

Distinguished Scholars 2020/2021

Supporting the advancement of elite graduate students
on their journeys toward becoming leaders in behavioral science.

Chair:

Mary Sawyer, PhD, BCBA-D

Fit Learning Atlanta & TEAM Coaching

Co-Chairs:

Michael Kranak, PhD, BCBA-D

*Post-Doctoral Fellow, Kennedy Krieger Institute -
Neurobehavioral Unit*

Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Amanda P. Laprime, PhD, BCBA-D

*Assistant Professor, University of Rochester Medical Center &
Assistant to CCBS Executive Director*

The Distinguished Scholars:

Abigail Blackman, MS, BCBA, *University of Kansas*

Tyler G. Erath, MA, *University of Kansas*

Maya Fallon, BA, *University of Nebraska Medical Center*

Matthew Laske, BS, *Appalachian State University*

Nicholas Matey, MS, *University of Florida*

Alyssa McElroy, MA, BCBA, *Western Michigan University*

Jessica Mias, MS, BCBA, *Simmons University*

Sandhya Rajagopal, MS, BCBA, *Florida Institute of Technology*

Alyssa Rojas, BS, *California State University, Northridge*

Andressa Sleiman, MS, BCBA, *University of Florida*

Valeria Squatrito, MA, *Kore University, Enna (Italy)*

Catherine Williams, BS, *West Virginia University*

Mary Sawyer, PhD, BCBA-D



Dr. Mary Sawyer, BCBA-D, earned her PhD in Special Education and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) from the Ohio State University. Prior to her doctorate, Dr. Sawyer earned an M.A. in Special Education, an M.A. in ABA, a graduate certificate in Positive Behavior Support, and a B.S. in Elementary Education, all from the University of South Florida. She is a Certified Educator in Elementary Education, Special Education, and English Speakers of Other Languages. In partnership with Dr. Aubrey Daniels, Dr. Sawyer is Co-Founder of Fit Learning Atlanta, a 1:1 learning laboratory, and TEAM Coaching, a school-based teacher training and coaching group. Additionally, Dr. Sawyer is adjunct faculty for the ABA graduate program at Georgia State University. She serves as the AVP of Scientific and Academic Affairs for the Standard Celeration Society and as the Distinguished Scholars Advisor for the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies. She is passionate about applying the science of behavior analysis to rapidly accelerate academic outcomes and to create nurturing environments in which individuals of all ages thrive.

Amanda P. Laprime, PhD, BCBA-D



Dr. Laprime has recently joined the Division of Transitional Medicine, in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Rochester Medical Center as an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics. She is leading the medical center in its mission to integrate Applied Behavior Analysis into Strong Memorial Hospital and Golisano's Children's Hospital for adolescents and adults with autism and related disorders who are transitioning or have recently transitioned from pediatric care into adult care. Dr. Laprime also holds a joint appointment in the Division of Neurodevelopmental and Behavioral Pediatrics as well as the Warner School of Education. Dr. Laprime's research interests include the functional assessment of severe challenging behavior, system-level changes within organizations to support individuals with complex needs, and the social validity of empirically-based interventions.

Michael P. Kranak, PhD, BCBA-D



Dr. Kranak is a Research Fellow at the Kennedy Krieger Institute and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He is a co-investigator on several research projects, including those funded by the NIH, and is the Chair of the Committee for Faculty Research for the Neurobehavioral Unit. He also supervises research assistants and BCBA trainees. His research focuses largely on the assessment and treatment of severe problem behavior through applied and translational experiments to better understand and prevent behavioral relapse, as well as improving best practices for training BCBA trainees and educators. His research has been published in several peer-reviewed journals, including the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* and *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, where he serves as an ad hoc reviewer. Dr. Kranak will join the faculty of Oakland University as an Assistant Professor in the fall.

Abigail Blackman, MS, BCBA



Abigail Blackman is a second-year doctoral student in the Performance Management Laboratory at the University of Kansas, working under the supervision of Dr. Florence DiGennaro Reed. She received her Master's in ABA and OBM at Florida Institute of Technology, while working with Drs. Christopher Podlesnik and Corina Jimenez-Gomez. Abby's research interests include evaluating resource efficient, yet effective, staff training practices and the potential efficacy of using various technologies to deliver training within human service settings. She has experience teaching an undergraduate behavioral science course, supervising undergraduate students within an early intervention classroom and an OBM practicum, and consulting with a staff training department at a local agency. In her free time, she enjoys FaceTiming her nephew and practicing yoga.

Tyler G. Erath, MA



Tyler Erath, MA, is a third-year doctoral student in the department of applied behavioral science at the University of Kansas working under the supervision of Dr. Florence DiGennaro Reed in the Performance Management Laboratory. He obtained his bachelor's degree in psychology and his master's degree in experimental psychology from Appalachian State University, working with Dr. Cynthia Anderson. Tyler's research interests include staff training, performance management, and behavioral consultation. Currently, he is pursuing a thematic line of research that seeks to enhance the implementation integrity of evidence-based training practices within a human service setting. Tyler has served as a guest reviewer for peer-reviewed journals, a practicum supervisor for undergraduate students interested in OBM, and the instructor of record for an introductory course on child development. In his free time, he enjoys cooking, exploring the outdoors, and chatting about craft beer.

Maya Fallon, BA



Maya Fallon is a second-year in the Masters of Science Applied Behavior Analysis program at California State University, Northridge studying under the mentorship of Dr. Stephanie Hood. As a graduate research assistant, Maya works with individuals with social skill deficits and evaluates procedures to increase advanced social skills. Her research currently includes evaluating procedures to increase recall and problem solving on conversational skills. She enjoys researching conversation skills and hopes to continue to work in this understudied area. Upon earning her master's degree, she will join Dr. Kevin Luczynski this fall at the University of Nebraska Medical Center as she starts the doctorate program in Applied Behavior Analysis.

Matthew Laske, MA



Matthew Laske is a first-year doctoral student at the University of Kansas' behavioral psychology program, working under the supervision of Dr. Florence DiGennaro Reed. Matthew completed his master's degree in industrial-organizational psychology and human resource management at Appalachian State University working under the guidance of Dr. Timothy Ludwig. He completed his bachelor's degree in behavioral sciences from Western Michigan University. He previously served as a project manager for the safety analytics team at Appalachian State University seeking to identify variables that are most predictive of adverse safety outcomes. His research interests include the investigation of effective communication and public speaking behaviors, behavioral safety, and how data analytics can be an effective tool for pinpointing life critical behaviors in safety. In his free time, Matthew enjoys biking, painting along with Bob Ross, and anything involving basketball.

Nicholas Matey, MS



Nick has an interest in applying behavior science to occupational safety, training, and leadership development. Nick has experience applying behavioral science in a variety of settings, from the Fortune 30, to small businesses alike. Nick holds a Master's degree in Behavior Analysis and Organizational Behavior Management, from Florida Institute of Technology. Currently, Nick is a doctoral student in Behavior Analysis, at the University of Florida, under Nicole Gravina, PhD.

Alyssa McElroy, MA, BCBA



Alyssa McElroy is a BCBA and third-year doctoral student at Western Michigan University. Alyssa received her master's degree in behavior analysis with a focus on early intervention and organizational behavior management from Western Michigan University in 2013. Upon receiving her master's degree, Alyssa worked as a clinician at Trumpet Behavioral Health in California and Colorado, where she developed interventions for individuals diagnosed with autism and developmental disabilities, supervised BCBA fieldwork, and oversaw operations at Trumpet's South Denver Center. After spending four years in the field, Alyssa re-joined Western Michigan University as a doctoral student in 2017. Alyssa has a variety of experience teaching undergraduate courses, including introduction to behavior analysis, introduction to psychology, concepts and principles in behavior analysis, and research methods/statistics.

She's published research on teaching feminine hygiene skills to young females with ASD and is currently working on research related to supervision best practices in the field of behavior analysis. Alyssa is the chair of the Behavior Analysis Graduate Student Organization at WMU and serves as an executive member of the Michigan Autism Conference planning committee. Her interests include school-based consulting, effective teaching strategies, supervision, and instructional design.

Jessica Mias, MS, BCBA



Jessica Mias is a doctoral student at Simmons University, pursuing a PhD in Applied Behavior Analysis under the advisement of Dr. Gretchen A. Dittrich. She earned her Master's degree in Early Childhood Education at Eastern Connecticut State University and was a teacher prior to becoming a BCBA. Her research interests are varied and include increasing activity for healthy, underactive adults, instructional and curriculum design for individuals with developmental disabilities, as well as the establishment of stimulus control for auditory-visual conditional discrimination tasks. Jessica currently serves as District BCBA for a public school district. In addition, Jessica is a part-time lecturer at Northeastern University, and has been an adjunct instructor at Simmons University.

Sandhya Rajagopal, MS, BCBA



Sandhya Rajagopal received her Master of Science degree in Applied Behavior Analysis and Organizational Behavior Management from Florida Tech in July 2017. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Behavior Analysis at Florida Tech under the advisement of Dr. Katie Nicholson, and she was admitted to candidacy in April 2019. She has experience working and conducting research with children and adults with autism and older adults with Alzheimer's dementia. Sandhya's primary research interests are in verbal behavior and teaching children with autism to tact private events. She is currently conducting a research study on this topic that was funded by the Organization for Autism Research's Graduate Research Grant Program, and plans to continue this line of research through her dissertation.

Alyssa Rojas, BS



Alyssa Rojas is a first-year graduate student in California State Northridge's master's in applied behavior analysis program. Along with pursuing her master's, she provides behavioral services as an RBT® to children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. She has played a key role in the development and implementation of research in the Functional Assessment and Healthy Behaviors Lab under the advisement of Dr. Fahmie. She has extended previous research and approached problem behavior by intervening before problem behavior becomes severe. As a graduate research assistant, she has conducted direct assessments in preschool classrooms, identified maintaining variables for those exhibiting problem behaviors and has created individualized function-based treatments. She has conducted functional analyses proactively, such that rather than conducting this analysis after problem behavior has already emerged, she screens for risk factors and creates preventative function-based

treatments before problem behavior becomes severe. Her main area of interest is to extend her current research to those on the autism spectrum. She looks forward to continuing her contributions to this field as an active researcher and plans to pursue her PhD in applied behavior analysis.

Andressa Sleiman, MS, BCBA



Andressa Sleiman, MS, BCBA, earned her Masters of Science degree in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Organizational Behavior Management (OBM) from Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) in 2017. She is currently pursuing her PhD at the University of Florida under the supervision and guidance of Nicole Gravina, PhD. Andressa has been in the field of ABA since 2011 and has worked with individuals with developmental disabilities, typically developing children and adults, and as an internal OBM consultant. Andressa's general research interests include OBM, process improvement, behavioral economics, determinants of reinforcement, training, dissemination of ABA and OBM, and science literacy.

Valeria Squatrito, MA



Valeria Squatrito is a PhD student in the doctorate program in "Social Inclusion in Multicultural Contexts" at Kore University of Enna (Italy). She was born and raised in Sicily and in 2011 she entered the BA program in Psychology and she immediately started to get interested in research, on the recognition of emotions as a first start. To get her MA degree Valeria presented a thesis on IRAP and religious prejudice. For this research she was honored with the ACBS Junior Investigator Poster Award at ACBS World Conference 15 in 2017 in Seville (Spain). She is interested in Clinical Psychology, Social Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, Web Communication and Social Media and Facial Action Coding System (FACS). She has attended in several conferences, such as ACBS World Conference 15 in 2017 and 8th EABA conference in 2016, presenting symposia and posters.

Catherine Williams, MS



Catherine Williams (formerly Stephens) is about to begin her last year in the Behavior Analysis Ph.D. program at West Virginia University. She earned her B.S. in psychology from Georgia Tech, where she worked with Dr. Jack Marr and developed an interest in using behavior analysis to improve education. Currently, she is conducting research under the supervision of Drs. Claire St. Peter and Michael Perone on identifying ways to design instruction that results in effective generalization and discrimination of responses. Ms. Williams also recently completed a practicum providing behavior-analytic services for students who engage in problem behavior in schools. She hopes to continue research related to education and to facilitate system-level changes that incorporate behavior-analytic strategies into widespread educational practices..