sharyl Wee** “Children’s Self-blame Appraisals About Their Mothers’ Depressive Symptoms and Risk for Internalizing Symptoms.” Their study tested children’s self-blame appraisals as a moderator of the association between maternal depressive symptoms and children’s internalizing symptoms

**Dr. Morton Ann Gernsbacher** (University of Wisconsin-Madison, Vilas Professor and Sir Frederic Bartlett Professor) presented her research on “Diverse Brains,” in which she discussed the diversity of the brain, when neuroscientists should accentuate the differences, why individuals should accept their brain differences, and how society can accommodate those differences.

## Psychology Fun at Homecoming



## FACULTY NEWS

**Drs. Benjamin Tabak** and **Chrystyna Kouros**, graduate student **Talha Alvi**, along with colleagues Junghee Lee and Daniel Fulford have been published in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* for their research regarding social anxiety and its association with social cognition.

**Dr. Nathan Hudson** was recently interviewed by Fox 4 News regarding his research on changing your personality to better yourself.

**Dr. Priscilla Lui** received an award from *the Society of Clinical Psychology* in recognition for her outstanding contributions to diversity in clinical psychology.

**Dr. David Rosenfield** was recently awarded two grants from the National Institute of Mental Health. The first is a \$2 million grant to study Multimodal CET for Smoking Cessation Augmented with D-cycloserine; and the second is a \$4 million grant to research the Effectiveness of an Integrated Treatment to Address Smoking Cessation and Anxiety/Depression in People Living with HIV.

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