FEATURED LAB: PERSONALITY STUDIES LABORATORY

The Personality Studies Lab is directed by Dr. Josh Miller at the University of Georgia. His lab focuses on the role of personality in psychological functioning with a focus on externalizing behaviors and some of the diagnostic constructs that predict them such as psychopathic and narcissistic personality disorders. The lab views personality as early emerging, relatively stable individual differences that form the bedrock and organizing features of many forms of psychopathology. Dr. Miller describes a particular interest in one specific domain – Agreeableness vs. Antagonism – as it is the core of these behaviors and disorders.

Dr. Miller reported a number of excellent collaborators throughout his career thus far, including continuing to collaborate with his graduate advisor, Dr. Don Lynam with whom he recently published a handbook on Antagonism. At UGA, Dr. Miller has collaborated with Dr. Keith Campbell trying to understand core issues in narcissism, Dr. Amos Zeichner on the personality and contextual factors that contribute to aggression, and Dr. Nate Carter on an array of assessment-related topics. Recently, Dr. Miller has been collaborating with Dr. Justin Lavner, a fellow member of UGA’s clinical psychology program, looking at personality and personality disorders in the context of marital functioning.

One of the things that Dr. Miller enjoys about academia is the opportunity to work on a wide array of studies at any one time, with graduate students who are “smart, hardworking” and share his enthusiasm for research. For instance, Chelsea Sleep—a 5th year doctoral student in the lab—and Dr. Miller have been particularly interested in testing key issues surrounding a new diagnostic model introduced in DSM-5 for personality disorders, testing core assumptions about personality disorders.

Courtland Hyatt—a 6th year student in the lab—has been tackling an array of issues related to aggression including predictors, contextual factors (e.g., misogynistic music lyrics), as well as key methodological issues that could affect the validity of findings that use these laboratory paradigms. Recently, Courtland has taken some of the lab’s interests and approaches and applied them to structural neuroimaging.

With Brandon Weiss, a 5th year student in the lab—Dr. Miller has been studying a variety of different issues including persuasiveness, examining the necessity of fearless dominance/boldness traits to conceptualizations and assessments of psychopathy, and relations between personality disorder symptoms and marital functioning. Brandon is currently finishing an interesting dissertation project in which he is examining whether a specific hallucinogenic substance—ayahuasca—results in meaningful personality change.

Dr. Miller reported feeling “lucky to have had excellent students throughout my time at UGA who have enriched my life in both professional and personal ways. Mentoring graduate students is by far the most rewarding part of this job, in my opinion!”

Dr. Miller sees his lab as a fun, high paced, and high energy environment where they take the work but not themselves too seriously. He reports trying to recruit students who he believes will fit both with this lab milieu and his own interpersonal approach. His students tend to graduate well-prepared to make meaningful contributions to clinical psychology in whatever professional context they ultimately seek out.

Reflecting on his time at UGA thus far, Dr. Miller noted that “my first 14 years at UGA have been gratifying personally and professionally and I would be thrilled if my next 14 years went as well.”
Greetings Alumni and Friends,

I hope this issue of Dawg Tracks finds you well – this is the first one we’ve published for a few years! We’re excited to send along this issue and keep you abreast of the various exciting happenings in the clinical psychology program. Since our last issue we’ve had two new tenure track hires; Drs. Isha Metzger (http://psychology.uga.edu/directory/people/isha-metzger) and Greg Strauss (https://psychology.uga.edu/directory/people/gregory-p-strauss) have joined us and we’re thrilled to have them. We also just learned that we have been approved to advertise this fall for a new clinical track (i.e., non-tenure track) hire for a faculty member to supervise child and family-based work in our UGA Psychology Clinic, as well as help serve the clinical program and department via teaching. Interested alumni are encouraged to keep an eye out for an advertisement in the near future and to reach out with questions. In a bit of more mixed news, Marilyn Steffe, who made so many important contributions to the clinical program over a 30+ year career, retired in 2017 – for much-deserved time with her family, horses, and other forms of recreation. Thankfully, Melissa Mattox moved from her longstanding job in the Psychology Clinic to take on Marilyn’s responsibilities, which she has done quite ably.

One particularly exciting bit of news is that UGA Clinical Psychology alumnus, Dr. Charles Petrie (PhD, 1990), who studied with Drs. Amos Zeichner and Henry Adams, made a very generous donation in the form of an endowment to be used to advance the research training of our doctoral students by providing funds that can be used by students towards the purchase of equipment, participant payment, workshops, or conference-related travel. We are thrilled by Dr. Petrie’s donation and the exciting opportunities it opens to further strengthen our support of graduate training. Should you be in a similar position and be interested in donating to the clinical psychology program, and any amount is helpful, please let us know and we’ll give you the (detailed) instructions that allow you to direct it specifically to the clinical program.

This year also marks the beginning of our 2019 APA re-accreditation review. We turned in our self-study in April (and thanks to many more recent alumni who filled out 1 or more surveys for this very purpose) and have a site visit scheduled for early October. We very much hope that the visitors will appreciate the strengths of our research and clinical training and will ultimately grant us a full 10-year re-accreditation.

As continued evidence of the strength of our program and graduates, all of our outgoing graduate students matched at excellent internship locations (see page 4 for details), our students continue to compete and be placed at incredible externship opportunities in Atlanta, and our graduates have secured outstanding postdoctoral fellowships and permanent positions. In fact, in compiling data for the APA site visit, we found that most of our students are now leaving the program for internship with, on average, 10 publications! Our faculty also continue to excel in a variety of domains – for instance, Greg Strauss received over $3.5 million dollars in external funding for his work on psychosis and became an Associate Editor of Schizophrenia Bulletin, Anne Shaffer was named a Senior Teaching Fellow and won an Excellence in Diversity Leadership award, Larry Sweet received multiple externally funded grants to study issues related to alcohol and drug abuse, and Steve Beach received over $2.5 million to examine social and contextual effects on methylymic aging. Ron Blount received the Michael C. Roberts Award for outstanding mentorship in pediatric psychology, Emily Mouliso was named to UGA’s Diversity Council, Justin Lavner was promoted to Associate Professor and named a Rising Star by the Association for Psychological Science, and Isha Metzger received an NIMH Clinical Research Loan Repayment Award and was named a faculty mentor of the year by the McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program at UGA. Cindy Suveg continues to serve as Associate Director of our clinical training program and was one of two clinical faculty (along with Larry Sweet) awarded the Department’s Research Mentoring Award recently, and I took over as Editor in Chief of the Journal of Research in Personality. In addition, one of our own (and a previous DCT), Steve Miller was named Department Head in the fall of 2017.

In closing we continue to be excited to learn of the many outstanding contributions our alumni make to the field of psychology in clinical, research, teaching, and administrative domains. We hope you enjoy reading about ongoing activities in the clinical psychology program, as well as fellow alums’ contributions, and encourage you to send us exciting news you are willing to share. You can send updates to Melissa Mattox (msmattox@uga.edu) or me (jdmiller@uga.edu).

Best wishes,

Josh Miller
Carolina. Dr. Petrie held staff and clinical faculty appointments in the Department of Psychology and the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the University Medical Center of East Carolina University School of Medicine. He was a Managing Partner and Director of Clinical Services at the Institute for Behavioral Medicine in Providence, RI and consulted to managed healthcare organizations in the New England region. In 1996, Dr. Petrie was recruited by Pfizer Global Research & Development to establish a Health Outcomes Research Group for early clinical trials of pharmaceuticals. He retired in 2018 as Vice President, Health Economics & Outcomes Research for Neuroscience and Rare Disease. Among other contributions to professional societies and advisory boards, Dr. Petrie served on the FDA-Critical Path Institute Patient Reported Outcomes Coordinating Committee and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders & Stroke (NINDS)-sponsored Health Measures Patient-Centered Assessment Resource. His work in behavioral medicine and outcomes research has been presented at professional conferences and workshops and published in peer-reviewed journals. Since retiring, Dr. Petrie enjoys hiking, biking, skiing, swimming, and spending time with family.

In 2018, Dr. Petrie gave a generous endowment to the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program at UGA. Dr. Petrie’s endowment was in recognition of the opportunity, support and mentorship he received during his training under the faculty in Clinical Psychology and especially with Amos Zeichner and Henry Adams. “Their leadership, clinical supervision, commitment to research - and occasional torture - well prepared and enabled me to pursue opportunities and collaborations not only in traditional clinical psychology behavioral medicine settings and university teaching hospitals, but also in interdisciplinary clinical and health services research and in the development and management of health care business ventures.”

ALUMNI NEWS & NOTES

Dr. Jeri Breiner (Class of 1981) - Owner of AtlantaDivorce Mediation Services LLC
Dr. Anna Jones (Class of 2018) - Psychology position within the Transition Oncology Program at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital
Dr. Mary Payne (Class of 2009) - Opened private practice, The Child and Family Counseling Center
Dr. Chandler Sims Chang (Class of 2007) - Adjunct faculty member at University of Southern California, opened a second lower-fee private practice in downtown LA.
Dr. Maya Gupta (Class of 2006) - Senior Director of Research at the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Dr. Susan Kelley Jones - Retired from Charleston Southern University after 31 years, awarded Professor Emerita of Psychology and opened full time private practice
Dr. Monica Whitehead (Class of 2017) - Assistant Professor/Clinical Faculty at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center/University of Cincinnati
Dr. Marni L Jacob (Class of 2012) - Current President of the Florida Psychological Association—Palm Chapter, Current President of OCD Central and South Florida, A Regional Affiliate of the International OCD Foundation, and became Board Certified in Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology
Dr. Cara Murphy (Class of 2015) - New job as an Assistant Professor at the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies in the Brown University School of Public Health, and new K23 grant award “A Multiple Health Behavior Change Intervention for Overweight and Obese Smokers”
Dr. Seoka Salstrom (Class of 2006) - Formed Hanover CBT, a practice specializing in third-wave CBT with all ages
Dr. Tracy Waldeck (Class of 1999) - Director of Extramural Policy and Review at National Institute of Drug Abuse
SECOND YEAR SPOTLIGHT!

Ariel Hart grew up in Atlanta, GA. She earned a B.A. in Natural Sciences (Biology) from New College of Florida in Sarasota. After graduating, Ariel worked for two years as a laboratory technician at Roskamp Institute, a neurobiology laboratory in Sarasota, FL, and then worked for the next three years as a research coordinator in the Division of General Medicine and Geriatrics at Emory School of Medicine. At Emory, her work focused on movement- and education-based interventions for older adults and people with Parkinson’s disease, as well as increasing engagement of diverse participants in research. Currently, Ariel works with Dr. Steven Beach and Dr. Justin Lavner. She is interested in the impact of psychosocial and contextual stressors on mental and physical health outcomes throughout the lifespan, and the development and dissemination of culturally-informed prevention and intervention efforts for marginalized populations. Outside of academia, Ariel is a dancer and has performed with several professional contemporary dance companies in Atlanta.

Erin Jones is from Valdosta, GA and earned her B. S. in Psychology from the University of Georgia in 2017. During her time as an undergraduate, she worked in Dr. Lawrence Sweet’s Clinical Neuroscience Laboratory studying relationships between brain morphometry and cognitive and emotional functioning. Erin continued her studies in Dr. Sweet’s lab as a graduate student and is interested in integrating neuropsychological and neuroimaging methods to study brain networks associated with addiction, craving, and relapse in order to better inform treatment methods. Her most recent work involves using an fMRI cue reactivity paradigm to investigate craving responses in young adult e-cigarette users. In her free time, she enjoys film photography, restoring vintage furniture, and making things for her cats.

2019 INTERNSHIP PLACEMENTS

Michael Crowe—Alpert Medical School of Brown University
Emily Hallowell—Alpert Medical School of Brown University
Hannah Rea—UC DAVIC Medical Center—CAARE Center
Katherine Visser—Veterans Affairs Connecticut Healthcare System


Dr. Gregory P. Strauss received his B.S. in Psychology from UGA and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from UNLV. After completing a neuropsychology focused internship at the University of Illinois, Chicago Department of Psychiatry, he was an NIMH funded postdoctoral fellow at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center. He then transitioned to Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Maryland School of Medicine after receiving a K-23 grant from the National Institute of Mental Health and was then an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the State University of New York at Binghamton.

Upon arriving at UGA in January 2017, he established two programs that he directs: the Clinical Affective Neuroscience Laboratory and Georgia Psychiatric Risk Evaluation Program (which provides specialty clinical services for individuals with early psychosis). Dr. Strauss is the author of over 120 publications and his research has been funded by >$15 million in grant funds, including a current R01 (~3 million) and two R21 (~400k each) grants from the National Institute of Mental Health, and a NARSAD Young Investigator Grant from the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation (70K). His program of research focuses on the etiology, assessment, and treatment of negative symptoms (e.g., anhedonia, amotivation) in adults with schizophrenia and youth at clinical high-risk for psychosis.

He uses several neuroscience-based methods to probe the reward and emotional systems in his research (e.g., EEG, fMRI, eye tracking), as well as psychophysiological recording (e.g., EDA, ECG) and digital phenotyping (e.g., geolocation, accelerometry, ambulatory facial and vocal recordings) methods. Most recently, his work has primarily focused on the prodromal, or pre-illness, period of psychosis, where subtle attenuated hallucinations and delusions develop along with declining social and role functioning. This prodromal period is thought to be a critical window for both the early identification and prevention of psychosis. Several of his current grants focus on developing novel methods for the early identification of psychosis using clinical rating scales, digital phenotyping, and social media data. By identifying individuals at the earliest period if risk, the hope is to enhance efforts at preventing or delaying illness onset.

As a UGA faculty member, he has enjoyed mentoring superb graduate and undergraduate students, utilizing the excellent facilities for neuroscience research at the UGA Bio-Imaging Research Center (BIRC), and benefiting from the resources and administrative support offered by the UGA Owens Institute for Behavioral Research. Moreover, he has cherished the opportunity to give back to the university and department that gave him his start in the field, and having the chance to return home to Georgia to raise his two young daughters in Athens.

Dr. Isha Metzger received her undergraduate degree in Psychology from Georgia State University and Ph.D. in Clinical-Community Psychology from University of South Carolina. After completing internship at MUSC, Dr. Metzger completed two postdoctoral fellowships, one at MUSC with the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, and one at Yale University at the Research Education Institute for Diverse Scholars. Her main program of research concerning trauma-exposed African American youth has three areas of focus: (1) basic research to test culturally relevant risk and resilience mechanisms associated with mental and behavioral health outcomes; (2) community based participatory research to identify service utilization barriers and facilitators; and (3) translational and implementation research to inform adapted programming using racial socialization in trauma treatment.

Dr. Metzger stated that since coming to UGA she has most enjoyed establishing the EMPOWER Lab, which focuses on Engaging Minorities in Prevention, Outreach, Workshops, Evaluation, and Research through community based and translational research. She looks forward to continued opportunities to provide research intensive opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students to receive mentorship and academic instruction around adapting treatments through sound methodology and community participation. Central to her experience, Dr. Metzger states that “growing up in Atlanta as a first generation American in a home with over 14 family members who were refugees from a civil war in Sierra Leone, West Africa, nurtured in me a personal and professional drive to improve mental health outcomes for African American youth and families who have experienced trauma.”
2018-2019 AWARDS

STUDENT AWARDS & GRANTS

Boardman-Forehand-Jackson Award: Emily Hallowell
Herbert Zimmer Research Award: Courtland Hyatt
Florence M. Young Award: Chelsea Sleep & Lauren Quast
Henry E. Adams Memorial Research Award: Kelly Rea
Louise McBee Award: Grace Cushman
A.S. Edwards Award: Courtland Hyatt

Dr. Antonio Puente and Dr. Donald Ingram Conference Travel Award: Kelly Rea
UGA Graduate School Travel Award: Kara Braunstein West, Marissa Gogniat, Tony Petruzzella & Chelsea Sleep
UGA Graduate School Dean’s Award: Kara Braunstein West
UGA Graduate School’s Innovative and Interdisciplinary Research Grant: Kelly Rea & Kara Braunstein West
UGA Graduate School George Hugh Boyd Memorial Scholarship: Kelly Rea
UGA Graduate Education Advancement Board Scholarship: Kara Braunstein West
Franklin Foundation Research Grant: Kara Braunstein West
Society of Pediatric Psychology Student Poster Awards & APA Scholar Award: Kelly Rea
Paul D. Coverdell Neuroimaging Program Fellowship: Marissa Gogniat
Emerging Scholar Award; Association for Research in Personality: Courtland Hyatt

FACULTY/STAFF AWARDS & GRANTS

Research Award: Dr. Josh Miller & Dr. Larry Sweet
Teaching Award: Dr. Justin Lavner
Clinical Supervision Award: Dr. Emily Mouilso
Appointee to the Parents Leadership Council: Dr. Emily Mouilso
Consultant on NIDA funded project “Primary prevention of sexual violence among college students”: Dr. Cynthia Suveg
NIMH R01, R21, NARSAD Young Investigator Grant, Clinical Translational Research Unit Pilot Grant: Dr. Gregory Strauss
Charles B. Knapp Early Career Scholar Award: Dr. Justin Lavner
UGA Senior Teaching Fellow: Dr. Anne Shaffer
NIMH R34, Clinical Translational Research Unit Pilot Grant: Dr. Anne Shaffer
NIAAA R01, NIDA UG3, K01, R34, P30: Dr. Lawrence Sweet
UGA Jr. Faculty Research Grant, OIBR Pilot Grant: Dr. Isha Metzger
Office of Inclusion and Diversity Leadership Innovation in the Franklin Multicultural Curriculum Award: Dr. Isha Metzger
UGA Faculty Mentor of the Year Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Program: Dr. Isha Metzger
A Common Call Regional Faculty Conference Grant: Dr. Isha Metzger
APA Journals Article Spotlight: Dr. Isha Metzger
Michael C. Roberts Award for Outstanding Mentorship: Dr. Ronald Blount
PETS OF THE PROGRAM: MEET OUR DAWGS (AND CATS!)

Izzy & Lola (Dr. Josh Miller)

Markley (Kelly Rea)

Molly (Dr. Cynthia Suveg)

Scout (Dr. Steve Miller)

Teddy (Marissa Gogniat)

Harold & Maude (Dr. Anne Shaffer)

Beau & Jax (Kara Braunstein West)

Rebbe (Dr. Emily Mouilso)

Chance (Courtland Hyatt)

Cracker (Tony Petruzzella)

CONTACT DAWGTRACKS AND UGA CLINICAL PROGRAM

We would like to hear from you! Please send us updates, achievements, and change of addresses.

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