

Happy Spring, 2015 UNT Experimental Psychology Alumni!

We hope you are doing very well this new year. This email serves as the very first Behavioral Science (formerly Experimental) Program Newsletter! One of our major goals is to build a stronger connection between our graduate students and alumni. If this is your first time seeing one of our letters or invitations to reach out, we hope these updates find you happy, healthy, and leave you interested in connecting with us again in the future!

| **Name Change** | **Newest Faculty/Research** | **Health Psychology Research Group** |
| **Student Happenings** | **Alumni Database** | **Updates from Alumni** | **Contact Info** |

Name Change: As of September 1st, 2014, the Experimental Psychology program formally changed its name to the Behavioral Science program. Our current chair, Dr. Adriel Boals, explains why and the progress and implications for the program in the future:

“The term Experimental refers to a type of research design. Research design does not really define us as a program. Some of us even conduct non-experimental (e.g. correlational) studies! In addition, numerous faculty from other programs commonly conduct experimental designs. We wanted a program name that does a better job of embracing who we are. Because our program houses faculty with a wide variety of research interests, we chose a name that is fairly broad. We believe Behavioral Science (sometimes referred to as the B-Sci program) encompasses who we are and where we want to go in the future.”

Newest faculty/research: There have been many new faces in our department in recent years. Familiarize yourself with newest faculty, existing and returning faculty and the research we are currently pursuing!



Dr. Adriel Boals (Chair): *Coping with stress and trauma, with an emphasis on autobiographical memory. This includes understanding the etiology of PTSD and posttraumatic growth, and how we can gain insight into healthy coping strategies through narrative analysis (e.g., Expressive Writing intervention).*

Dr. Heidemarie Blumenthal: *Researching the etiology of anxiety and problematic substance use among adolescents and emerging adults, co-occurring anxiety and developmental psychopathology, and how significant facets of adolescence (e.g. puberty) related to the onset and maintenance of anxiety and drinking behaviors*
<http://psychology.unt.edu/teen-star-laboratory>

Dr. Rex Wright: *Concerned broadly with determinants and cardiovascular correlates of effort. His lab builds on the ideas of Jack Brehm and Paul Obrist to develop a theory of motivation intensity with wide-ranging applications to behavior phenomena. Specific interest revolves around ability factors (e.g. fatigue) affecting effort and associated CV response in performance challenges.*

Dr. Camilo Ruggero (part-time): *Explores the phenomenology of mental disorders using advanced analytic and assessment approaches. Work from his lab focuses primarily on the mood spectrum (bipolar disorder & depression) but also addresses the psychophysiology of related disorders like PTSD.* <http://psychology.unt.edu/map-lab>

Dr. John Ruiz (part-time): *Psychosocial influences on health, such as examining relationships between individual-level psychosocial factors, social behaviors, and cardiovascular disease risk with an emphasis on biobehavioral mechanisms, such as social vigilance. In addition, he also researches the role of psychosocial factors in health disparities, e.g. the epidemiological phenomenon known as the Hispanic Paradox.* <http://psychology.unt.edu/john-ruiz>

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Dr. Tommy Parsons (part-time): *Intersecting novel technologies and clinical neuropsychology to understand individual and social cognition via ecologically valid virtual environments (e.g. human-computer interfaces, virtual/augmented reality, video games). His lab is aimed at producing clinical scientists devoted to the continuous development of an empirical knowledge base in neuropsychology.* <http://psychology.unt.edu/cns-lab-parsons>

Dr. Kim Kelly (part-time): *Psychoneuroimmunology, Health and Stress Response*

Health Psychology Research Group (HPRG): A most recent addition to the semester has been HPRG, held on Fridays at noon. Students and faculty alike voluntarily organize and attend these meetings to discuss current studies and issues in the field relevant to health psychology. In addition, we discuss professional development topics and network with psychologists in both the academic and applied sectors.



L: Dr. Ruiz presenting his current research on the North Texas Heart Study <http://psychology.unt.edu/north-texas-heart-study>
R: Dr. Ann Marie Warren, Clinical Psychologist and Trauma Researcher at Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas, TX

Student Happenings: Get to know some of our Experimental and B-Sci students through their achievements!



L: B-Sci students at a GASP social gathering.
C: 1st year Lee Bedford (R) presents his veterans research at the 2015 AABSS Conference in Las Vegas.
R: 1st year Sarah Finley works with both Dr. Boals and Dr. Ruggero.

- ❖ **Jonathan Banks** (2011 Experimental graduate) is currently a professor at Nova Southeastern University
- ❖ **Amanda Kraha** (2013 Experimental graduate) is currently a professor at Indiana University East.
- ❖ **Dr. Wright**, along with 3rd year **Stephanie Agtarap** just recently published a book chapter. Congratulations!
Wright, R. A., & Agtarap, S. D. (2014). The intensity of behavioral restraint: Determinants and cardiovascular correlates. In Gendolla, G. H. E., Tops, M., & Koole, S. (Eds.), *Biobehavioral Foundations of Self-Regulation* (Chapter 10). Springer (in press).
- ❖ **Dr. Boals**, along with 5th year **Shana Southard-Dobbs** and **Dr. Blumenthal** just recently published a manuscript. Congratulations!
Boals, A., Southard-Dobbs, S., & Blumenthal, H. (2014). Adverse events in emerging adulthood are associated with increases in neuroticism. *Journal of Personality*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1111/jopy.12095

- ❖ **27th Annual Meeting for the Association for Psychological Science** will be host to many posters and presentations from Behavioral Science graduate students, including:

Cloutier, R.M., Budnar, R., Levitt, D., Olivares, S., Wright, P., Tavakoli, K., Dalai, M., Richardson, M., Gee, D., Trost, Z., **Blumenthal, H.**, & Vingren, J. (2015). Exploring the relationship between alcohol craving, pain catastrophizing, and self-reported anxiety in the context of experimental back injury.

Southard-Dobbs, S., Agtarap, S., Boals, A., Steinberg, D. S., Mannon, K. A., Williams, W., Brown, T., Lane, F., Self, H., Cruze, R., Ekwulugo, O., Suri, N., Lopez, M., Connally, M. L., & **Bedford, L.** (2015, May). Experimentally reducing event centrality using a modified expressive writing intervention.

Thank You – The Alumni Database: Thank you for taking part in our alumni survey this past September. The Alumni Survey was initiated by the Graduate Association of Students in Psychology (GASP) to garner interest in mentorship and involvement with all four doctoral programs in the department. If you have not taken the survey yet and would like to, follow this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MF3M2N9>

Our GASP President, Thomas Nguyen, is currently planning an alumni networking event later in the year. You are all invited!

Updates from Alumni:

We are very interested in how all of you are doing! If you are willing and/or interested to share:

- Post-graduate experience
- Navigating the job market
- Wisdom and tips while in graduate school

Please don't hesitate to contact us and share! The B-Sci program has grown leaps and bounds and we credit its history to past graduates and professionals like you! Please write to us at our contact information below.

That's all for our first newsletter. As Texas works to stay warm, we wish everyone a Merry Spring!

Sincerely,

Your Program Representatives,

Stephanie Agtarap

Sabrina Blackledge

StephanieAgtarap@my.unt.edu

SabrinaBlackledge@my.unt.edu

Behavioral Science Program
Department of Psychology
University of North Texas