

FACULTY WHO WILL BE ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS TO BEGIN THE UNC CHARLOTTE HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY Ph.D. PROGRAM IN FALL 2026

Dr. Jeanette Bennett

Please see her website for more information. <https://pages.charlotte.edu/swbrl/>

Dr. George Demakis

I am a licensed psychologist and board-certified clinical neuropsychologist with several areas of research interest: (1.) civil competency and guardianship issues, (2.) application of clinical psychology and clinical neuropsychology to legal issues and questions, (3.) traumatic brain injury and repeat concussion. I maintain an active clinical practice and use that to generate research ideas, collect data, and/or inform research.

Dr. Drew Gadaire

As a community health psychologist, I conduct research and evaluation to understand and improve the systems affecting children and families. Our lab is currently studying how early childhood education systems support linguistically and culturally diverse children and families with a focus on dual language education, family engagement, workforce development, and implementation infrastructure. We also conduct applied research and evaluation with a local bilingual preschool (Spanish-English) to understand and inform their programs supporting children, families, and the broader Latinx community. Our work frequently overlaps with efforts to build community, connect families to resources, and promote economic mobility.

Dr. V Gil-Rivas

Dr. Gil-Rivas is looking for students who will contribute to research focused on the intersection between chronic illness and disordered eating behaviors. As a secondary interest, she would consider someone who is interested in examining the contributions of the social context to physical and mental health among minoritized populations. Applicants can visit the HEALTH Lab website for more details about the lab's current projects: <https://healthlabclt.wixsite.com/healthlab>

Dr. Ryan Kilmer

A child clinical-community psychologist, Dr. Kilmer's work focuses on (1) understanding factors influencing the development of children at-risk for emotional, behavioral, and/or academic difficulties, particularly risk and resilience and youngsters' adjustment to trauma; and (2) using evaluation to refine programs, improve service delivery, support organizational development, and guide system change and local policy. Across his applied research and evaluation efforts, he has sought to improve the services and supports provided to children and families, many of whom have traditionally been marginalized or underserved. Kilmer has developed measures of posttraumatic growth (PTG) in children and youth and has examined PTG and adaptation in those who have experienced mass trauma events (e.g., natural disasters) and diverse adversities (e.g., grief loss) with domestic and international collaborators. His most recent effort has focused on children and families served via grief centers. He is only available as a co-advisor or co-mentor for this admissions cycle. More information is available [here](#).

Dr. Sara Levens

I am an affective health psychologist in the Behavioral Science concentration. My research broadly explores the role of emotion in health. My lab uses an integrative interdisciplinary approach that brings together the fields of affective science, behavioral science, neuroscience, behavioral medicine, and health psychology, and methodologies such as mindfulness, guided imagery, participatory intervention development, and qualitative and quantitative research techniques. We explore avenues of physical activity engagement and emotion regulation habits and ability in the context of health across the lifespan, with current efforts aimed at promoting physical activity in midlife for healthy aging and in women undergoing menopausal transition. Our overarching goal is to develop effective, tailorable, scalable, and accessible interventions that leverage emotion processing, emotion regulation, and episodic future thinking to increase physical activity engagement by increasing physical activity enjoyment. I am recruiting students with interest in emotion and health, specifically health behavior promotion, intervention development, and facilitating physical activity engagement.

Dr. Erika Montanaro

I am a social health psychologist and I use health behavior theory to create effective behavior change programs for risk behaviors (e.g., risky sex, problematic alcohol use). I currently utilize the situational model of bystander intervention as the guiding theoretical framework to develop reduction programs for problematic alcohol use and gun violence. I am also interested in holistically understanding sexuality development and changes within communities. Students who are interested in bystander intervention, alcohol use prevention programs, gun violence prevention programs, and/or sexual health are particularly encouraged to apply.

Dr. Amy Peterman

Dr. Peterman is a clinical health psychologist whose research interests center on developing a deeper understanding of the role played by psychological and behavioral factors in the socioeconomic gradient of health. She welcomes applications from students who are interested in the intersection of socioeconomic status and other identities that are marginalized in the US, as well as students interested in the role of integrated primary care in supporting health and well-being with people with limited resources.

Dr. Scott Ravyts

The Pain and Transdiagnostic Health (PATH) lab investigates how biopsychosocial factors shape pain and daily functioning, with particular attention to how comorbid conditions (e.g., insomnia, PTSD) and social context influence individuals' ability to cope with pain. Our research program includes: (1) using quantitative sensory testing (QST) to examine how psychosocial factors affect pain and daily functioning in adults with and without chronic pain, (2) conducting systematic reviews and meta-analyses on the impact of transdiagnostic mental health factors on chronic pain outcomes, and (3) carrying out longitudinal online studies to identify psychosocial predictors of pain and well-being in adults living with chronic pain.

Dr. Victoria Scott

In the Collective Wellness lab, we work with community stakeholders to understand the interplay of individual and contextual factors that impact health outcomes in order to promote health equity. As community researchers, the real-world setting is our "laboratory". We work to improve individual and community wellness through working closely with community members. Guided largely by the values and principles of community psychology, the central mission of our work is social improvement - of, by, and for the community. Please visit <https://www.collectivewellnesslab.com/> to learn more about us and our work.