

Information for applicants interviewing with David Valentiner for Fall 2025 admission

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The information in these pages is intended for applicants who are interviewing for the PhD program in Clinical Psychology at NIU as they consider graduate training with me.

Current graduate students

- ✓ Sebastian Szollos (7th year) has defended his dissertation on shame and post-event processing and is interviewing for his pre-doctoral internship.
- ✓ Cassie Mick (6th year) is collecting for her dissertation, examining parenting practices that contribute to social anxiety and OCD in children and adolescent. She is also interviewing for her predoctoral internship.
- ✓ Allison Graham (4th year) is completing the defense of her Masters Thesis, examining the role of self-concept clarity in social anxiety.
- ✓ Dominoe Jones (3rd year) is collecting data for her Masters Thesis, examining the role of a hippocampus-dependent process (spatial navigation) in post-traumatic stress symptoms.
- ✓ Alexis Jankowski (1st year) is preparing to propose her Masters Thesis related to social anxiety, loneliness, and acknowledgment of unmet interpersonal needs.

Former doctoral students

All 19 lab alumni are licensed or on track to be licensed as clinical psychologists. They have between 0 and 135+ authorships on professional peer-reviewed journal articles (average ~20). About 50% work in the VA system, about 25% in non-VA clinical practice, and 25% in academic/research positions.

- ✓ Brett Deacon (2002) is an Associate Professor of Psychology and Convener of the Clinical Psychology Program at the *University of Melbourne*. He is also the Founder and Director of the Illawara Anxiety Clinic in Wollongong, Australia.
- ✓ Julie Hook (2002) is a Research Associate Professor at Northwestern University. She was previously a Research Psychologist (neuropsychology specialist) for Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., and an Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Rush Presbyterian Medical School.
- ✓ Je t'aime Hood (2002) is a staff psychologist at the VA South Oregon Rehab Center and Clinics in White City, OR.
- ✓ Eric Snitchler (2004) is in private practice in Norfolk, NE.
- ✓ Kerry Renner (2007) is a staff psychologist at the Cleveland VA Medical Center in Cleveland, OH, where she serves as a PTSD Clinical Team member and as the Local Evidence-Based Psychotherapy Coordinator.
- ✓ Hyun-Soo Kim (2009) is a Professor of Psychology and Director of the Child Psychotherapy Program in the School of Education at Hanyang University, Seoul, Korea.
- ✓ Sarah Smith (2010) is a staff psychologist in the OEF/OIF/OND Clinic at the Pittsburg VA. Where she works in the Post-Deployment Clinic and is a national consultant for the National Center for PTSD Prolonged Exposure Therapy Initiative.

- ✓ Katherine Stephenson (2012) recently completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the Ann Arbor VA. She has a private practice (Oakheart) in Aurora, IL, and sometimes teaches in the NIU doctoral program in clinical psychology as an adjunct faculty member.
- ✓ Tom Fergus (2012) is an Associate Professor and Assistant Chair in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at Baylor University, Waco, TX.
- ✓ Stephanie Gier-Lonsway (2013) is a Clinical Psychologist and Consultant at NOCD.
- ✓ Regina Hiraoka (2014) is a Clinical Assistant Professor and Associate Clinic Director in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at Baylor University, Waco, TX.
- ✓ Michael Gillen (2014) is a staff psychologist at the Lovell FHCC VA in North Chicago, IL.
- ✓ Ross Knoll (2015) is a staff psychologist at the Detroit VA.
- ✓ Ericka Rutledge (2016) is a staff psychologist at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital in St. Louis, MO.
- ✓ Kathleen McCraw (2017) is on the faculty in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health in Madison, WI.
- ✓ Ben Darnell (2021) is currently working in a post-doctoral position working with Brett Litz at the Boston VA/Boston University.
- ✓ Anna Martinez-Snyder (2022) is a practicing psychologist in Naperville, IL, in pursuit of professional licensure.
- ✓ Jessica Winder Ellem (2023) is a staff psychologist in the trauma services program at the Minneapolis VA.

Some Personal Information:

I am 62 years old, biracial (Korean/European), cis male, heterosexual, Christian, liberal, antiracist, a husband, a father, a son, a brother, an uncle, a novice gardener, and a former beekeeper, among other things. I was born in and spent my first 14 years around the New York City area, including grade school in East Harlem and Junior High School in Stony Brook. I spent my High School, young adult, and college years in the Minneapolis area. I have lived in Austin, TX; Philadelphia, PA; and Nashville, TN. I moved to DeKalb in 1996 to work at NIU. I met my wife, Nina Mounts, when she joined the NU faculty in 1999. We have four children, ages 20 to 30. I anticipate retiring in four to seven years and being available to mentor student research for at least five years.

Some Educational and Professional Information:

I earned my BS (1989) from UMN-Twin Cities, and my MA (1992) and PhD (1994) from UT-Austin. I completed a pre-doctoral internship at the Medical College of Pennsylvania (Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute) and an NIMH post-doctoral fellowship in Developmental Psychopathology at Vanderbilt University. I am licensed as a clinical psychologist in Illinois and am board certified in clinical psychology. My primary professional appointment is as a core faculty member in the PhD program in clinical psychology at NIU, a role I have had since 1996. I currently hold the rank of Full Professor. I also work about one evening per week in a local private practice.

A bit about my approach to working with, mentoring and supporting graduate students:

I expect students to take an active role in their learning and preparation for their professional goals. As a student progresses through graduate training, they adopt an increasing level of independence and

autonomy. Most beginning graduate students work on research topics of their advisor, shape the research programs they work on, and progress toward relatively more independent research.

Learning and preparation for professional goals requires active pursuit of the necessary skills through discussion, practice, and reading. Students with professional interests primarily in clinical practice need to focus on the development of their clinical competencies and credentials, but they should also be competent researchers and consumers of research and scholarship. Students with professional interests primarily in research need to focus on the development of their research competencies and credentials, but they should also be competent clinicians. Training should be tailored to fit with the student's interests, but a minimal level of training and competency is expected of all students in both research and clinical practice. Students with professional interests in teaching should seek out opportunities to teach, such as by requesting a teaching assistantship to teach Introduction to Psychology during their first or second year. I support professional development mainly by advising and stimulating reflection.

I meet with students as needed. This time is mainly used for discussion of readings, ideas, research, and directions, and to provide training in research and statistics. A typical student might meet with me once every other week during the first year; almost once a week during the second year to develop the thesis proposal; once a month during thesis data collection; almost once a week during the preparation of the thesis results and discussion sections; etc. When working on drafts, I aim to give students feedback on their writing weekly. During busy times, I may not be able to give feedback for several weeks. I sometimes give feedback more often, particularly when students are facing a deadline. Students typically revise a thesis or dissertation proposal or completed document about four times before seeking review by their thesis or dissertation committee. I am rigorous and fair. My students are well prepared to present their research to their committees, develop a strong understanding of clinical research methods, and have considerable expertise in the treatment of anxiety disorders.

Students are provided with opportunities to develop their statistical skills and are strongly encouraged to do so. Students are also expected to continue to develop their writing skills. Strong statistical and writing skill contribute to critical thinking. Students with these skills do well in graduate school and beyond. Most of the graduate students in my lab usually go to the annual convention of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT). I occasionally attend conferences of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS), Anxiety Disorders Association of American (ADAA), the Obsessive Compulsive Foundation (OCF), the Midwestern Psychological Association (MPA), the Society for Research on Child Development (SRCD), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the Association for Psychological Science (APS). Students typically present as a primary author of a poster presentation each year starting in their second year.

A bit about my approach to clinical work, training, and supervision:

I am a scientist-practitioner and rely upon evidence-based approaches whenever possible. My clinical orientation is pragmatic eclecticism, in which the selection of treatment is heavily informed by the scientific literature and adherence to the treatment model is paramount. Given that most of my clinical work involves anxiety disorders, I rely heavily upon behavioral, cognitive, and cognitive-behavioral clinical models and manuals. These models include Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, mindfulness-

based approaches, and Functional Analytic Psychotherapy. I also increasingly see a place in my clinical work for humanistic and existential considerations, typically considered within a behavioral framework. I also have some interest and background in Therapeutic Assessment using the MMPI-RF, Motivational Interviewing, and Therapeutic Alliance Rupture Repair.

When supervising, my approach is largely humanistic (supportive and non-evaluative) and psychoeducational. I especially value respect for the autonomy of others, including supervisees, students, and clients. I expect therapists-in-training to benefit from experience, information, feedback, and opportunities for reflection. Manuals, protocols, and readings are effective ways to give direction and information, which many beginning therapists find helpful. Effective supervision also gives therapists-in-training opportunities to learn and reflect. Student therapists sometimes observe or work as co-therapist with more experienced therapists, including myself.

The Anxiety Disorders Service (ADS) in the Psychological Service Center (PSC) provides assessment and treatment for individuals with anxiety disorders. Obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, and social anxiety disorder are the most common diagnoses. I supervise practicum students in PSYC 654 (Practicum in Psychotherapy) about one semester every other year. Approximately one-third of the graduate students in our program will be on my supervision team for at least one semester during their two years in the PSC. Virtually all of the graduate students in our program will treat several clients with an anxiety disorder in the PSC as part of their training. In addition, graduate students working on research related to anxiety disorders typically see additional anxiety cases.

Graduate students with strong interests in anxiety disorders have the opportunity to get additional practicum training in placements with NIU alum, most of which work with the same evidence-based treatment models that we rely upon in the PSC. I work one evening a week at a local clinic, the LivingRite Center for Behavioral Health, seeing primarily clients with obsessive-compulsive and anxiety disorders. I also supervise one advanced graduate student on externship at the DeKalb County Court Services Probation Office. That extern conducts psychological evaluations on probationers and co-leads anger management group therapy sessions. I am currently working to develop other opportunities with juvenile probationers using approaches that incorporate Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Writing Exposure Therapy (WET), and to develop other opportunities for advanced training working with OCD and anxiety-related conditions.

Antiracism:

We are all embedded within complex personal, social, institutional, and cultural systems that include racist, sexist, homophobic, and other social stratification phenomena. These systems are not generally well understood and efforts to address social injustice sometimes inadvertently contribute to the problems. Our best chance to reduce injustice is likely to include humility about our own positions within these complex systems, earnest compassion and curiosity about others' experiences and perspectives, an openness and commitment to learn, and courage to advocate for those who have the least voice. Consistent with my humanistic and psychoeducational approach to teaching, I provide thoughtful and, when possible, evidence-based materials to stimulate development. I respect trainees' autonomy and allow them to regulate their own progress to develop the competencies prescribed by the clinical psychology profession.

My growing understanding of racism and related problems lays the foundation for my involvement in a number of community initiatives and activities. My growing understanding of the complex problems of racism, particularly institutional racism, has led me to serve in a variety of roles, including as the chair of the Diversity and Social Justice Committee of the Department of Psychology, and several faculty governance committees in the larger NIU community. I recently served as the Chair of the Social Justice Committee of the Faculty Senate, am a Founder and Board Member of the Anti-Racism Collective at NIU, serve on the Faculty Senate's Personnel Committee, and am part of an ad hoc workgroup addressing institutional racism at NIU. My growing understanding of the challenges associated with promoting social justice also effects my clinical, research, and teaching, including my approach to teaching the graduate courses that I am currently assigned to teach (i.e., cognitive-behavioral therapy, and practicum supervision). My growing understanding of the systemic nature of racism and related social justice issues has also affected my understanding of mental health, the clinical psychology profession, and my research, particularly research related to trauma, belief change, social identity, self-concept, and interpersonal processes.

Research Interests:

For me to dedicate the time and resources to a research project, the topic must be sufficiently interesting to me. As my own research programs have developed, I have increasingly asked graduate students working with me to complete their thesis and dissertation projects on topics that are closely related to existing projects. That being said, I am responsive to my doctoral students and I work with them to do research related to their interests. There is a surprising diversity of research topics in the Valentiner lab, including projects related to social anxiety, trauma, obsessive-compulsive disorder, health anxiety, disgust, test anxiety, the transition to college, and emotion regulation (i.e., coping with stress). The current and prior research that I am most likely to pursue is described below.

Social Anxiety - The projects I am currently most excited about involve the application of mindset theory to psychopathology, particularly social anxiety. I expect this field to lead to important innovations in the next decade in the prevention and treatment of anxiety conditions. I believe that my lab will make important contributions to these efforts, particularly its use during the transition to college. Four of the five students working in my lab at this time are working on theses or dissertations related to social anxiety. Other recent and current projects in the lab examine other issues related to social anxiety, including focus of attention; safety behaviors; post-event processing and rumination; and self-verification processes. Some of the prior research related to self-verification theory is described in an accompanying video.

Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms - I also have a long-standing interest in translational research. Recent developments in the neuroscience of anxiety are quite striking and have important implications for clinical work with humans. I expect translational research to continue to affect how we conduct therapy for anxiety conditions, especially PTSD. The publications from my lab that are most related to these interests are: Despotes et al., 2016; Holzman et al., 2017; Laman-Maharg et al., 2024; and Darnell & Valentiner, 2020.

My students and I participate in a collaboration that examines the role of wellbeing mindset on burnout and mental health in nurses and other health professionals. This work has not been published but is described in one of the accompanying videos. My lab has also piloted an intervention to reduce experiential avoidance in college freshmen, following up on a study of experiential avoidance and academic functioning (Laman-Maharg et al., 2024). Future projects will also examine the role of trauma in other disorders, especially OCD. My lab has designed a trauma rescripting intervention targeting trauma-related cognitions to reduce OCD symptoms, following up on Despotes et al., (2021) and as described in an accompanying video.

Select Publications (*names of student authors are italicized*)

Valentiner, D.P., & Jones, D. (in press). Anxiety Disorders. Chapter 4 in Siegel, D. I. (Ed.), *Diagnostic Interviewing*, sixth edition. Springer.

Laman-Maharg, B., Valentiner, D. P., Szöllös, S., & Mounts, N. S. (2024). Experiential Avoidance, Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms, and Academic Impairment. *Psychological Reports*.

Darnell, B. C., Lee, S. R., Despotes, A. M., & Valentiner, D. P. (2024). Metacognition as a Mediator for Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms Following Childhood Stressful Life Events: An Examination of the Construct Validity of the Metacognitions Questionnaire-PTSD. *Psychological Reports*.

Martinez-Snyder, A. M., Valentiner, D. P., & Mick, C. (2023). Measures of anxiety disorder symptoms in adolescents. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 1-13.

Szöllös, S., Valentiner, D. P., Kingzette, A., Ellem, B., & Mounts, N. S. (2023). Reassurance seeking test behavior and exam performance. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 202, 111953.

Despotes, A. M., Darnell, B. C., Lee, S. R., & Valentiner, D. P. (2021). Past adversity and obsessive-compulsive symptoms: The mediating roles of posttraumatic cognitions and posttraumatic stress symptoms. *Journal of Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders*, 28, 100613.

Mounts, N.S., & Valentiner, D.P. (2021). Do ask, do tell? Observations of mothers' solicitation and adolescents' disclosure. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 35(2), 160.

Darnell, B.C., & Valentiner, D.P. (2020). Performance on the Multi-Source Interference Task Moderates the Relationship between Trauma Exposure and Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms. *Clinical Psychological Science* 8 (2), 351-358.

Holzman, J.B., Valentiner, D.P., Hannan, S.M., Wallace, D. G., & Orcutt, H. K. (2017). High dose alcohol consumption predicts less reduction in post-traumatic stress symptoms after a campus mass shooting. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping*, 30(6), 609-618.

Valentiner, D.P., Skowronski, J.J., Mounts, N.S., & Holzman, J.B. (2017). Social anxiety and relationship formation during the college transition: Self-verification, self-image and victimization. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 31, 136-148.

Despotes, A.M., Valentiner, D.P., & London, M. (2016). *Resiliency and posttraumatic growth*. Chapter 18 in Wilson, L. (ed.), *Wiley Handbook of the Psychology of Mass Shootings*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, Inc.