



# BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

## 2020 ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

MAY 2020



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### A NOTE FROM OUR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**DR. ADRIEL BOALS**

This past academic year was certainly an unusual one, filled with a unique set of barriers and challenges. We started the year by welcoming a new faculty member (Dr. Danica Slavish) and three new graduate students (Jake, Lizzie, and Banan). After a two year hiatus, we relaunched our weekly brown bag series, this time under the name Psychology Research Series (PRS). PRS was a great success, filled with talks from current faculty, alumni, students, and outside speakers. PRS also was the venue for our inaugural first year talks. Jake, Lizzie, and Banan did a great job sharing their first year experiences. We also launched our Professional Development class, taught by Dr. Flores Niemann. The early feedback is this class is a rousing success. In the middle of the spring semester, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and campus quickly closed. Students and faculty faced challenges of completing their work off-campus. We were not deterred. Classes continued, research meetings continued, and we still had multiple successful thesis and dissertation meetings (albeit via Zoom). I am proud of the way our program rose (and continues to rise) to meet these challenges. We are hoping campus will safely open in time to welcome the Class of 2020 in the fall semester. If it does not, I am confident in our ability to make the necessary adjustments and continue to march forward. A month ago we welcomed a new Affiliated Faculty in Dr. Ryan Olson, an Assistant Professor from Kinesiology. We welcome Dr. Olson and look forward to the many future collaborations. The BSci program continues to grow in both size and our contributions. We are never satisfied. We endeavor to continue to grow, learn, improve our graduate training, and produce high quality research. We have come a long ways and I am excited for what still lies ahead.

### INCOMING STUDENTS FALL 2020

Ian Ambrose  
Madasen Briggs  
Jonathan Cajas  
Ruth King  
Brett Messman  
Joseph Vilches

# RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

## FACULTY

Dr. Yolanda Flores-Niemann has had a number of publications during the past year. She has in press *Presumed Incompetent II: Race, Class, Power, and Resistance of Women in Academia*. She has published a number of research articles over the past year.

Dr. Danica Slavish joined us this year. The SHEL-Lab kicked off its inaugural year at UNT! We will be welcoming the lab's first graduate student, Mr. Brett Messman, in the Fall of 2020. Dr. Slavish and colleagues have been busy submitting a number of grants to support research on sleep and health outcomes. Several SHEL-Lab manuscripts have been recently accepted for publication in outlets such as *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, *SLEEP*, and *Behavioral Sleep Medicine*. We look forward to expanding the SHEL-Lab at UNT in the coming semesters!

Dr. Rex Wright is proud of his recently-graduated student, Chris Mlynski, who has been in a postdoc position at the University of Dresden in Germany. This coming fall, Chris will be transferring to work with Veronika Job at the University of Vienna. These three have recently submitted a research grant for ongoing joint research. Dr. Wright has recently submitted a preliminary proposal which has been approved from the Templeton Foundation; he plans to continue his ongoing research on his theory of love.

Dr. Casey Guillot recently became an Editorial Fellow for *Experimental and Clinical Psychopharmacology* for 2020, which will be followed by being appointed a Consulting Editor as part of the journal's Editorial Board.

## STUDENTS

With a focus on the intersections of media psychology and the psychology of race, Audon Archibald is currently pursuing research on the positive effects of stereotype-breaking characters on real-world attitudes. Additionally, Audon is completing research on the use of novel technologies, such as virtual reality or artificial intelligence, on student learning in- and outside of the classroom.

Jake Hanes is a new addition to the Teen Star laboratory. There he is utilizing the Responses to Stress Questionnaire to investigate indirect relationships between coping, substance use, and mental health outcomes. He is particularly interested in involuntary and temperamentally-based coping and its role in shaping development.

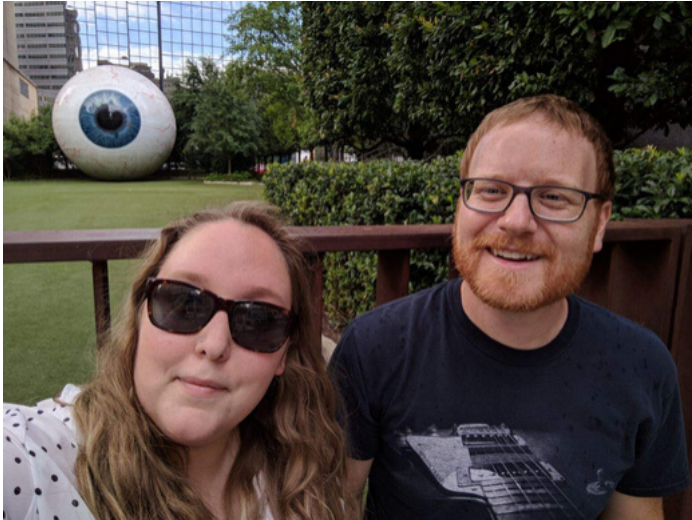
Justin Asbee is proud that he recently completed a meta-analysis entitled "A Comparison of Virtual Reality Classroom Continuous Performance Tests to Traditional Continuous Performance Tests in Delineating ADHD: a Meta-Analysis." He is currently working with Dr. Slavish to revise and resubmit a paper on stress and sleep. Justin is also proud that a conference proceeding is to be published based on an oral presentation.

Dr. Alvin Akibar defended his dissertation in which he investigated relationships between experiences of discrimination, group identity, and depression symptoms, with a particular focus on LGBTQ+ emerging adults of Color. He was recently appointed to the APAGS Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity (CSOGD), and he is now co-coordinating the CSOGD Mentorship program.

For a more comprehensive list of accomplishments, please check out the Behavioral Science webpage.



# EVENTS OF THE PAST YEAR



Pictured: Heather Lucke and Justin Asbee



Pictured: Teen STar Lab

## PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM (PRS)

This spring, we started weekly Psychology Research Symposium (PRS) meetings. The meetings give us a chance to talk about research and professional development focused on the needs of the Behavioral Science program. This spring we covered topics such as how to use ecological momentary assessment, conduct meta-analyses, and diversity and inclusion. We also had faculty and students talk about their current research and future projects. PRS also gives us opportunities to have guest speakers and promote collaborations inside and outside of the department.

## VIRTUAL PRS

Beginning in March 2020, we had to move our PRS meetings to Zoom. We continued with our presentations remotely, and all went smoothly! We are proud that we continued our goals throughout the pandemic.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2019-2020 GRADUATES!

DR. ALVIN AKIBAR  
DR. LEE BEDFORD  
DR. NATHAN KEARNS



Pictured: Banan Ramadan, Jake Hanes, and Lizzie Griffith

# CATCHING UP WITH AN ALUMNA

Dr. Shana Southard-Dobbs



Dr. Southard-Dobbs is proud to share that she received her university's Young Faculty Teaching Award in Fall 2019. To see the news release for this award, please visit the following link: <https://www.lander.edu/node/14061>

*What have you been doing since your time in BSci?*

I went straight into a tenure-track faculty position, and I've been at Lander University in SC since Fall 2016. I'm wrapping up my fourth year there. I really enjoy it! The nature of this job of being a tenure-track faculty member at an undergrad-serving institution was my goal from the beginning of my doctoral training, and the nature of this job is mostly what I thought it was going to be. I love being in the classroom. I love seeing that spark of understanding that happens when you're teaching or mentoring undergrad research.

*What is your favorite thing about your job?*

For a long time, I was on the staff side of higher ed; I did academic advising at NCTC, and I really liked working with that traditional college age group, emerging adults that are trying to figure things out and learning what their values are and their goals. It's really special to be a part of that, to help guide these young folks, to help them make it another step on their journey. I really enjoy working with students and seeing them learn and apply and figure things out. It's so exciting, and it's always there! I teach the same classes pretty much every year, but it's a new group of students and they're doing that all over again.

*What was your favorite thing about your time in BSci?*

One of my favorite things about my time there in that department was the camaraderie among the students and really just the collegiate atmosphere among the whole department. Some places are so competitive, and not that there isn't any of that, but it's such a collegial environment, especially among the students. The UNT Psych department is a good department to teach in, especially among the grad students because people are very willing to share materials and support each other and that kind of thing. It's a good dept to stretch your teaching legs in.

*What is the most valuable thing you learned during your time in BSci?*

I learned to be confident in my identity as a scientist, as a scholar, and as a teacher. The experience I had, the people I worked with, was all part of that. That's kinda nebulous, but that's important to me, being able to say I'm a behavioral scientist, I'm a psychological scientist, and I am confident that my training prepared me to have that identity and to educate other people about it. I feel confident in my identity as a scientist, and I think that comes from my training in that program.

*Do you have any advice for future or potential students?*

My observation while a student and being on the job market and my time since then: It's really important to have a fairly solid idea of what your path is. I incorporate it a lot when advising. Don't go to grad school just because; one does not "just go to grad school." It's awful sometimes, and it's a big investment of some very formative years of your life, and nobody is guaranteed an outcome that is favorable. Fellow BSci people are doing some amazing things, and that didn't just happen; it started with crafting a vision, at least in a general way. What do I want to be doing? I knew that I wanted to teach, and I went into doctoral training knowing this is what I want to do. I won't say everything I did was with that goal in mind, but largely it was. I made sure I was spending time with people who would help me achieve that goal.

*Do you have any advice for current students?*

For anybody who is interested in teaching, I would encourage you to make and maintain contact with CLEAR. They have so many trainings, and you can meet so many different people—faculty from other units, and other grad students. You just never know how a connection with somebody else can come into play later on. Also, fully experience the Denton community! I miss Denton a lot. It is so unique, arts-rich, with so many wonderful productions and performances.