

# DAWG TRACKS

MAY 2005

## WELCOME TO THE 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL UGA CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM NEWSLETTER!

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Following the successful reception of last year's newsletter, we hope to continue to highlight the achievements made by students, faculty, and alumni associated with the UGA Clinical Psychology program. In doing so we hope the newsletter will promote the strengthening of communication among all members of UGA's Clinical Psychology program and

provide recognition of individual and group achievements. With this goal in mind, we invite any notable contributions with regards to accomplishments, suggestions for future issues, or general feedback (Contact: Charles Kamen (Student-Faculty, Student Chair 2005-2006) at [ckamen@uga.edu](mailto:ckamen@uga.edu)).

## FEATURED LAB: DR. AMIR AND TEAM

The second floor of the psychology building is home to several metal sound-attenuated chambers where willing participants are led by graduate students or research assistants to be seated in front of computers and subjected to anxiety-inducing stimuli. Are these all research participants? Some of them may be patients in a new type of therapy being tested by clinical faculty Nader Amir.

Dr. Amir received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Health Sciences at the Chicago Medical School in 1995. When asked why he decided to specialize in anxiety, he said, "Two reasons: One, I think it's very prevalent. It's difficult to think of any person or psychiatric population who doesn't have some level of it, so it's very easy for it to become pathological. Two, I think we have good treatments for it, so clinically it's very rewarding to work with anxious patients."

Dr. Amir's current research interest is on changing information biases in people with anxiety by using computer paradigms. The theory, supported by thirty years of previous research, is that anxious people selectively attend to anxiety-provoking information and exclude contradictory or neutral stimuli. In Dr. Amir's paradigm, patients come to the lab twice a week for four weeks, during which time they are taught to direct their attention away from anxiety-provoking stimuli and to interpret ambiguous stimuli positively. He has found that this four-week program is equivalent to 12 weeks of cognitive-behavioral therapy in reducing anxiety (as indicated by self-report measures and interviews). Other institutions collaborating on this research include Ohio State University, Florida State University, and the Medical Research Council in England. Dr. Amir has also collaborated with Dr. L. Stephen Miller, the program's clinical neuropsychologist, on studying structural differences in the brains

of individuals with social anxiety using fMRI techniques (see publications below).

This busy research laboratory includes four graduate students, two of whom are on internship, and seven undergraduate research assistants. Courtney Beard, a second-year graduate student, said, "I enjoy working with Nader because he has such passion about research, clinical work, and academia. He ensures that his students learn much more than the basic requirements of the program. Our lab always has too many projects going on at once. However, the craziness forces us to all to work together."

For more information with regards to Dr. Amir's work you may contact: [amir@egon.psy.uga.edu](mailto:amir@egon.psy.uga.edu) or visit the Anxiety Clinic website at [www.uga.edu/psychology/clinic/anxiety.htm](http://www.uga.edu/psychology/clinic/anxiety.htm).



Nader Amir, Ph.D.

Associate Professor

## ALUMNI FOCUS: PAGE B. WALLEY, PH.D.

When asked about bringing psychology to the political arena, Dr. Page Walley, a former student of Jim Calhoun, stated that his background in clinical psychology has helped him to implement the principles of behavioral change on a broader social scale, and that such change is the backbone of political progress. Dr. Walley earned his PhD from the UGA Clinical Psychology program in 1984, and while he enjoyed his work with Dr. Calhoun and other members of the psychology faculty, including Rex Forehand and Jack Jenkins, he always felt called to public service. He currently serves as Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Human Resources, where he attempts to integrate empirical principles and clinical concern at the statewide level.

After graduating from our program, Dr. Walley operated as clinical director for a number of rural mental health centers in his native Tennessee. Having grown up in the small

town of LaGrange, near the Western Mental Health Institute, Dr. Walley understood the importance of providing mental health services at the local level. He also came to realize, however, the degree of impact the state legislature has on the provision of mental health care. And so, despite the paucity of psychologists in public office, Dr. Walley ran for, and was elected to, a seat on the Tennessee state legislature in 1990. From his legislative seat, he transitioned to an administrative post, working with Tennessee's Department of Children's Services and, later, Alabama's Department of Children's Affairs. He took office as Commissioner of Alabama's Department of Human Resources in January of 2004.

Dr. Walley would encourage other psychologists not to shy from the prospect of involvement with public policy. In his own position, he feels his background has aided him in communicating and problem solving with his 4,300 staff members

and the million-plus clients they serve. Theories he studied at the University, particularly the psychology of behavioral change and social influence, have allowed him to interact competently and effectively with those under his supervision. Currently, he is working with the University of Alabama at Birmingham to create a family and child research center, with the aim of developing a multi-systemic, therapeutic environment that can be brought into foster homes and abusive family situations. He hopes that with empirical investigation, Alabama's child welfare system, already one of the premier systems in the nation, can become even more focused in their interventions. Dr. Walley also plans to make his Department increasingly sophisticated in their use of data. At present, he and his staff follow up on contracts with care providers by utilizing outcome measures to assess efficacy, and he hopes to implement similar empirical checks in other areas of the Department.



**Page Walley, Ph.D.**  
**Commissioner of Alabama's**  
**Department of Human Resources**

While at the University, Dr. Walley recalls enjoying the relationships he formed with his classmates, as well as the coursework on social theory. He also appreciates the encouragement of his advisor as he followed a path outside the realm of academia. He currently lives in Auburn, Alabama with his wife and three children.

## FIRST-YEAR STUDENT FOCUS

**Megan Boyd.** No stranger to Georgia culture, Megan matriculated at UGA after leaving her hometown of Perry. Under the supervision of Dr. Stephen Miller, her research interests include brain imaging of severe psychopathology and cognitive neuro-psychology. She is currently working on a brain imaging study of visuospatial processing in schizophrenics, and she hopes to eventually specialize in neuropsychology in a clinical setting.

**Michelle Cobb.** Michelle has lived all over, from New Mexico to Florida to Pennsylvania, where she completed her undergraduate work at the University of Pittsburgh. Under the supervision of Dr. Nader Amir, her research interests include

computerized retraining tasks for anxiety disorders, including social phobia and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Currently, she is exploring the impact of positive feedback on social phobia.

**Megan Crawford.** Hailing from Gallatin, Tennessee, Megan graduated from Emory University. Under the supervision of Dr. Karen Calhoun, her research interests include analysis of narrative writings in women who have experienced sexual assault and issues of assault re-victimization. She is currently working on a joint study of correlates of assault in women who have experienced re-victimization.

**Ashley Furr.** Born in Greenville, South Carolina, Ashley completed her undergraduate degree at the

College of Charleston, South Carolina. Under the supervision of Dr. Joan Jackson, her research interests include issues of childhood sexual abuse, particularly the positive coping strategies utilized by abuse survivors. She is planning to work with Megan Crawford on a joint study of abuse and assault re-victimization, with a focus on effective coping strategies.

**Charles Kamen.** A Midwesterner at heart, Charles attended school at the University of Notre Dame after leaving his hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio. Under the supervision of Dr. Steven Beach, his research interests include self-evaluation maintenance processes in minority couples, and the mental health correlates of same-sex relationships. He is currently working on a parallel research project com-

paring self-evaluation maintenance in African American and Caucasian couples.

**Mary Payne.** Born and raised in New Tazewell, Tennessee, Mary left her small town to attend school at Vanderbilt University. Under the supervision of Dr. Ronald Blount, her current research interests include developmental pediatric psychology, with a focus on the mental health impact of childhood chronic illness. She is currently working on a study examining coping methods and stress in children diagnosed with chronic illness.

## CLINICAL PROGRAM FUND-RAISING

### CLINICAL PROGRAM RECEIVES MAJOR GIFT AS CHALLENGE

A generous graduate of the UGA Clinical Psychology Program, who wishes to remain anonymous, has offered the program a gift of \$100,000 in the form of a challenge grant. The purpose of this gift is to establish an ongoing fundraising effort that will enhance the program and the training it offers. The challenge is: we must raise a matching \$100,000 through private gifts from other alumni and friends!

If we raise the matching \$100,000 soon (within one to one-and-a-half years), this same anonymous graduate has pledged an additional gift of \$50,000 to bring the total to \$250,000. At this

time, the funds will be used to establish an endowed professorship, which will become the centerpiece of our efforts to gain recognition as a center of excellence in clinical psychology. Recruitment for a faculty member with an outstanding national reputation for scholarly work and visionary leadership in the application of psychological innovations will begin as soon as we have reached our goal.

We hope you will consider helping us reach this exciting goal! Every gift counts, and we will be pleased to keep you posted on our progress.

Checks may be made payable to the "University of Georgia Foundation" with "Clinical

Psychology Professorship Fund, # 40G1850" on the memo line. Please mail to:

**Franklin College Office of Development**

**300 New College**

**Athens, GA 30602**

If you have questions about gifts of stock, matching gifts from your company, or a bequest to this fund, please contact:

**Sarah Baines, Interim Director of Development**

**Franklin College of Arts and Sciences**

**Phone: 706-583-0825 or Toll Free: 888-268-5442.**

**Email: [sbaines@franklin.uga.edu](mailto:sbaines@franklin.uga.edu)**



Contributions are tax-deductible and will earn our deepest gratitude.

Thank you for your support as we continue to build an exceptional program!

### INCOMING STUDENTS

**Fayeza Ahmed** (Dr. S. Miller)  
**Xi Chen** (Dr. Amir)  
**Jessica Dreifuss** (Dr. Beach)  
**Carlos Faraco** (Dr. S. Miller)  
**Jordan Gilleland** (Dr. Blount)  
**Kameron Franklin** (Dr. Beach)

### 2005-2006 STUDENT INTERNSHIPS

<b>Megan Benoit</b>	University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Medical Center
<b>Amy Cohn</b>	New York University Bellevue Hospital Center, New York City
<b>Yfat Kessel</b>	University of Chicago Medical Center
<b>Kirsten Michels</b>	University of Maine Counseling Center - Orono
<b>Puja Seth</b>	University of Maryland School of Medicine/VA Maryland Health Care System
<b>Chandler Sims</b>	UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute - Los Angeles
<b>Heidi Zinzow</b>	Medical University of South Carolina/DVA - Charleston

### WELCOME JOSHUA MILLER, PH.D.!

Dr. Miller received his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Kentucky in 2003, where he worked primarily with Drs. Donald Lynam and Richard Milich. For the past three years (internship and two years as a post-doctoral fellow) he has been working at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic in Pittsburgh, PA, where he worked with Drs. Paul Pilkonis and Edward Mulvey.

Dr. Miller's research examines the relations between structural models of personality and psychopathology, specifically various forms of externalizing problems and the personality disorders. He has taken a multi-pronged approach to understanding the relations between personality and psychopathology. Dr. Miller's research includes four specific foci, which involve examining the:

- \* Relations between broad personality domains, specific traits, and externalizing behaviors (e.g., crime, substance use, risky sex)
- \* Use of general personality traits to conceptualize maladaptive or psychopathological personality profiles: A study of psychopathy and DSM-IV personality disorders (PDs)
- \* Overlap between general personality and PDs in the prediction of clinical outcomes
- \* Potential mechanisms that might explain the links between general personality, personality disorders, and problematic behaviors through the use of laboratory tasks



Joshua Miller, Ph.D.  
 Will join the Clinical faculty, Fall 2005

## 2005 GRADUATE PLACEMENTS

### **Monica M. Fitzgerald**

NIMH research postdoctoral fellowship at the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center at the Medical University of South Carolina

### **Jamylah K. Dunn**

VA North Texas Health Care System (Dallas, TX)

### **Anna Edwards**

Postdoctoral contract position through the Injury Prevention Division of the Centers for Disease Control (in Atlanta, GA)

### **Amy Brown**

Postdoctoral Fellowship in Child Psychology, Mayo Clinic (Rochester, MN)

### **Josh Spitalnick**

Postdoctoral Fellowship – NIMH Research Fellowship at Emory HIV/AIDS Postdoctoral Fellowship (Atlanta, GA)

### **Anne Bartolucci**

Insomnia specialist at the Sleep Disorders Centers of Southeastern Lung Care (Atlanta, GA)

### **Amy Van Wynsberghe**

Full time clinical position (Team Leader) at Hammond Developmental Center in Hammond, LA

Congratulations  
to our newest  
Ph.D.'s !



## 2004-2005 AWARDS

Student Representative, Executive Committee of the Society of Pediatric Psychology, Division 54 of the APA: **Katie Devine**

Herbert Zimmer Research Award: **Renee Schneider**

Florene M. Young Award: **Megan Benoit**

Henry E. Adams Memorial Research Award: **Courtney Beard**

Boardman-Forehand-Jackson Award: **Monica M. Fitzgerald**

Graduate Teaching Assistant Award: **Megan Benoit**

Charles Darby Award: **Josh Spitalnick**

Mentorship Award: **Joan Jackson**

Outstanding Contribution to the Tone of the Program Award: **Amos Zeichner**

Advancement of the Clinical Psychology Program Award: **Ron Blount**

## SAMUEL M. TURNER, PH.D., 1944-2005

The Clinical Program lost one of our most prominent graduates this year. Sam Turner lost a heroic battle with a brain tumor in March. A native of Macon, Georgia, Sam obtained his Bachelor's degree from Georgia State University after serving four years in the Air Force. In 1975, he became the first African American to receive a Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Georgia. From 1975-1992, he was on the faculty at Western Psychiatric Institute, Department of Psychiatry, University of Pittsburgh. From 1992-1998, he was Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Medical University of South Carolina. He joined the Psychology Department at the University of Maryland, College Park in 1998, where he was Professor of Psychology and Co-Director of the Maryland Center for Anxiety Disorders. He was a Fellow of the APA and APS, and a Diplomate of the American Board of Professional Psychology in Clinical Psychology and in Behavioral Psychology. In 1997, he received the APA Award for Distinguished Contributions to Professional Knowledge, and in 1998, the Distinguished Scientist Award from the Association of Medical School Psychologists. He served as Associate Editor of The American Psychologist and on the editorial boards of numerous scientific journals. He authored more than two hundred scientific publications, as well as fifty book chapters and eighteen books. He will be remembered as a strong advocate for scientific clinical psychology and for the numerous students and junior colleagues for whom he served as mentor and role model.



## RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS 2003-2004

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### DAWG TRACKS CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Marc Martinez  
Charles Kamen  
Anne Bartolucci

### UGA CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM

Department of Psychology  
Psychology Building  
University of Georgia  
Athens, GA 30606  
Phone: 706-542-1173  
Dawg Tracks Contact: Charles Kamen  
Email: [ckamen@uga.edu](mailto:ckamen@uga.edu)

We're on the web!

<http://www.uga.edu/psychology/graduate/clinical/info.htm>