2020, WHAT A YEAR!

2020 has been an unusual year to say the least, but our program has had plenty to celebrate. Thank you to all alumni & students for keeping the program current with your life updates and achievements, and thank you to the readers who continually stay invested in the program.

If you have any future updates, please reach out to experimentalpsyc@towson.edu.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter and as always, thank you for taking the time to read it.
WELCOME TO OUR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS!

From Left to Right:
Laura Humm
Diane Nguyen
Michael Brienzo
Sydney Gemmell
Kelly Deegan
Kira-Leigh Banks
Matthew Woodson
Christina Spafadora

& CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2020 GRADUATES!

Laura Castellon
Michael Droboniku
Esau Garcia
Krystyna Griswold
Sarah Jaweed
Ian Moss
Christopher Mullin
Andrea Norr
Jared Wildberger
ALUMNI UPDATES

**Jesse Rothweiler**  
Currently enrolled in a Cognitive Psychology Ph.D. program at Iowa State University.

**Blair Shevlin**  
Passed his comprehensive exams for candidacy in a Decision Psychology Ph.D. program at Ohio State University.

**Drew Parton**  
Started a Ph.D. program in Social Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University.

**Larry Fort**  
Recently finished an International Fellowship in Berlin, Germany.  
Currently in the process of a Ph.D. proposal at the University of Liege in Belgium.

**Michael Droboniku**  
Received the Outstanding Experimental Psychology Graduate Student award at Towson University.  
Recently started a doctoral program in Experimental Psychology at the University of Cincinnati.

**Leanna (Bergeron) Cupit**  
Received a Ph.D. in Leadership and Human Resource Development from Louisiana State University in May of 2019.  
Started a new position as a Research Associate in the Social Research and Evaluation Center at Louisiana State University.
Iiona Scully
Received a Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology from Lehigh University in July of 2019.

Currently works as a Scientist and Consultant in the Human Factors practice at Exponent.

Jackie Palmer
Started a position as a Research and Data Analyst at Bloomberg Law in Washington DC.

Virginia Diehl
Worked as a faculty member in Psychology at Western Illinois University and retired two years ago.

Chris Normile
Received a PhD in Experimental Psychology from Central Michigan University.

Started a new position as an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Allegheny College in Northwest PA.

CJ Arayata
Started a new position in the “District Attorney’s Transparency Analytics” [DATA] Lab for the District Attorney of Philadelphia. Their mission in the DATA Lab is to become leaders in data-driven progressive criminal justice reform. Currently, the DATA Lab is the nation’s second largest data unit within any prosecutor’s office.

Stacie Metz
Assumed MPH Program Director position at West Chester University in West Chester, PA in July of 2020.

Chris Mullin
Received the Outstanding Psychology Graduate Student award at Towson University.

Catherine Butt and Drew Parton
Married in July 2020.
Laura Humm (1st year student) presented "Combining technology, research, and stakeholder-input in the design, development, and evaluation of simulated conversation tools" at the 2020 digital ISC Science @ UNGA 75 conference.

Laura Humm (1st year student) presented "Community Partners Develop Practice Simulations To Train Gender-Affirmative Therapy Skills" at the 2020 Virtual American Psychological Association Convention (APA).

Kelly Deegan (1st year student) with Dr. Kukucka (faculty advisor) presented "Do Exonerees Face Housing Discrimination? An email-based field experiment" at the 2020 American Psychology and Law Society Conference in New Orleans.


Tiana Cruz (alumni) presented "Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy-Brief: Psychometric Properties and Related Multicultural Constructs" at the 2020 Virtual American Psychological Association Convention (APA).

Tiana Cruz (alumni) presented "Benefits and Drawbacks Associated with Social Media Use: A Latent Profile Analysis of Emerging Adults" at the 2020 Virtual American Psychological Association Convention (APA).

Larry Fort (alumni) presented "Manipulating Consciousness: False Memory Susceptibility after Mindfulness exposure" at the 2019 Science of Consciousness Conference in Interlaken, Switzerland.
Laura Humm (1st year student) published "Initial testing of a computer-based simulation training module to support clinicians' acquisition of CBT skills for substance use disorder treatment" in the Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment in 2020.


Laura Humm (1st year student) published "Suicide risk assessment training using an online virtual patient simulation" in the Journal mHealth in 2019.

Geoff Munro (faculty) and Toni Santoro (alumni) published "Perceptions of counter arguing and source derogation as attitude resistance techniques" in the Journal of Theoretical Social Psychology in 2020.


Tiana Cruz (alumni) published "Facets of personality related to sleep habits in black adults" in Sleep Health: Journal of the National Sleep Foundation in 2019.


Iiona Scully (alumni) published "Different reactivation procedures enable or prevent episodic memory updating" in the Journal of Hippocampus in 2019.
My Ph.D. is in Experimental / BioPsychology and my dissertation research focused on long-term potentiation in the rat olfactory cortex. Although my current research seems as though it could not be more different from my training, I find that every day I draw upon the basic research and writing skills I learned in graduate school and I am so grateful for that training.

My Ph.D. mentor was fond of saying that a Ph.D. is a "problem-solving degree" and I have found that to be true (both in my approach to science and in navigating an academic career). I feel like what ultimately led me to my field was 1) a strong desire to make a difference in the communities that matter most to me; 2) the flexibility to navigate a series of mishaps and obstacles early in my career; and 3) the ability to pivot and not be afraid to constantly learn new skills in order to take advantage of opportunities as they present.

**Areas of Interest?**

Broadly, my research focuses on understanding the experiences of the most marginalized individuals within the LGBTQ+ community. This includes 1) LGBTQ+ Black, Indigineous, People of Color (BIPOC); 2) trans and nonbinary folx; and 3) bisexual/plurisexual individuals.

**What led you to your field?**

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My passion projects right now include:

- A series of studies designed to reconceptualize gender dysphoria by centering the lived experiences of trans and nonbinary (TGNB) individuals.

- A series of studies leading to the development of more accurate scales for measuring sexual orientation.

- A collaborative project with a tech company (SIMmersion) to develop training simulations that therapists can use to build gender affirmative skills for working with TGNB clients.

- An edited special issue on the experiences of BIPOC trans and nonbinary people.

Fun Facts:

- My sun sign is Leo.
- I have a crown made of amythyst and onyx, and I'm not afraid to use it.
- I have a Little Free Library in my yard that I love to buy books for -- but I confess that I do not really understand the reading habits of my neighbors.
Why Psychology?

For me, psychological research has always been a form of creative expression because I have free reign to design and conduct studies in an area that is important to me.

What are you currently researching?

Through my research endeavors, I aim to ameliorate the stigma (i.e., discrimination) toward individuals who engage in non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) or disclose suicidal thoughts.

I directly examined the stigma, fears, and beliefs about NSSI because of the past concerns expressed by the institutional review board (IRB) about the safety of participants who participate in research asking about NSSI, suicide, and trauma. Dr. Tina Dardis suggested that I include a measure that assesses the emotional consequences of participation, so that Shae Nester (my co-author for this project) and I could see whether, and to what extent, participants are experiencing unintended emotional duress after participation.

We found that among those with a history of NSSI, participants reported that their perceptions of participation and global evaluations of the project (i.e. implications) were greater than their reported emotional reactions and drawbacks.

Your current study was recently submitted, what were the reviews?

We submitted this study to the Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics in late August, and to our surprise, we received reviews back in one week! Better yet, they were very manageable! One reviewer had very minor concerns, while the other reviewer wanted us to clarify our language about the study. We are very hopeful and excited that this paper will be accepted soon. The results could provide evidence to IRB committees that researching trauma, NSSI, and suicide can be done safely.

Ryan Robertson, 2nd Yr Student