

EMORY DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES KUDOS  
JULY 2021

**REMEMBER**

**Please send me your accomplishments and personal updates for the August 2021 Kudos**

**SAVE THE DATES**

Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences CME QI Conference:  
Considerations & Response to a Case of COVID-19 on an Inpatient Geriatric Psychiatry Unit

- August 4, 2021 - <https://zoom.us/j/93536880522>

**FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SEMINARS**

Below is the information on the first faculty development seminar for 2021. We will send out the rest of the information as soon as possible so that people can clear their schedules. All seminars are from 9:00-10:30am and will be virtual this year.

- September 1, 2021 – Teaching Portfolios -  
<https://zoom.us/j/6213030759?pwd=dzB1aWU5TFRVbTZwK2JFd3R6WTh2dz09>

**RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND CULTURAL MINORITY (RECM) FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE and DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SUBCOMMITTEE (DISC)**

RECM and DISC are co-sponsoring a workshop entitled "**Culturally-informed Supervision: How to Counter Pathologizing Cultural Norms**" to be held Wednesday August 25, 2021 from 12-1pm.

**WRITING GROUPS: UPCOMING**

The Writing Group is the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every month from 8:00-9:00am. The next meeting is Wednesday August 4, 2021 and will be on Zoom -  
<https://zoom.us/j/6213030759?pwd=T0hpY056a0N1RFdvWjFIQ3d4UU1vZz09>

**CE WORKSHOP SCHEDULE**

The next workshop is on **Math Interactive Learning Experience (MILE) Training** and will be conducted by Claire Coles, Julie Kable, and Molly Millians. It will be held on Thursday August 19 and Friday August 20, 1:00-5:00pm each day. Contact Rachel Ammirati, [rammira@emory.edu](mailto:rammira@emory.edu)

**SPOTLIGHTS**

**FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Emily Jackson, PhD**

Emily is an Assistant Professor in the SOM at Emory and supervises one of the Nia DBT Skills Groups at Grady and is a member on the Women's Subcommittee. Emily

actually began her tenure with the Department of Psychiatry in 1999 as the project coordinator for the Grady Nia Project. She completed her PhD at the University of GA in Counseling Psychology and internship and postdoctoral residency at Grady Hospital through Emory University School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. She is grateful for the many years she has spent in the Department and has gained a wealth of experience from so many of the faculty over the years. She is a staff psychologist at the Atlanta VAMC in the Trauma Recovery Program on the Military Sexual Assault/Dialectical Behavior Therapy Treatment Team and serves as the Telemental Health Champion for the Mental Health Service Line. She is currently serving on the Georgia Psychological Association Annual Meeting planning committee.

Emily most enjoys working with interns and students. She learns as much from them as they do from her. She is grateful for the experiences and friendships she has built over her time in the Department of Psychiatry and looks forward to continuing to work on finding new ways to contribute to her community, colleagues, and trainees.

Emily balances many roles including wife, daughter, aunt, sister, and friend. She is the mother to two 3-year-old dachshunds (Alice and Kirby) and two 14-year-old kitties (Merlin and Persephone) whom she and her husband Matt spend most of their time and money spoiling. She does her best to take care of herself and go for walks around their neighborhood park or sitting on the back porch reading. She is a big SyFy and Marvel fan and enjoys watching movies with her best friend and husband of 21 years.

### **ADJUNCT FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Adriana Flores, PhD**

Adriana Flores' journey to a career in forensic psychology was one that began in November of 1977, when her family immigrated to the United States from Piedras Negras, Mexico (a town on the Texas border). It was winter in Milwaukee, Wisconsin!! Her parents valued education and the opportunities their children would have in the US. They sacrificed—her father leaving a white-collar career in banking to work at a tannery with worm-infested cow hides. Unfortunately, the family would experience additional challenges that would contribute to Adriana's path to psychology. When she was 12 years old, her mother was diagnosed with Schizophrenia-Paranoid Type. It is her mother's illness that sparked an interest in psychology. Because her mother spoke limited English, Adriana interpreted for her at psychiatric appointments. She thought there was a piece missing in her mother's treatment—therapy, for her mother, and for the family who was under extreme stress coping with her mother's illness. During high school, she vacillated whether to pursue a career in law or psychology. Ultimately, she chose psychology.

Adriana went on to graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with a major in psychology, followed by a master's and PhD in clinical psychology from Miami University in Ohio. She planned to pursue a career in child psychology. During her graduate studies, she realized, however, that she also enjoyed working with adults. On the "big day" in 1999, the year the first computer matching for psychology doctoral internships occurred, EMORY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, shone brightly on her computer screen. "A perfect fit for me," thought Adriana, as Emory offered her

training with children and adults. She had no idea that at Emory, she would discover a passion for forensics that would lead her to what she describes as the “most amazing” career. Once at Emory, she completed a four-month elective rotation in forensics. The moment Adriana evaluated her first detainee at smelly, loud, Fulton County Jail, with Glenn Egan, she experienced an “aha” moment. Forensics, the intersection of law and psychology, was fascinating, like putting together a complex puzzle and being a detective as well. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at ESOM in adolescent psychology (the program’s forensic psychology postdoctoral fellowship would develop 10 years later). As a postdoc, she continued to train in forensics with Drs. Egan and Peter Ash.

Upon completion of her Postdoc, Adriana went to work as an inpatient forensic psychologist at Georgia Regional Hospital-Atlanta (GRH/A), treating and evaluating individuals adjudicated incompetent to stand trial or not guilty by reason of insanity. Her 10-year tenure at GRH/A includes four years on the Executive Team, as Director of Treatment Programming of the then 320-bed hospital. Under Adriana’s leadership, the hospital developed treatment malls, providing patients 20 hours of weekly therapeutic programming. In 2011, she pursued full time private practice in forensics (assessment of various competencies—to stand trial, waive Miranda rights, consent to sexual contact; criminal responsibility; dangerousness risk assessment; and mitigation). She is particularly well known and respected for her comprehensive mitigation evaluations and is retained by attorneys throughout the country to help explain, in reports and expert witness testimony, how the client/defendant “got there” (i.e., criminal conduct). She is routinely hired in high profile cases.

As Adjunct Associate Professor, Adriana trains the department’s Psychiatry and the Law Program’s forensic psychology postdocs and forensic psychiatry fellows. She very much enjoys teaching and mentoring future forensic psychologists and psychiatrists. Her mentees’ thriving is super rewarding to her. She smiles proudly, each time she receives a note from an attorney thanking her for referring a mentee. Adriana is very active within the Georgia Psychological Association; she received GPA’s President’s Award this year in recognition for her work chairing the Social Justice Taskforce (the group conducted an assessment of the organization and is making recommendations to the Board to advance GPA’s diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in all functions of GPA).

Adriana lives in Milton with her husband Randy, four children (ages 15 to 20), and two pups. She loves to try out new restaurants, especially little hole in the wall places serving authentic cuisine from other countries. She also enjoys travel outside the country and cannot wait for COVID to be over, so she can return to Italy—one of her favorite places due to the warmth of its people, the history, and of course, FOOD!

#### **STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Allegra El-Sayed**

Allegra L. El-Sayed provides HR Generalist support for Brain Health and Orthopaedics. She is also the point of contact for faculty hires within the department, while handling all HR requests for the Psychiatry department.

Prior to working at Emory, Allegra worked as the Human Resources Manager for Planned Parenthood Southeast, and as a Generalist for Department of Children and Family Services. She also spent a few years working for the Atlanta Braves when they were located at Turner Field.

Allegra initially became interested in Human Resources because she enjoys working with people. In her years in the field that love for people has continued. She gets the opportunity to work with and interact with people of all backgrounds. Highlights of her career include becoming HR certified, which is something she is very proud of, as well as her time with Planned Parenthood. In that role she was promoted multiple times and as a result was able to expand her experience and knowledge.

In terms of goals and plans for the future, Allegra looks to continue growing professionally, which includes more certifications, as well as taking on more responsibilities. She hopes to continue to grow within Brain Health as well.

What keeps Allegra busy outside of work are her toddlers, who are two and three years old. When she is not chasing them, she loves to travel (COVID put that on pause), cook and try new restaurants. She used to be a runner and completed two marathons but has transitioned primarily to Crossfit. Allegra hopes to be able to travel to more places with her kids and husband and enjoy more good food.

### **TRAINEE SPOTLIGHT: Yara Mekawi, PhD**

Yara Mekawi has been a part of the Emory School of Medicine since 2018 and will be joining the University of Louisville as an assistant professor in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences this fall. Yara started her time at Emory University as a trauma-track doctoral intern working with the Nia Project, and then transitioned to a postdoctoral residency with the Grady Trauma Project (GTP). At GTP, Yara worked with Drs. Abby Lott, Jenni Stevens and Vas Michopoulos on several exciting projects examining the effects of trauma on the Grady population. Throughout her time at GTP, she had the opportunity to hold a variety of roles including data manager, clinical supervisor, and research mentor (and office decorator on the side!). Yara has flourished in this position and has found it to be a formative experience in many ways. She enjoyed working with so many wonderful people across disciplines and roles, including participants, undergraduate research assistants, graduate students, staff, other postdocs, GTP co-directors, and GTP collaborators within and outside of Emory University. She loved learning about the complexities of working as a large team and the importance of consistent communication, humor, flexibility, collaborative problem-solving, and creativity!

Most of Yara's research to date has focused on the perpetration and experience of racial prejudice and discrimination. In the simplest terms, she wants to know, "How and why do people in racially privileged groups continue to be racist?" and "How does experiencing racism negatively impact the mental health of racially marginalized groups?" In graduate school, she explored the latter question with a mostly

undergraduate sample and since then has enjoyed expanding this work as part of her research endeavors with GTP. Specifically, her interests have shifted toward examining the intersection of racial discrimination and other types of traumatic stress on various outcomes.

Yara is incredibly excited to continue this work at the University of Louisville and start her own research lab as a tenure-track assistant professor while still maintaining collaborations with her Emory colleagues. This fall, she will be teaching a graduate course entitled “Power, Privilege, and Psychopathology,” which will focus on exploring how oppression plays a role in the assessment, etiology, and treatment of mental health phenomena. In future years, she hopes to return to clinical supervision with the goal of developing a practicum focused on using evidence-based treatments to treat trauma-related stress and psychopathology.

Outside of academia, Yara has numerous other creative and didactic interests, including operating two Etsy shops with her husband, Dr. Konrad Bresin! One of the shops, called Elevate & Fly Designs, was started in 2016 after Yara searched high and low on Etsy and failed to find appropriate gifts to celebrate her dear friends’ doctoral graduations. Since then, it has expanded to a science, self-care, and social justice-themed shop that offers mugs, signs, coasters, prints, notebooks, and several other goods. She loves that it allows her to connect with people all over the world in a different way and express her creative side. Her second shop, Seeking Maat Photography, is inspired by her love of travel and photography. In the summer of 2020, Yara also co-founded the Dialectical Engagement in Anti-Racism (DEAR) project with long-time friends and collaborators, Danyelle Dawson and Dr. Natalie Watson-Singleton. Yara absolutely loves working on the DEAR Project, which focuses on facilitating emotion-focused and behavioral change-oriented antiracism training for white folks. Specifically, she loves working with her colleagues to find effective and creative ways to help white folks implement changes that are likely to lead to measurable change. Integrating principles from her favorite clinical interventions (e.g., Dialectical Behavior Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) with the literature on anti-racism has resulted in several exciting offerings (e.g., blogs, trainings) which she is excited to continue in the future.

In the past few weeks, Yara has taken a pause from *most* of the above to care for her and her husband’s first child, Kenzi Mekawi Bresin! Yara is excited to add the role of “mother” to her life and has thus far found the experience to be exciting and transformative (with a side of exhausting). Although leaving Atlanta was incredibly difficult, Yara is thrilled to take all that she has learned and apply it to her new professional, familial, and artistic endeavors in Louisville!

## **FACULTY COMINGS AND GOINGS**

### **New Faculty**

**Danielle Brown** – Danielle Brown will be joining Emory Psychiatry’s faculty as an Assistant Professor this May working in the Adult Outpatient Clinic. Familiar to Atlanta, she completed a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at Emory College. She comes to Emory

after recently finishing her residency at the University of Florida in Gainesville, where she served as Chief Resident. Her areas of interest include women's mental health, geriatrics and medical student/resident education.

**Anthony Chatham** – Anthony Chatham is from South Carolina and received his medical degree from the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC. He completed his psychiatry residency at East Carolina University, where he was chief resident in 2019-2020. He then came Emory for fellowship in geriatric psychiatry. Following completion of his fellowship, he joined the faculty in the geriatric psychiatry department. He is interested in helping people transition gracefully into their later stages of life, as well as dealing with the difficulties that arise along the way. He also enjoys teaching and advising fellows, residents and students.

**Mike Lucido** – Mike Lucido is a recent graduate from the Emory Psychiatry residency program, where he was Co-Chief Resident of the research track. He obtained his undergraduate education at the Florida Institute of Technology from 2005 to 2010, receiving degrees in psychology and chemistry, and completed a combined MD/PhD program at SUNY Buffalo Jacobs School of Medicine in 2017. His doctoral research in structural biology focused on the effects of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, like aspirin, on the function of enzymes. During residency, he worked with Dr. Zhexing Wen to study the effects of inflammation on dopamine in depressed patients using advanced induced pluripotent stem cell technology. He remains interested in the intersection of immunology and psychiatry, particularly as it relates to serious mental illness and refractory psychiatric conditions, and is looking forward to exploring this further while working as a psychiatrist in the transplant clinic.

**Ellie Santy** – Ellie Santy is a board-certified geriatric psychiatrist. She is originally from West Virginia and graduated from the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine in 2015. She completed her general psychiatry residency training at the Medical University of South Carolina in 2019 and her Geriatric Psychiatry Fellowship at the Medical University of South Carolina in 2020. Areas of interest include neuropsychiatry and dementia with behavioral disturbances.

**David Thylur** – David Thylur will be working as an attending psychiatrist on the psychiatry consultation-liaison service at Grady Memorial Hospital. His interests include the psychiatric care of medically-ill patients, care of individuals with severe mental illness, neuropsychiatry, and psychoneuroimmunology. He looks forward to working closely with residents, medical students, and other trainees within psychiatry and psychology. He completed his residency training in general psychiatry at Emory in 2021 after receiving his medical degree at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California. He grew up in Colorado which has given him a love for nature, and continues to enjoy spending time outside by going on hikes and kayaking with his wife and their two small dogs.

**Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee (DISC) and Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Minority Faculty (RECM) Subcommittee**

None reported

## **FACULTY KUDOS**

### **Major Leadership Appointments, Activities and Achievements**

None reported

### **Education**

Michael Morrier was an invited panelist for Florida Weekly/ABC7/Family Initiative Inc sponsored expert panel discussion “Understanding Autism” in Fort Myers, FL.

### **Research**

Bryant-Genevier J, Rao CY, Lopes-Cardozo B, et al. Symptoms of Depression, Anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Suicidal Ideation Among State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Public Health Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, March–April 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* ePub: 25 June 2021.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7026e1external icon>

Cassiello-Robbins C, Zachary Rosenthal M, & Ammirati RJ. (2021). Delivering Transdiagnostic Treatment Over Telehealth During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Application of the Unified Protocol. *Cognitive and behavioral practice*, 10.1016/j.cbpra.2021.04.007. Advance online publication.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpra.2021.04.007>

Powers A, Mekawi Y, Fickenwirth M, Nugent NR, Dixon HD, Minton S, Kim Y, Gluck R, Carter S, Fani N, Schwartz AC, Bradley B, Umpierrez GE, Pace TWW, Jovanovic T, Michopoulos V, & Gillespie CF. (In press). Emotion dysregulation and dissociation contribute to decreased heart rate variability to an acute psychosocial stressor in trauma-exposed Black women. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*.

O'Donnell CJ, Schwartz Longacre L, Cohen BE, Fayad ZA, Gillespie CF, Liberzon I, Pathak GA, Polimanti R, Risbrough V, Ursano RJ, Vander Heide RS, Yancy CW, Vaccarino V, Sopko G, Stein MB. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Cardiovascular Disease: State of the Science, Knowledge Gaps, and Research Opportunities. *JAMA Cardiol.* 2021 Jul 14. doi: 10.1001/jamacardio.2021.2530. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 34259831.

Powers A, Dixon HD, Guelfo A, Mekawi Y, Bradley B, Kaslow N, & Fani N. (In press). The mediating role of emotion dysregulation in the association between trait mindfulness and PTSD symptoms among trauma-exposed adults. *Mindfulness*.

van Rooij SJH, Sippel LM, McDonald WM, & Holtzheimer PE. (2021). Defining focal brain stimulation targets for PTSD using neuroimaging. *Depression and Anxiety.* 38, 768– 785. <https://doi.org/10.1002/da.23159>

Wang J, Jiang F, Zhang Y, Cotes RO, Yang Y, Liu Z, Liu T, Liu Y, Tang YL\*, Liu H. Patterns of antipsychotic prescriptions in patients with schizophrenia in China: a national survey. *Asian J Psychiatry*, 26 June 2021, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2021.102742>

Ziegler SMT, & Morrier MJ. (2021). Increasing Social Interactions of Preschool Children with Autism through Cooperative Outdoor Play. *Journal of Special Education*.

### **Honors, Awards, Rankings**

Douglas Lewis was commissioned this month at the rank of captain for the United States Army National Guard. He will be proudly serving our nation and the state of Georgia as a clinical psychologist in the Guard's Army Medical Department.

Noriel Lim was appointed to a two-year term as Co-Chair of the Asian American Psychological Association's Education and Training Council.

Mar Sanchez was invited to serve on Emory's Faculty Committee on Appointments and Promotions.

Joseph Vinson received Faculty Development Funds to continue training at the Existential-Humanistic Institute in San Rafael, CA.

The following faculty and adjunct faculty members were recognized as one of Atlanta Top Doctors through the Atlanta Magazine:

- Scott Firestone
- Toby Goldsmith
- Adriana Hermida
- Jennifer Holton
- Karen Mechanic
- Andrew Miller
- Carrie Poline

### **Presentations**

Rebecca Schneider led a youth program workshop at the International Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Foundation (IOCDF) Online OCD Camp titled "1-2-3 Blast off! A family values activity." She also gave a community presentation today at the OCD Southern California 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on the topic "A Discussion on Treatment for and Experiences of OCD and Co-Occurring Self-Harm."

### **Emory in the Media**

Michael Morrier (1) Florida Weekly – [Getting Better at Understanding the Broader Spectrum](#). (2) Florida Weekly – [Understanding Autism: Researchers Attempt to Unravel the Mysteries of the Syndrome](#).

## **TRAINEE KUDOS**



Benson Ku was selected as a recipient of the 2021 AAP Resident Psychiatric Educator Award, and received a Resident Recognition Award from the APA for exemplifying APA values in leadership, clinical excellence and/or community service.

Upon completion of their postdoctoral residency, these individuals have accepted the following positions:

- Katie Detscher - Georgia State University Counseling and Testing Center, Private Practice
- Yara Mekawi – Assistant Professor, University of Louisville Department of Psychology
- Brittany Penson – Forensic Psychologist, Georgia Regional Hospital
- Hannah Simon - Assistant Professor, Emory University School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences based in the Seavey Clinic

### **STAFF KUDOS**

None reported