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Research Spotlight: Rheeda Walker-Obasi



To Dr. Rheeda Walker (far left), effective treatment of psychological illness begins with recognizing the multidimensional factors contributing to that illness. In the Cultural Risk and Resilience Lab, Dr. Walker and her research team of graduate students (Sierra Carter, Kelci Flowers, and Temilola Salami, pictured left to right) use a sociocultural approach to identify factors involved with premature death in African Americans. Walker has conceptualized a framework for how researchers and clinicians might examine suicide vulnerability in a multidimensional, culturally-informed manner. According to Walker, "It's important to realize, consistent with the positive psychology movement, that sociocultural dimensions of resilience are also meaningful. Not everyone who is burdened by marginalization is suicidal, depressed, or otherwise dying, prematurely." She believes this may be because culturally-relevant buffers such as internalized religiosity interact with "universal" risks such as depression/depressive symptoms to affect suicidal ideation, planning, and attempts.



Departmental News

Follow the department on Twitter!
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Congratulations to our clinical psychology program which was ranked #32 by *U.S. News & World Report!*

Michael Amlung (BBS) received the Graduate School's Excellence in Teaching Award. This award is given to five graduate teaching assistants across campus who demonstrate exemplary teaching at UGA.

Melissa Bright (BBS) was recently featured in the UGA faculty newspaper, *Columns*, as well as popular science website ScienceDaily.com for her research on cortisol hormone levels in infants.

In one study exploring the influence of these buffers, Walker's lab surveyed a community sample of working age African American adults. Results showed that perceived racism was both directly and indirectly (in part due to symptoms of depression) related to suicide ideation. However, for those adults who reported relatively high levels of internalized religiosity, depression was not associated with thoughts of suicide. Taken together, the lab's findings demonstrated the significant role that sociocultural factors such as religion and perceived racism play in suicide ideation among African Americans.

Most recently, Walker and her research team designed and initiated a campus-wide study of stress and coping among college students. The primary objective is to assess how students respond to stress over time. All incoming first-year students in the fall of 2011 completed a baseline battery of questions that included measures of personality and religious coping as well as psychological symptoms such as depression and anxiety. The second wave of data collection is set to begin soon, so preliminary results should be available in the near future.

To read more:

Walker, R. L. (2007). Acculturation and acculturative stress as indicators for suicide risk among African Americans. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 77(3), 386-391.

Walker, R. L., & Flowers, K. C. (2011). Effects of race and precipitating event on suicide versus nonsuicide death classification in a college sample. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 41(1), 12-20.

Walker, R. L., Wingate, L.R., Obasi, E. M., & Joiner, T. E. (2008). An empirical investigation of acculturative stress and ethnic identity as moderators for depression and suicidal ideation in college students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 14(1), 75-82.

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Profiles

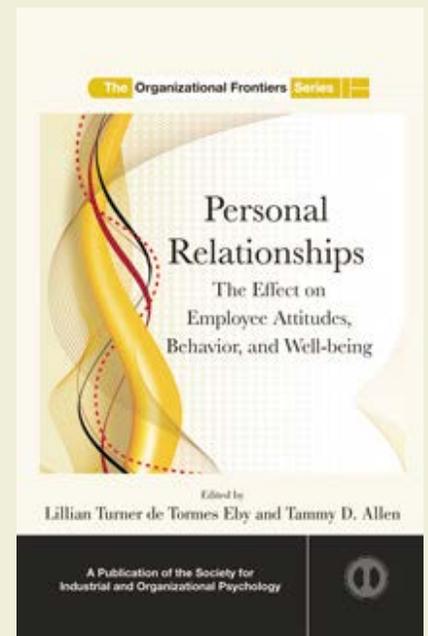
Staff: Linda Bruce

Linda has been a member of the Psychology Department staff since 2007. Originally born in sunny San Diego, she has spent most of her life in Georgia. Currently, she is the primary receptionist for the department. She assists faculty, students, staff, as well as visitors. If something is being ordered, issued, or requested in our department, Linda is most likely involved. She also provides administrative support by assisting in special projects, correspondence, and instructional reports. Despite all of this, Linda always makes time for herself. She loves doing yard work, puzzles, and sewing, and says spending time with her family is one of her greatest joys. As for a "hidden talent," Linda seems to have a



Alumna Freya Liu ('11) was one of five graduate students who received the Graduate School's Excellence in Research by Graduate Students award. This award is presented to graduate students who graduated in the calendar year prior to the award being presented.

Dr. **Lillian Eby** published a book titled, *Personal Relationships: The Effects on Employee Attitudes, Behavior and Well-Being*.



Allison Howard (BBS) won Intergraph and DigitalGlobe's international Geospatial Challenge competition for her research with wild capuchin monkeys. As part of the award, Allison was invited to present her work at the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing's annual conference.

Lauren Wood's (I-O) master's thesis, "The Job Characteristics: The Times, They Are A-Changing," was one of 20 posters featured at SIOP's annual conference in April. Additionally, the paper was one of five nominated for the John C. Flanagan Award for best student presentation at the conference.

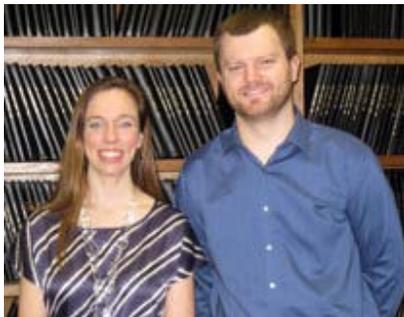
In March, the department welcomed new

knack for fixing and repairing broken items around the house. She says she owes it all to her *Reader's Digest Fix It Yourself* book series. So, the next time you're in the main office, be sure to thank Linda (she loves Peanut M&Ms!) for all her hard work and dedication to the department.

Graduate Students: Allison Howard and Michael Amlung

Allison Howard (BBS) is a fourth-year graduate student in Dr. Dorothy Fragaszy's Primate Cognition Lab. Her current research focuses on capuchin monkeys' spatial cognition. In the lab, Allison investigated whether our capuchins used an egocentric or allocentric approach when solving a laser-pointer traveling salesman problem.

Transferring spatial cognition to the field, Allison has been working closely with her co-advisor Marguerite Madden in the Geography Department using geographic information systems (GIS) to model the routes of wild capuchin monkeys in Brazil. Though most of us know Allison as a hard-working graduate student, she has been making quite a name for herself over the years as an energetic Zumba instructor at the Ramsey Center. Last summer, she also taught a highly popular canine cognition course which she currently is teaching again this summer. Upon graduating, Allison intends to apply for post-doctoral positions so she can continue her research in animal spatial cognition using GIS and spatial modeling techniques.



Michael Amlung (BBS) is a doctoral candidate working both in the Experimental and Clinical Psychopharmacology Lab and at UGA's Bio-Imaging Research Center. Broadly, his research explores human choice behavior, particularly in the context of substance abuse and other unhealthy behaviors. His research has earned him awards such as the Student Merit Award from the Research Society on Alcoholism, and the Walter Isaac Memorial Graduate Student Award. Currently, Michael is collecting data for his dissertation, "Effects of Acute Stress and Alcohol Cues on Measures of Incentive Value in Heavy Drinkers." Along with his passion for research, Michael also values teaching. He was a founding member of the Psychology Educator Development Association (PEDA), has served as instructor of record for multiple semesters, and is actively involved in undergraduate mentoring and scholarship in teaching and learning research. Upon graduating, Michael hopes to obtain a faculty position that will allow him the opportunity to pursue research and teaching.

Undergraduate Students: Rachel Gallery and Reuben Faloughi

Rachel Gallery ('13) is a Psychology major and Cognitive Science minor from Warner Robins, GA. Her concentration within her minor is philosophy of mind, which she relates to her research interests in animal cognition. As a member of the Primate Cognition Lab, Rachel assisted with work on decision making in capuchin monkeys, but she has since set her sights on studying language-like behavior in parrots. Currently, she is working on her CURO thesis comparing human infants to speech-using African Greys. Her project specifically



undergraduate adviser, Daniel Harrison, to the UGA psychology family.

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Faculty Spotlight Brian Haas



1. What is the best part about being at UGA?

After being here a short time, I have felt incredibly welcomed by the Department of Psychology, the University of Georgia and the town of Athens. The people here are extremely kind and have gone out of their way to make me feel at home. The people associated with UGA are definitely the best part!

2. Explain the overarching theme of your research.

I am interested in understanding the relationship between genes, the brain, and social behavior. I believe that if we can better understand these relationships, important advancements in designing intervention and treatment techniques can be made, and that we can improve outcomes for those suffering with forms of psychopathology characterized by abnormal social and emotional functioning.

3. What is something unique about you?

I was born on February 29th (my birthday only comes every four years).

4. What is your favorite movie and why?

investigates social referencing cues, and the extent to which infants and parrots use their caregivers' vocal intonation to make choices. In March, Rachel presented a poster of her pilot data at the Psi Chi Convention of the Behavioral Sciences. In her spare time, Rachel enjoys exercising, studying American Sign Language, and watching one of her favorite shows, *The Dog Whisperer*. Rachel's post-graduation plan is to attend graduate school.

Augusta native **Reuben Faloughi ('13)** is the definition of a true student-athlete. An outside linebacker for the UGA football team, Reuben excels both on and off the field, earning such distinctions as the SEC Academic Honor Roll, the Athletic Director's Honor Roll, the Teka and John Adams Football Scholarship, the Iron Dawg Award, and the Joe B. Maxwell Family Football Scholarship. Guided by his interest in clinical psychology, Reuben works as an undergraduate researcher in Dr. Cynthia Suveg's Development and Psychopathology Lab. In the lab, Reuben assists with studies regarding anxiety treatment in 7-12 year olds, and mutual reactivity in mother-child dyads in preschool-aged children. Outside of school, Reuben enjoys representing the Bulldogs in local school programs where he talks to students about the importance of academics and physical fitness. He also enjoys playing the guitar. Upon graduating, Reuben plans to pursue doctoral study in clinical or counseling psychology..

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2011 - 2012 Departmental Award Recipients

Psi Chi Awards

- A.S. Edwards Award - Eva Bonney Reed-Knight
- Graduate Teaching Award - Dr. Anne Shaffer
- Undergraduate Teaching Award - Dr. Richard Suplita

Faculty & Staff Awards

- Geri Moon Staff Award for Exemplary Service - Sandra J. Hodo
- Richard L. Marsh Mentoring Award (Faculty) - Dr. Philip V. Holmes

Department Wide Undergraduate Awards

- Scott Torgesen Award - Stephanie M. Ross
- William T. James Award - Lindsay N. Briggs
- Judge Horace B. Russell Prize - Hannah K. Muetzelfeld

Department Wide Graduate Awards

- Charles L. Darby Teaching Award - Michael Amlung
- Herbert Zimmer Scholars - Elizabeth L. Monahan (I-O Program); Erin N. Colbert-White (BBS Program); Lauren R. Few (Clinical Program)
- Richard L. Marsh Mentoring Award (Graduate) - Julia B. Sauer

Behavioral and Brain Sciences Program Student Awards

- Martha Jo Walker Johnson Memorial Award - Brittany C. Gentile
- Charles D. Smock Memorial Award - Rachel Han

Clinical Program Student Awards

Pulp Fiction because of the dialogue.

5. If you weren't a psychologist, what would you be?

I am fascinated by the process of evolution. I would love to study evolution in geographically isolated places such as Madagascar.

6. What's one piece of advice you can give to undergraduate psychology majors?

Ask questions, and if it is still not clear, ask more questions. There is absolutely no way to find out more about Psychology and what aspects are promising to you unless you keep asking questions.

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History Note **By Roger K. Thomas**



The Strahan House, Psychology's first home (1921). It was demolished to make way for the construction of the Law School Library in the 1960s, by which time Psychology occupied both Meigs Hall and New College.

This column is about the history of departmental organization. When the department was established (1921), Austin S. Edwards was its only faculty member. During the Great Depression, departments were closed elsewhere, and two psychologists were transferred making UGA's a department of three. By 1960, there were eight faculty members and no specialty programs. An APA accredited Clinical Psychology program was approved by 1966, and the non-clinical faculty were said to be "general-

Henry E. Adams Memorial Research Award - Lauren R. Few
Boardman, Forehand, Jackson Award - Eva Bonney Reed-Knight
Florene M. Young Award - Diana M. Morelen & Lauren F. Wilson
Turner Clinical Research Award - Temilola Salami
Special Program Award - Marilyn Steffe

Clinical Program Faculty Awards

Research Award - Dr. Amos Zeichner
Teaching Award - Dr. Joshua Miller
Clinical Training Award - Dr. Karen Smith

Industrial-Organizational Program Awards

Dan Mack Award - Kerrin E. George
Donald Grant Award - Elizabeth L. Monahan
I-O Excellence in Teaching Award - Dr. Lillian T. Eby

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Support the Department

There are many ways to support the department. Financial contributions are most welcome, but we also appreciate our alumni who give their time to speak to our current students and new graduates by providing advice about careers in specific areas. Thank you!

Make a Donation

The Department of Psychology appreciates your financial support. Every dollar contributed to the department has a direct impact on our students and faculty. Your gift is important to us and helps support critical opportunities for students and faculty alike, including lectures, travel support, and any number of educational events that augment the classroom experience.

For more information about this and other funds in the department, or additional ways you can help, please contact Jennifer Messer, Director of Development, at 706-542-0068 or email at jlmesser@uga.edu. [Donate Now!](#)



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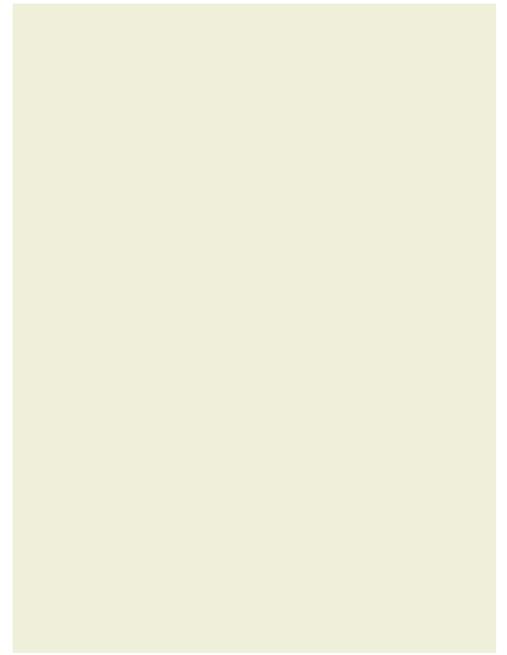
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experimental.” Faculty size doubled in 1967 to about 35 faculty members, and additional specialty programs began to emerge. By 1970, the department had programs in Applied, Biopsychology, Clinical, General-Experimental, and Social Psychology, as well as joint programs in Counseling and Educational Psychology with the College of Education; the latter two were phased out by about 1975. In 1987, the Life-Span Developmental Psychology program emerged. Eventually, General-Experimental became Cognitive-Experimental and Biopsychology became Neuroscience and Behavior. The recent crippling economy together with significant loss of tenured faculty forced reorganization in 2011 resulting in three programs, Clinical, Industrial-Organizational, and Behavioral and Brain Sciences. The department also affiliates with UGA’s interdisciplinary, Neuroscience Ph.D. program.

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