Psychology of Active, Healthy Living Group

PAHL
School of Human Sciences
University of Western Australia

2018 Overview
Who are we?

The UWA Psychology of Active, Healthy Living (PAHL) Group was formed in 2013 by Dr Ben Jackson and Dr James Dimmock. Ben and James now act as co-Directors of the PAHL group, working with collaborators from all over the world and coordinating over a dozen graduate students based at UWA.

What do we do?

The guiding principle of the PAHL group is to develop rigorous, innovative, and fundable projects that make a difference to people’s lives.

The three main objectives of the group are to:

A. Conduct basic (e.g., experimental) work that advances our understanding of health and physical activity
B. Develop and implement sustainable and effective health promotion interventions
C. Translate our research by ensuring the group’s work reaches and involves the community

Our current research projects include experimental and intervention-based work directed toward psychological resilience, self-regulation, confidence, motivation, social support, and interpersonal communication, and we apply this work to the study of health issues including weight management, nutrition, physical activity, and mental health. We focus on people right across the lifespan, from young children through to seniors, and conduct our work within diverse education, sport/exercise, workplace, family, and healthcare settings.

In the last 3 years alone, the PAHL group has been responsible for over 40 research articles and book chapters, a popular book, a number of funded research projects, and several successful community programs.
Given PAHL’s focus on improving people’s physical and mental health, the group is committed to community engagement through developing, and working with, successful WA health promotion programs. Just some examples of our current community engagement activities include...

**The Mummy Buddy Program**

Psychological distress is prevalent among new mothers, and is debilitating for mother, baby, and the family.

The Mummy Buddy Program sees experienced mothers volunteer to receive communication training and act as “Buddies” to first-time mothers, with the aim of helping those new mums make a happy and healthy transition to motherhood.

As part of a 6-month feasibility trial funded by Healthway, there are currently ~70 new mums and Mummy Buddies involved in the program, and initial results are showing that the program is having strong positive effects for all involved.

**Man v Fat Soccer**

Over 70% of Australian men are overweight or obese, accounting for substantial health, economic, and social costs. Adding to this problem, we know that men are hard to reach with health and weight loss interventions.

Man v Fat Football is a UK initiative, started in 2016, that uses football (soccer) to help men lose weight and improve their health, and the success of the program in the UK has been unparalleled. In just over two years, 50 Man v Fat football leagues have opened across the UK. Over 10,000 men have been, or are, involved in the program, and have collectively lost over 40,000 kg.

Since 2016, we have been working with Man v Fat in the UK to create Man v Fat Soccer for Australia, and are positioned to open WA leagues in 2018 – these will be the first leagues anywhere in the world outside of the UK.
Growth & Resilience in Teachers Program

Teaching is a high-stress, high-churn job, and principals are seeing many burned-out junior staff leaving the profession. The GRiT program is a social support and coping initiative designed for, and with, school teachers. GRiT is currently being trialled in 3 secondary schools in Perth, and initial feedback from teachers is that it provides an effective framework to help tackle workplace stress and anxiety.

Sports Challenge Australia (SCA)

Australian children are not sufficiently physically active, and one of the most important ways to promote physical activity across the lifespan is by providing enjoyable sport and exercise experiences during early childhood (e.g., during PE in primary school). Unfortunately, the vast majority of teachers responsible for delivering primary school PE are not specialist instructors, and often don’t enjoy teaching PE. This causes real problems for children’s experiences in PE.

SCA has worked for over 30 years in WA and in that time has run programs with hundreds of primary schools. Having recently developed a partnership with SCA, the PAHL group is working to provide training to non-specialist primary school PE teachers in WA, with the goal of improving PE and physical activity experiences for thousands of young children (a substantial grant application for this work is currently under review).

WA Drug & Alcohol Youth Service (DAYS)

Sadly, the incidence of substance use disorders is increasing among young Australians, and rates of relapse during recovery are high. DAYS is a residential rehab facility in Perth, housing youth recovering from substance use disorders. In collaboration with DAYS, Mission Australia, and the UWA Thriving program, PAHL is working to provide enjoyable weekly exercise sessions at UWA for youth residing in the DAYS facility.

This exercise program is the first of its kind anywhere in Australia, and has been funded by Exercise and Sport Science Australia and the Commonwealth Bank. The exercise program also recently received an Excellence Award in the “Young People” category at the 2018 Western Australian Alcohol and Other Drug Conference.
The PAHL Group has developed an extensive international collaborative network. Illustrated below are just some of the prestigious institutions housing researchers with whom we have published in the past 4 years.

**PAHL Group Awards & Honours**

- **2019** Invited keynote address, 50th Anniversary European Congress of Sport & Exercise Psychology (BJ)
- **2018** Research Excellence Award, WA Alcohol & Other Drug Conference (BJ / JD)
- **2017** UWA Faculty of Science, Excellence in Student Support Award (JD)
- **2016** Top Paper Award, National Communication Association Conference (USA; BJ / JD)
- **2016** Students’ Choice Award for Excellence in Teaching, UWA Students’ Guild Awards (BJ)
- **2016** Early Career Distinguished Scholar Award, North American Society for the Psychology of Sport & Physical Activity (BJ)
- **2015** UWA VC’s Outstanding Early Career Investigator Award (BJ)
- **2014** Invited speaker, Exercise and Sports Science Australia Conference (JD)

**Editorial Board & Committee Positions**

- **2014-** Associate Editor, *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology* (BJ)
- **2014-** Associate Editor, *Journal of Science & Medicine in Sport* (JD)
- **’14-’16** Associate Editor, *Psychology of Sport & Exercise* (JD)
- **2010-** Editorial Board, *Frontiers in Psychology* (BJ)
- **2013-** Editorial Board, *Psychology of Sport & Exercise* (BJ)
- **2016-** Editorial Board, *Sport, Exercise, & Performance Psychology* (BJ / JD)
- **2014-** Editorial Board, *International Review of Sport & Exercise Psychology* (JD)
- **2012-** Expert Assessor, *Australian Research Council* (BJ)
Selected Recent Publications (2016 –)

Sport, Exercise, & Physical Activity

• Howle, Dimmock, Ntoumanis, Chatzisarantis, Sparks, & Jackson. (2017). The impact of agentic and communal exercise messages on individuals’ exercise class attitudes, self-efficacy beliefs, and intention to attend. *J Sport & Exercise Psychology, 39*, 397-411.
• Sparks, Dimmock, Lonsdale, & Jackson. (2016). Modeling indicators and outcomes of students’ perceived teacher relatedness support in high school physical education. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 26*, 71-82.

Nutrition


Stress, Anxiety, Resilience, & Mental Health
