



SMU Department of Psychology Newsletter

Spring 2019



WELCOME!

The SMU Department of Psychology faculty and staff welcome you to our new departmental newsletter. We aim to provide you with important departmental news, information, achievements, and all the exciting things happening in the department. 2018 was an exceptional year and we expect 2019 to be no less. We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Dr. Priscilla Lui was recognized as a *Rising Star* by the Association of Psychological Science. She has also recently received the APA Division 12 *Samuel M. Turner Early Career Award for Distinguished Contributions in Clinical Psychology*.

Dr. Nathan Hudson spoke at SMU TEDxKIDS on changing your personality:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLhkvGGVUig>

Dr. George Holden was awarded the 2018 Distinguished Career Award from the *International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect*.

Dr. Alicia Meuret won the SMU 2018 Rotunda Outstanding Professor Award.

Dr. Thomas Ritz and **Dr. Alicia Meuret** along with their colleague, Michelle Craske (UCLA), recently received a \$4 million dollar NIH grant to study anhedonia - the inability to find pleasure in any aspect of life. They have also received, along with their colleague Dr. Sherwood Brown (U.T. Southwestern), a \$2.6 million dollar NIH grant to explore the apparent connection between asthma and diminished cognitive function in middle to late-age adults.

DEPARTMENT NEWS:

Beginning in fall of 2019:

M.S. Program in Organizational Psychology

The SMU Board of Trustees approved a new M.S. program in *Organizational Psychology*. Enrollment in the program is open only to SMU seniors. Following graduation, students spend the summer and an additional year at SMU in internships and taking classes. Juniors can apply for admissions this spring.

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Clinical Program Accepted into the "ACADEMY"

The doctoral program in clinical psychology recently became the newest member of the *Academy of Psychological Clinical Science*. APCS is an association of the leading scientifically-oriented doctoral and internship programs in clinical and health psychology in the U.S. and Canada.

★★ SAVE THE DATE ★★

ATTENTION ALUMNI:

THURSDAY, APRIL 11

5:30-7:30 pm

Expressway Tower, Room 208

Program will begin at 6:00.

**Refreshments will be served.*

Join us to hear about new developments in the department, graduate research and catch up with former classmates.



Alumni and faculty at the 2017 alumni event. Pictured (L to R): Reggie Dupard, Courtney Underwood and Dr. Chris Logan.

NEW FACULTY SPOTLIGHT:



Holly Bowen, Ph.D.

The psychology department is pleased to introduce its newest faculty member, Dr. Holly Bowen. Dr. Bowen is a cognitive psychologist and Director of the

MAPL Lab. Her research focuses on how affective states, specifically emotion and motivation, influence how we form memories and remember past experiences. We recently asked her to answer a few questions about herself.

Where are you from and where did you attend college?

I am from Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, a small city 1.5 hours northeast of Toronto. I graduated with a BA in Psychology from Trent University. After that, I completed an M.A. and Ph.D. in Psychology at Ryerson University located downtown Toronto.

What or who influenced you to study psychology?

I started out as a Biology major, but quickly realized after taking introductory psychology that I was much more interested in understanding human behavior than dissecting animals or studying plants. One of my favorite undergraduate classes was “Sleep and Arousal” with Dr. Carlyle Smith—a well-known sleep expert. This class got me interested in the brain and neuroimaging, and how factors like sleep can have a dramatic effect on our thinking and behavior. As an undergrad, I completed an independent research practicum and an honors thesis. These opportunities really sparked my interest in research and set me on this path.

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

There is so much to learn about the brain and how it supports cognitive functions. Cognitive neuroscience is a really exciting field with new findings, and technological and statistical advances emerging every day. Within this large field of research, I am extremely interested in how affect exerts such a pervasive influence on our memory. If you think about your own life, the memories that most easily come to mind, that include vivid details as if you are re-experiencing that event when you think of it now, are most likely from a highly positive or negative emotional event. Much of my work centers on what aspects of memory and what brain areas are influenced by emotion and motivation. I also have a line of research focused on how we can improve memory in older adults by making information emotionally or motivationally salient.

Although my work focuses on healthy younger and older adults, it can inform research on cognitive training interventions, understanding psychological disorders like PTSD, and has implications for applied aspects of memory like eyewitness and victim testimony.



Tell us about Mapl Lab.

In the MAPL Lab (which is an acronym for Memory and Affective Processes Across the Lifespan), we study how different types of affect, particularly emotion and motivation, influence how we form memories and remember past experiences. We are also interested in how the interactions between emotion, motivation, and memory change across the adult lifespan. To study this we do behavioral experiments, where participants come to the lab, are asked to learn some information and are tested on it later. Often this information is emotional, such as a picture of a car crash or cute puppies. Other times we motivate memory performance using monetary rewards.

To investigate the brain we use functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) which allows us to see what areas of the brain are active during the encoding and retrieval of memories, and whether this brain activation differs depending on whether the information is positive or negative, or associated with a reward or punishment.

What has been your favorite thing about Texas so far?

Tacos and no snow!

What is your favorite hobby?

I regularly attend spin classes and have taken up (indoor) rock climbing. Being in a new city has been great because my husband and I like to try different restaurants and explore areas and neighborhoods on the weekend.

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

We often think of aging as an inevitable progression toward dementia, but this is not really true. Yes, even in healthy aging there are declines in cognitive function, such as memory, but on the other hand, affective processing can improve with age. For example, healthy older adults are better at emotion regulation than younger adults, which is important for mental health and well-being. In my work, I have found that older adults are still sensitive to rewards, can prioritize high value information in memory like younger adults, and have preserved reward network brain activation in response to rewarding cues and reward feedback. Aging is not all about declining abilities, dementia, or Alzheimer's disease.

IN THE COMMUNITY:

Clinic Provides Valuable Services and Invaluable Training

The SMU Psychology Clinic is a non-profit clinic housed in the Department of Psychology that is committed to providing professional, confidential services to individuals from diverse backgrounds. The SMU Psychology Clinic offers two types of services: a) psychological/psychoeducation testing; and b) psychotherapy for children over the age of five, adolescents, and adults.

The clinic provides high quality, affordable services to the community. By offering therapy services on a sliding scale and assessment services at a discounted rate, we are able to serve individuals and families in the community who might not otherwise be able to receive these services.

In addition to providing the community with a source for affordable services, the clinic allows our doctoral students an opportunity to train in a diverse professional environment while receiving supervision from licensed clinical psychologists.

Last year, 48 assessments were conducted in the clinic and 44 clients were seen for 460 hours of therapy.

The clinic is currently collaborating with the Human Rights Initiative, providing pro-bono psychological evaluations for individuals applying for legal status through the U-Visa program or the Violence Against Women Act. These programs aid in decreasing crime in underserved areas and allowing those who are abused by a U.S. citizen or permanent resident to apply for legal status. The clinic assists by conducting thorough evaluations and providing the findings to use as part of the individual's case for legal status and/or permanent residency.

Each year the Clinic sponsors one or two workshops that are open to the community. This year the Clinic hosted a two-day clinical training workshop in June on Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). CPT is an evidence-based cognitive behavioral therapy used to effectively treat PTSD, a mental health disorder that affects approximately 8% of the US population.

The end of 2018 brought an exciting development to the clinic with the installation of a new state-of-the-art VALT recording system. The system allows for the secure online streaming of therapy and assessment sessions. This tool is providing our supervisors and doctoral therapists with an enhanced and more interactive training experience.

If you would like more information, please call 214-768-2398 or visit the psychology department website.

ALUMNI – Let us know where you are!

We will be including a "Where Are They Now?" section in future newsletters. This section will spotlight where our alumni are and what they are currently doing. Please send your information to Lisa Ruano at lrmano@smu.edu.

Dr. Alan Brown Retires as Professor Emeritus



On April 27, the department held a festschrift conference in honor of Dr. Alan Brown's retirement. The "Brownschrift," entitled "*Memory Quirks: The Study of Odd Phenomena in Memory*" featured eight speakers from universities (e.g., Colorado State, Duke, Florida International, UNC-Chapel Hill, & TX A&M) along with 28 alumni and guests. A book, based on the proceedings, is in the works.

ALUMNI FOCUS:

Courtney Underwood, B.A.

Courtney Underwood ('05, '08) has been on a mission to help rape victims get support and to increase the likelihood of perpetrators being caught. Courtney opened the Dallas Area Rape Crisis Center in 2010, and founded the SANE Initiative (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) in 2013, to assure that local hospitals would have rape victim specialists on hand to assist in the forensic and medical evaluation and offer support to the victim.



In 2018, Courtney opened Courtney's SAFE Place in Plano. It was the first round-the-clock SANE clinic in North Texas. The staff includes victim advocates and trained nurses who can perform a forensic exam. There is no charge for any service at SAFE Place.

We thank Courtney for her dedication to survivors and the community as a whole.

Join the SMU FAMILY RESEARCH REGISTRY!

Dr. Chrystyna Kouros and her team have developed the SMU Family Research Registry. The registry will provide a valuable tool by coupling families in the community who are interested in participating in studies with research opportunities. Individuals enter basic information into the registry, allowing them to be contacted when a research opportunity arises. For more information on the registry, please visit www.smufamilyhealth.com.

UNDERGRADUATES IN ACTION:

Alexandra Rutherford received the 2018 senior award for Outstanding Performance in Psychology. As a research assistant with the SMU Family Research Center, under the mentorship of Dr. Ernest Jouriles, Allie worked in training students on complex research protocols and participated in the development of an observational coding system for assessing awareness of risk for child maltreatment.

Shalanda Berkley received the 2018 award for Outstanding Research by an Undergraduate in Psychology. Shay played an integral part in the ADAPT lab under the mentorship of Dr. Priscilla Lui. While taking part in and contributing to participant recruitment, data collection and management, and data analysis. She also first-authored and gave a oral presentation at the Texas Research Society on Alcoholism, as well as drafted a first-author abstract for the biennial conference of the Society for Psychological Study on Culture, Ethnicity, and Race.

Kathryn Curtis (mentor: Dr. Priscilla Lui), **Stejara Dinulescu** (mentor: Dr. Ben Tabak), and **Page Hurley** (mentor: Dr. Chrystyna Kouros) are all Hamilton Scholars working on departmental Distinction projects. Kathryn's research focuses on how people's feelings about emotions contribute to their likelihood to avoid negative experiences, alcohol, and eating-related problems. Stejara is researching how social cognitive ability predicts self-referential memory accuracy. Page is currently examining the extent to which discrepancies in friends' perceptions of their relationship is associated with well-being.

Psi Chi Encourages Leadership and Welcomes Guest Speakers



Dr. Rosenfield talking about careers in psychology at the Psi Chi (the Psychology Honors Society) meeting.

Psi Chi is the national honor society in psychology. Membership provides the opportunity to obtain experience, recognition, professionalism, and leadership skills. In 2018, we welcomed Dr. Michael Lindsey as the new advisor of the *Psi Chi* program. To learn more about *Psi Chi*, contact Dr. Lindsey or visit the psychology department website.

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COHORT CORNER:

Graduate Student Awards



Kelli Sargent (mentored by Dr. Ernest Jouriles) won the 2018 Outstanding Graduate Student Award. Kelli is the recipient of the 2016-2021 Dean's Graduate Fellowship, has first-authored eleven publications, and participated in fourteen conference presentations, with five of them being as first-author. Kelli has practicum training at the SMU Psychology Clinic, Dallas Independent School District Youth and Family Centers, and the Dallas County Juvenile Department.

Margaret Sala (mentored by Dr. Austin Baldwin) received an APA Dissertation Award, PEO Scholar Award, Society for Health Psychology Graduate Research Award, and a HOGG Foundation Award – all in 2018!

Juliet Kroll (mentored by Dr. Thomas Ritz) received the Paul D. MacLean Scholar Award for Neuroscience Trainee from the American Psychosomatic Society.

Match Day Success - Congratulations!

For the 7th straight year, all of our students who applied for clinical internships experienced a 100% match. This is a good reflection of the training they have received. Congratulations to these students!

Juliet Kroll is headed to UCLA for her internship at the Semel Institute. They specialize in health and behavioral medicine.

Another student moving to Los Angeles is **Michael Ovale**, where he will be an intern with the USC Children's Hospital. He will be specializing in child/family and adolescent medicine.

Margaret Sala is headed to the opposite coast, where she will intern at the Veterans Affairs Connecticut Healthcare System in West Haven, CT. Her specialty will be in clinical health psychology.

Margaret Smith will become a clinical intern at the Tulane School of Medicine in New Orleans, LA. There, she will specialize in child and infant mental health.

Our fifth graduate student who is heading off to an internship is **Chelsey Werchan**. She will work as a behavioral medicine intern at the Charleston Consortium in Charleston, SC.

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