We are so delighted to share the Fall Newsletter with all of you! We hope that you will get to know some great HDFS students, faculty, and graduates. We also hope that the newsletter will help you catch up with the people you already know, as you read about the departmental and personal milestones your colleagues have achieved since the spring. And there’s a fun surprise at the end of the newsletter! We really hope you enjoy it!

~Annie Le and Rose Wesche, editors

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The first-years pose for a picture at the Fall Welcome Picnic
Meet First-Year Students!

**Roisin White**

**Hometown**  Tipperary, Ireland

**Adviser**  Dr. Chuck Geier

**Education**

- B.A. Psychology  
  Trinity College Dublin

**Hobby**  Reading, baking, watching sports

**Sara Freed**

**Hometown**  Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania

**Adviser**  Dr. Lesley Ross

**Education**

- B.S. HDFS  
  Penn State University

**Hobby**  Sports, reading, video games

**Fun Fact**  Met the actor who plays Chewbacca in the Star Wars movies!

**Penina Backer**

**Hometown**  Baltimore, Maryland

**Adviser**  Dr. Cindy Stifter

**Education**

- B.A. Psychology  
  University of Maryland, Baltimore County

**Hobby**  Arts 'n crafts, music, hiking

**Fun Fact**  I am the oldest of 7 children and love being around kids. I have taught arts 'n crafts to kids in summer camp and in an inner-city mental health clinic.
Meet First-Year Students!

**Meng Chen**

**Hometown**: Dalian, China  
**Adviser**: Dr. Sy-Miin Chow  
**Education**: B.A. Psychology & Mathematics  
Smith College, MA  
**Hobby**: Watching animations (Disney, Japanese anime, etc)  
**Fun Fact**: I listen to show tunes if I want to be productive.

**Hye Won Chai**

**Hometown**: Seoul, South Korea  
**Adviser**: Dr. David Eggebeen  
**Education**: B.A. Political Science,  
B.S. & M.A. in Child and Family Studies  
Yonsei University  
**Hobby**: Mindless walking, listening to music, traveling  
**Fun Fact**: My high school was a boarding school.

**Hio Wa (Grace) Mak**

**Hometown**: Macau  
**Adviser**: Dr. Greg Fosco  
**Education**: B.SocSc. Psychology  
M.SocSc. Clinical Psychology  
University of Macau  
**Hobby**: Traveling, playing table tennis, chatting with friends  
**Fun Fact**: I speak Cantonese, Mandarin and English
### Meet First-Year Students!

#### Summer Braun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hometown</th>
<th>Jupiter, FL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>Dr. Scott Gest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>B.A. Psychology from Rollins College Sexuality, Women and Gender Studies, and Spanish minors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobby</td>
<td>Crafting, biking, scrapbooking, baking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun Fact</td>
<td>In college, I studied abroad in Morocco and Spain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Lizbeth (Libby) Benson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hometown</th>
<th>Wausau, WI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>Dr. Nilam Ram &amp; Dr. Dave Almeida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>B.A. University of Wisconsin-Madison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobby</td>
<td>Skiing, ultimate Frisbee, cooking, baking, writing cards to people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music with electric string instruments (Lindsey Stirling, Section Quartet, 2 Cellos) is my favorite type to listen to these days.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Sabrina Voltaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hometown</th>
<th>Cap Haïtien, Haiti</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>Dr. Doug Teti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>B.S. Psychology, MA Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobby</td>
<td>Reading, cooking, baking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun Fact</td>
<td>Can't resist an Internet quiz.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meet First-Year Students!

Jessica Braymiller

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Hometown</strong></th>
<th>Buffalo, NY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adviser</strong></td>
<td>Dr. Chuck Geier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>B.A. in Psychology, Minors in Biology and Neuroscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td>Mercyhurst University, Erie, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hobby</strong></td>
<td>Binge watching Netflix (particularly Grey's Anatomy, House, M.D., and Scrubs... I secretly wish I was an M.D.). I also enjoy baking and cooking!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fun Fact</strong></td>
<td>I used to figure skate competitively in high school!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words of advice for first-years

Ask for help if you get stuck! Better to get things cleared up early than find out later you have to re-learn something!

~Kristine Bova

Those of you who need a fuzzy friend can hang out with my dog, if you don’t mind his bad breath.

~Rose Wesche

Just because you are lonely and stressed out and need a fuzzy friend does not mean you are ready for the responsibility of a cat.

~David Lydon

Appreciate the time you spend with your cohort.

~Lu Ou

You are one another’s most valuable resource- both in terms of learning and enjoying grad school :)

~Lauren Philbrook

Hang in there.

~Chelom Leavitt

Those of you who need a fuzzy friend can hang out with my dog, if you don’t mind his bad breath.

~Rose Wesche

Learn to manage your time...including taking time to relax.

~Jon Reader

Those of you who need a fuzzy friend can hang out with my dog, if you don’t mind his bad breath.

~Rose Wesche

Make sure to take breaks and know you’re more than just a walking talking version of your CV. :-)

~Briana Sprague

Do something fun everyday.

~Emily Waterman

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~Briana Sprague

Do your homework.

~Aaron Miller

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~David Lydon

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~Briana Sprague

Do your homework.

~Aaron Miller
More advice for first-years

Stay open to new areas of research and methods, even if you think you already know what you want to do. It's important to be passionate about your work - it makes it easier to dedicate the time necessary for success.

~Ali Doub

We all need to relax a little bit! Don't try soooo hard. Find the sweet spot of balance between making effort and enjoying life.

~Kami Dvorakova

Some people may look like they have it more together, but really everyone is going through the same thing. Talk to each other, ask for help from your cohort and more advanced cohorts, and make sure that you have a study group.

~Jacqueline Miller

Take breaks, take deep breaths, you're doing great!

~Eva Lefkowitz

No matter how stressful or overwhelming things get during your first year, just remember that you will survive. Probably. (Actually it's more like 50/50, but I'm an optimistic kind of guy.)

~Brian Calhoun

Make it a priority to find a sustainable balance between work and personal life. It's really important and it doesn't get any easier as you get further along.

~Scott Gest

Support your personal wellbeing with activities that are not school related!

~Deirdre Katz

Get to know people in upper cohorts - they can be a great source of advice about classes, milestones, etc. Always remember that the other grad students are here for you! Social scientists can be really great at providing social support. :)

~Mairin Augustine

Just know that it gets better.

~Megan Maas
The first-years enjoy their fall festival in 501 HDFS-ers and friends at the Wasson Farm Fall Fest corn maze!

At the lion shrine

Before and after the Color Run

The first-years’ autumn-themed cohort party

Dr. Lesley Ross’s fall lab trip to the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire
What are your areas of research?

ZO: I’m generally interested in emotional and cognitive processes within the individual, as well as individual differences in terms of process variables. Most of my work involves a complex approach to some substantive problem, and I take advantage of Bayesian methods to do model fitting. I’m broadly interested in how these methods can help researchers to develop and apply state-of-the-art statistical approaches to particular areas of substantive research (in my case emotion and cognition) that would be difficult or impossible to study without novel methods of analysis. I like translational research practices, and try to develop and distribute user-friendly software packages which facilitate carrying out data analysis and statistical inference with relatively complex models.

TB: Overall, I’m interested in applying techniques from computing to the study of human interaction. At a methodological level, that means the development of tools and methods for analyzing dense data about highly multivariate, dynamic, and non-stationary systems. At the technological level, it means programs and devices for computer vision and noninvasive instrumentation that can help us to measure some of these systems. At the substantive level, I use those computerized tracking tools and dynamic models to analyze, understand, and manipulate the dynamics of emotional expression in conversation.

What is your educational background (BA, PhD)?

ZO: I have a master’s degree in psychology that I completed at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. I earned my PhD in quantitative psychology at the University of Leuven, Belgium. After my PhD and before coming to Penn State I was a postdoc at the Department of Cognitive Sciences at the University of California, Irvine.

TB: I actually got two Bachelors’ degrees as an undergraduate—a BA in psychology and a BS is computer science. Then I went away and taught at a high school for a few years. When I came back to academia, I did my masters’ at the University of Notre Dame in computer science, working on artificial intelligence systems to make robots better at conversation-like interactions. In the process, I realized that I was much more interested in learning how humans interact in conversation than in making artificial systems to approximate it. So I moved to the University of Virginia, and got my PhD in Psychology. After that I went to Berlin, and took a postdoc in the Center for Lifespan Psychology at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development. And now I’m here.
New HDFS Faculty!

What classes are you teaching/ would you like to teach?

ZO: I’m teaching Bayesian methods for studying human development in the spring semester. My goal is to demonstrate how intuitive and coherent Bayesian statistics is, and that it is a workable alternative to the classical methods that are more commonly taught. I have several other methods topics that I would like to turn into a course later on, like survey design and item response theory, statistical software development, and research methods for effective science.

TB: I’m not teaching right now, but I’ll be teaching Data Mining for Human Development in the Spring. I’d like to teach a few classes about more advanced methodology and machine learning techniques, and how they can be applied to Human Development research.

What are you most excited about this semester?

ZO: I’m really excited about starting a new, at least three-year long project this fall. We will study how we can think of psychological well-being as a multifaceted construct that changes over time. The project will start with devising a measurement instrument that can be used in daily studies for measuring several elements of well-being simultaneously. As part of this work I will also be studying cognitive evaluation of “felt love,” and how that relates to other personality traits. Another major component of the project is to collect data of self-reported well-being through experience sampling, and analyze multivariate dynamics in well-being with process models. I’m also looking forward to getting to know graduate students who might be interested in these topics and maybe collaborate in my lab.

TB: I’m really just getting my feet on the ground this semester, so I’m kind of excited about everything. I’m starting to work on getting a lab put together and I’m building up some collaborative projects, so I’m excited to really spend some time digging in on new research. I’m also looking forward to teaching real classes again.

Do you have any hidden talents?

ZO: I hope so!

TB: I used to drive a school bus. Does that count as a talent?
New Academic Year Resolutions

Complete my master's and prep for candidacy!
~Kristine Bova

To set a writing goal every weekday.
~Emily Waterman

I'm going to publish something, finally!
~Aaron Miller

To give a lecture in one of my TA classes.
~Sara Freed

Get a job and defend my dissertation!
~Jacqueline Miller

There's some thing called a thesis that people supposedly do. I guess I should see what that's all about.
~Brian Calhoun

Do my dissertation proposal.
~Brandon McDaniel

I want to figure out who the fruit bandits are.
~David Lydon

Read more and write more.
~Jenny Padilla

Get my Master's.
~Jon Reader

To make forward progress on my dissertation every week, and to stay sane while trying to plan a wedding and write a dissertation at the same time (wish me luck!).
~Cindy Willner

Live a healthy life.
~Lu Ou

Submit a stellar NSF fellowship proposal =)
~Libby Benson

To set a writing goal every weekday.
~Chelom Leavitt

Go through the 2nd year with minimal stress:)
~Kami Dvorakova

Finish my Master's thesis and do candidacy; Find another internship for next summer!
~Ali Doub

Make it through comps!
~Deirdre Katz

Survive.
~Sabrina Voltaire

Actively engage in research projects and at the same time, enjoy my first year!
~Hio Wa (Grace) Mak

Survive my first year of graduate school!
~Summer Braun

For the Geier Lab to win the Chandlee Halloween lab door-decorating competition.
~David Lydon

Be ABD by the end of fall semester!
~Mairin Augustine
Annie and Rose had the opportunity to talk with Suzanne Le Menestrel, an HDFS alum who has had success in a non-academic career path. We asked her about her graduate and post-graduate experiences.

Where do you work now?

I work for the 4-H National Headquarters which is part of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture. 4-H serves 6 million children and youth ages 5-19. I am the national program leader for youth development research.

What are your responsibilities?

My position was newly created ten years ago when I got the job. I build capacity for people who work with 4-H programs to do high quality program evaluation, including longitudinal research. I also work with the development of a national 4-H common outcome measures system and a national 4-H logic model, which means getting very diverse programs to agree on what to measure as outcomes. One goal is merging research and practice to make sure programs are research/evidence based. As part of that, I worked to develop the Journal of Youth Development: Bridging Research and Practice. Another part of my job is bridging the work of the Cooperative Extension system with research and youth development programming that is occurring within the federal government as well as the private sector. Most recently, I worked with people from 16 other federal agencies to develop a federal research agenda for positive youth development.

What was your path to your current position?

As a graduate student, I worked with Anne Petersen (who is now at the University of Michigan) and Bonnie Barber (who is now at Murdoch University, Australia). I helped design an adolescent depression prevention program, and my dissertation was an evaluation of the program. After five years at Penn State, I worked for two nonprofits—Child Trends and the Academy for Educational Development (now called FHI360)—before beginning my current position at the Department of Agriculture, which is where I’ve been for ten years.

Did you know coming into graduate school that you wanted to work in a non-tenure track job?

Yes, I always knew I wanted a job outside of academia.

How did your graduate experiences prepare you for a job in a non-university setting?

I took classes in psychology and program evaluation classes. I also had the opportunity to help design and evaluate a program. I TA’d for Tony D’Augelli’s helping relationships class, which was targeted toward people who were going into the human services field. I also found outside opportunities. For example, I worked in a consulting capacity for a nonprofit in the summer.
What advice would you give to students who are interested in a career similar to yours?

I wish I had gotten out of the ivory tower. I would recommend that students interested in a nonacademic job seek out an internship in the summer, get off campus and work for a nonprofit or the federal government. Paid internships and internships for university credit exist. There are lots of opportunities in the DC area. Students can also seek out opportunities for program evaluation. For example, they can partner with area nonprofits, who don’t typically have a lot of money but love working with grad students. For-profit companies like Mathematica Policy Research and Westat (based in the DC area) may also have opportunities.

Cooperative Extension may be the best kept secret in academia. Many faculty appointments are split between research and extension, which includes the outreach of research and applied programming. You get to be at a university but do applied work, which is a nice opportunity. The College of Agriculture at Penn State houses Cooperative Extension and the 4-H youth development program, which HDFS students could possibly be involved in.

Someone coming out of HDFS would be called a “developmentalist” by many research companies. Students should get experience working with large public datasets. They might want to take classes in sociology and demography. I would recommend broadening the methods you take outside of the department, because you will likely need big data skills.

Suzanne offered her contact information for students who are interested in hearing more about 4-H or nonacademic careers:

slemenestrel@nifa.usda.gov
Clodagh is a researcher-in-training!

More photos!

Can you spot Mairin in the pumpkin patch?

Pumpkins aglow after pumpkin carving.

Tailgating

Lining at the top of the Willis Tower in Chicago (or Sears Tower, if you grew up in Chicago before they changed the name).

Rachel and Libby dressed as "paranormal distributions" at the HDFS Halloween party.

As always, Jon is the life of the party.
Summer Fun!

Here’s what HDFS-ers were up to this summer:

Went to the beach with my family for a week and my internship with the EPISCenter!
~Kristine Bova
I ran an intervention pilot!
~Emily Waterman

Went to visit family in Ireland
~Deirdre Katz
I taught Brian how to geocache, learned how to speak Spanish, and ate 6 bags of puff-n-corn ... all at the same time!
~David Lydon
Sleep between day-travels and night-work.
~Lu Ou

Camping every other week with 75 middle schoolers
~Sabrina Voltaire
Took my family to Disney World
~Brandon McDaniel

Went to Germany for vacation...and a conference.
~Jon Reader
Spent time with my 2-year old daughter.
~Aaron Miller

Road-tripped around Ireland, tried to see as much as I could before I left!
~Roisin White
I spent time camping in England with family.
~Summer Braun

Taking my dogs swimming.
~Sara Freed
I went to Firefly Music Festival in Dover, DE and finally saw one of my favorite bands live.
~Mairin Augustine

Went to visit family in Ireland
~Megan Maas

Visit my family, go to Ricketts Glen State Park, & hike.
~Jenny Padilla

I spent time hiking with my husband and daughter.
~Jacqueline Miller

Spend a week trekking over the Siberian tundra with my good friends Nal and Paka
~Brian Calhoun

I leisure read to my heart’s content and went to NYC with Dave and visited family for two weeks.
~Briana Sprague

Spent time hiking with my husband and daughter.
~Megan Maas

In July, Dan and I went on a trip to Niagara Falls - that was pretty epic. Finished up some short stories - one of which will be published soon.
~David Lydon

I visited Okinawa with friends for a week over the summer and we went snorkeling and scuba diving. The underwater world is amazing and feeding fish in close distance is such a unique experience.
~Hio Wa (Grace) Mak

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~Mairin Augustine

Spend time hiking with my husband and daughter.
~Ali Doub

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~Ali Doub
Exciting Life Events

I'm now post candidacy and my daughter turned 2!
~Megan Maas

We are officially semi-empty-nesters now with both kids here at Penn State (senior daughter & freshman son)
~Scott Gest

It's incredible, we're actually running an intervention! And all of that thanks to the kindness and support of Mark Greenberg. Thank you Mark for everything!
~Kami Dvorakova

My husband and I welcomed a baby girl back in April, but life was too hectic to respond to the survey for the last newsletter. Her name is Genevieve Marie Miller.
~Jacqueline Miller

I graduated with my Master's degree.
~Emily Waterman

Submitted a F-31 grant proposal to NIH, also started recruitment on my daily diary research on coparenting relationships; my daughter started kindergarten!!!
~Brandon McDaniel

I adopted a dog!
~Rose Wesche

I

Submitted a F-31 grant proposal to NIH, also started recruitment on my daily diary research on coparenting relationships; my daughter started kindergarten!!!
~Brandon McDaniel
HDFS GRAD STUDENT BINGO!

How to play:

Mark off every square as it happens to you. The center square is free. If you’re the first to mark five squares in a row (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal), you win!*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Become furious when you read a press article that misinterprets research findings</td>
<td>Mispronounce the name of an article’s author (Cairns? Carnes?)</td>
<td>Wonder why you even bother holding office hours that nobody shows up for</td>
<td>Feel surprised when a student finally comes to your office hours</td>
<td>Feel proud when a student’s grade improves after they come to your office hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-do all of your analyses when you realize you coded one variable incorrectly</td>
<td>Leave your poster on the plane going to a conference</td>
<td>Feel inspired by a meeting with your advisor</td>
<td>Stay in your office working past bedtime</td>
<td>Daydream about finding a job in your ideal geographic region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel thankful that you’re not doing the 9 to 5 grind</td>
<td>Make questionable dietary choices. Eating a whole box of Oreos in one sitting is okay if you only do it once, right?</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td>Think of a great Follies skit over the summer, then forget it before Follies planning starts</td>
<td>Start to adopt the principles of mindfulness, seemingly by osmosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realize you have started to enjoy the taste of coffee</td>
<td>Analyze your friends’ babies to determine when they reach every developmental milestone</td>
<td>Feel thankful for the absolutely amazing training you’re getting at Penn State</td>
<td>Attend an event solely for the free food</td>
<td>Get lost trying to get into HHD East during construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find a typo in your conference PowerPoint while you’re presenting</td>
<td>Get starstruck when you meet your research idol</td>
<td>Undergrad in the class you TA addresses you as “Professor” in an email</td>
<td>Finally achieve work-life balance. Just kidding, that was summer vacation.</td>
<td>Wonder why people in our department are so nice. Do they secretly insult kittens in their free time? No, of course not. Grad students don’t have free time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*We don’t actually have any prizes because we don’t want your performance to be contingent on the presence of a reward. Do it because you’re intrinsically motivated!