

Faculty Mentors for Fall 2024 Admissions

The Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program at UMass Boston uses a clinical research apprenticeship model. Each first year graduate student apprentices with a clinical faculty member who will serve as research mentor and advisor to the graduate student.

The following list of faculty members are interested in accepting one or more new students for fall 2024 admissions.

[Devin Atallah, PhD](#)

[Evan Auguste, PhD](#)

[Abbey Eisenhower, PhD](#)

[Sarah Hayes-Skelton, PhD](#)

[Jean Rhodes, PhD](#)

[Karen Suyemoto, PhD](#)

Devin G. Atallah, PhD

Dr. Atallah's research team is called the Decolonial Antiracism Research & Action (DARA) Collective for Healing & Liberación. The DARA Collective aims to engage decolonial, narrative, and community-based participatory approaches to critical inquiry and healing justice praxis, seeking to contribute to revolutionizing research, activism, teaching, and practice in clinical psychology and beyond. Please see our website for more information on our team and ongoing works: www.daracollective.com.

At this point in time, Dr. Atallah will be accepting one new graduate student to work with the DARA Collective. In particular, we are looking for a student who would be interested and qualified in supporting deeply **at least one of these three projects** (which are each at different stages in development engagement):

1. Decolonial research/practice/activism with the **CURCUM كركم Collective**: In this project, we are a group of Palestinians working across borders towards designing, implementing, and evaluating a psychosocial training program for Community Health Workers (CHW) in a Palestinian refugee camp in the West Bank entitled “**CURCUM’s Trees: A Decolonial Healing Guide for Palestinian Community Health Workers**”. We have designed and implemented this CURUCM’s Trees workbook with a group of seven CHWs to strengthen their capacities to accompany and support their patients and broader community around issues of trauma and oppression through decolonial, Indigenous approaches. We are currently using qualitative research to evaluate the impact of this training process.

2. **Qualitative research and activism** to evaluate the impact of a social justice-focused youth program in partnership with a **Boston-based grassroots community organization** (The City School).
3. Currently **developing a follow-up qualitative research project with the Trauma-learning Policy Initiative (TLPI)** focusing on **antiracism and trauma-informed school-wide transformation** processes.

Dr. Atallah's work examines decolonial healing processes in the face of the internalized, structural, intergenerational, embodied, and everyday consequences of racism and settler colonialism that become normalized and are often rarely questioned locally in urban Boston, and transnationally in occupied Palestine and with Mapuche communities in Chile. It is very important that any applicant who wishes to join Dr. Atallah's team understands that the work that we do here at the DARA Collective is always transnational, while still anchored in local communities and our revolutionary collectives and collaborations. Any student that joins our team would need to be able to NOT ONLY work intensively locally, in one of these projects, but instead, would need to have commitment and competence in working across these projects as well. Please be sure to read through some of our works (many are listed on our website: <https://www.daracollective.com/publications>) to get a better sense of our decolonial praxis.

Thank you / Gracias / شكرا!

Evan Auguste, PhD

This lab focuses on addressing the mental health consequences of structural anti-Blackness through the lens of Black liberation psychology. Currently, our research involves community participatory, qualitative, and quantitative methods to examine the effects of disparate exposure to justice-contact for Black adolescents and intergenerational traumas for Haitian people. We also focus on developing and piloting anti-carceral and community based health interventions, such as the Association of Black Psychologists' Sawubona Healing Circles to promote healing from an African-centered framework. Our advocacy involves connecting with local, national, and international coalitions to promote policy and community change.

An incoming student would have a key role in co-constructing the culture of this new lab. I am looking for students eager to work at the intersections of Black psychology and law. The following projects are currently active and available should a student desire to use the data for a master's thesis:

The Sawubona Healing Virtual Circle Study, funded by SAMHSA, is longitudinal assessment of the efficacy of The Association of Black Psychologists Inc's Sawubona Healing Circles. This study is a collaboration with Drs. Angela Haeny and Chyrell Bellamy at Yale School of Medicine and The Association of Black Psychologists Inc (ABPsi). In 2020, The Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) drew attention to how the history of racism in the U.S. had created and

exacerbated extant medical racial inequities to the detriment of Black people. In consultation with the Black Family Summit, ABPsi developed a pilot investigation, the Sawubona Healing Circle (SHQ initiative, which are culturally-grounding healing circles to support Black first-responders. Since then, the groups have been expanded to offer support broadly within the Black-identifying African diaspora. The use of African terms and concepts from various African ethnic groups can be especially beneficial for strengthening a sense of pan-African ethnic identity among Black people making the Sawubona Healing Circle a candidate as an adjunctive support for Black people seeking treatment for mental health or substance use challenges; however, limited quantitative and preliminary qualitative data exists on the feasibility and acceptability of the Sawubona Healing Circle among Black people with mental health problems or substance use disorders. Grad students can train to become certified leaders through ABPsi and assist in the delivery of the intervention and/or assist in the development of mixed methods examination of the data (collection on-going).

The Haitian Well-Being Study is a multi-site collaboration with Dr. Judite Blanc at the University of Miami and Dr. Ernest Barthelemy at SUNY Downstate. The study aims to advance empirical knowledge on Haitian psychosocial, physiological, and cultural well-being. This mixed method, longitudinal study includes the assessment of physiological determinants of health, encounters with vicarious and lived trauma, mental health sequelae, and sociocultural variables (such as ethnic and racial identity, spirituality, and afri-cultural coping). Further, this study will result in the construction and validation of a novel measure of Anti-Haitian discrimination, which takes into account the transnational and dynamic nature of anti-Blackness. Participants include Haitians on the island and in the diaspora, with a key focus on those who have recently migrated. Grad students can hold focus groups and/or examine the data for their master's project.

Future projects in active development include the development of a grounded theory for a Black liberation psychology approach to forensic psychology and an assessment of the influences of the Institute for the Development of Human Arts' Decarcerating Care series on the attitudes and commitments of clinicians and community-based healers.

Abbey Eisenhower, PhD

Our research team shares interests in the early childhood and school experiences, family factors, and relationships of autistic children* and other groups of children during childhood and adolescence. We employ a neurodiversity-affirming lens to understanding autism and prioritize centering the first person perspectives of autistic students and adults. Our projects aim to equip teachers to support their autistic students in the classroom, to promote affirming resources for clinicians and others, and to uplift the views of autistic students and adults. Our research involves partnering with schools, early intervention agencies, teachers, and intervention providers.

An incoming student would likely complete a master's thesis based on one of the below projects. Team members also collaborate with one another on projects, and students contribute to the below studies in clinical, consultative, and research roles:

The Smooth Sailing Study, funded by the Institute of Education Sciences through an Initial Efficacy Grant (2023-2028, PI: Eisenhower), is an effort to improve early school experiences for autistic children. This is a two-site study with Dr. Jan Blacher's team at the University of California Riverside and in collaboration with Narmene Hamsho (Fairleigh-Dickinson University) and others. The transition to formal schooling is a crucial milestone for children, and autistic children may face particular challenges in school contexts that are often better set up for non-autistic children. At the same time, general education teachers report wanting better support to meet the needs of their autistic students. Our team is conducting a randomized, controlled trial (RCT) of our Smooth Sailing program, a professional development (PD) program on autism for teachers. The program was developed in partnership with teachers and with autistic students and adults and prioritizes a neurodiversity-affirming understanding of autism and supports teachers in building strong student-teacher relationships. Over 2023-2026 we will implement this PD program with 150 teachers in Boston-area and Southern California schools and assess its efficacy in improving teacher, student, and relational outcomes. Our team's grad students serve as coaches to teachers, assist in grant writing, and take a key role in developing training materials. Students may also conduct child observations, child interviews, or qualitative interviews with teachers or caregivers. Student projects can examine our already-collected longitudinal data on autistic children's school adjustment, family factors, and relationships. or involve the mixed methods data we are gathering from consultation, focus groups, surveys, and qualitative interviews with current and former autistic students as well as with teachers and parents.

The School Experiences Study, funded by a UMB Public Service Grant, is a qualitative interview study with autistic adolescents and adults regarding their school experiences, interactions with teachers and peers, and their identities as autistic students. Autistic consultants through this study served as expert consultants in our development of teacher trainings. Conducted in partnership with former grad student Sarah Levinson, Professor Shana Cohen at UCSD, and other non-autistic and autistic collaborators, our grounded theory-informed qualitative analysis has highlighted the power student-teacher relationships as affirming, empowering forces or ableist, exclusionary forces; the importance of intersectionality between students' autistic identities and other identities; and interactions between students' mental health needs and school-based discipline practices. These findings inform our development of person-centered training resources for teachers.

The Early Childhood Educators' Study. Early learning settings are crucial influences on children's social-emotional development. Unfortunately, one in six autistic children are expelled from child-care or preschool settings before starting kindergarten. Funded by a UMB Proposal Development Grant, we are developing a professional development (PD) program on autism for child-care and preschool educators. Qualitative interviews with educators, program development, and pilot-testing are underway in 2023-2024. In partnership with educators and

autistic collaborators, we are shaping this program to offer an autism-affirming, neurodiversity-informed lens on autism and help educators build positive relationships with neurodivergent young children.

The ABCD Early Screening Project, a collaboration with Dr. Alice Carter as well as researchers at BU and Rutgers, is a recently-completed study in which we implemented a multi-stage, early screening protocol with three local Early Intervention (EI) agencies. The project originally emerged from UMB grad student Frances Martinez Pedraza's dissertation and expanded with funding from HRSA and NIMH to address disparities in identification and service access for children of color, English learners, and children with low socioeconomic resources. We partnered with local EI agencies to screen 2300+ children and conduct over 500 developmental evaluations. Findings suggest that the multi-stage, universal screening program in EI can reduce disparities in the rates and ages of autism diagnosis for young children. Student projects within this rich, longitudinal dataset can examine questions around service access, parent-provider interactions, disparities, parent-child interactions, EI- and school-based service experiences, and other areas.

Student Projects

A sampling of current and recent projects my students are conducting is below:

- » The social and language development of bilingual versus monolingual Spanish- and English-speaking toddlers diagnosed with autism.
- » A critical autism studies approach to understanding quality of life and identity among autistic children and adolescents
- » The experiences and needs of early childhood educators working with autistic and neurodivergent young children.
- » A mixed-methods study of sexuality and well-being among women and gender fluid autistic adults
- » Autistic adults' experiences in therapy and mental health services
- » A qualitative study of autistic adolescents' and adults' views on factors enabling or impeding their self-advocacy in school
- » The role of parents' early developmental concerns in interacting with race to predict timing of autism diagnosis
- » An examination of autistic students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for content reflecting ableist or affirming messages about autism

» Experiences of identity, stigma, and intersectionality among autistic adolescents and adults.
» A critical examination of carceral practices in schools and the intersection with ableism and sanism for autistic students

» How student-teacher relationships shape autistic students' school experiences

*Identity-first language is used to reflect the preferences of many autistic individuals (e.g., Taboas et al., 2022; see Bottema-Beutel et al., 2020 for details).

Sarah Hayes-Skelton, PhD

My primary research involves examining the mechanisms and processes responsible for change in psychotherapy (e.g., cognitive-behavioral therapies or acceptance and mindfulness-based therapies) for social and generalized anxiety disorders, in other words, how and why treatments work. I am also currently expanding this work into perinatal anxiety (anxiety during pregnancy and after the birth of a child), with a focus on developing an acceptance-based prevention program for perinatal anxiety. Across my work, I am particularly committed to enhancing the cultural-sensitivity of treatments.

Within this larger interest, there are several types of projects that are in different stages of development:

Perinatal Anxiety Prevention Program

We are developing a prevention program to address perinatal anxiety (or anxiety during pregnancy and during the postpartum period). This program involves acceptance-based strategies and has provided an opportunity for students to be involved with treatment development work. Along with this prevention program, we also have a questionnaire study examining potential mechanisms of perinatal anxiety. I am particularly interested in mentoring a student on a Master's thesis focused on some part of this perinatal anxiety research.

Treatment and Mechanism Research

Most of the people on our team have an interest in treatment mechanisms. This takes many forms including the use of experimental paradigms to examine potential treatment mechanisms in lab-based analogue studies. For example, one student dissertation examined whether self-efficacy and finding personal meaning as predictors of approaching an anxiety-provoking situation.

We have recently completed a treatment study examining mechanisms of change within a standard group CBT for individuals with social anxiety disorder. Within this study, there was a particular focus on the combinations of specific mechanisms and processes of change. Several students have used data from this project for their research. There is the potential for additional

projects stemming from this study. For example, the video recordings of sessions could be coded for additional mechanisms of interest. We have also used this study to write about adaptations to enhance the cultural sensitivity of CBTs.

Similarly, we have developed and piloted an acceptance-based behavioral exposure therapy for social anxiety disorder that combines acceptance-based approaches with more traditional exposure exercises. We are currently preparing to run a study comparing this treatment to more traditional cognitive behavior therapy. This study will also provide an avenue for students on our team to learn these two therapies.

Social Anxiety Research

Our team has a particular interest in the development, maintenance, and treatment of social anxiety. In addition to the treatment research described above, our team also has been collecting questionnaire data on structural, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and sociocultural factors that may influence the development of social anxiety. I would also be interested in mentoring a student on a Master's thesis focused on this kind of social anxiety research.

Student Projects

Students on my research team have recently completed projects on:

- The development of a self-report measure of decentering
- The role of cognitive reappraisal in social anxiety
- Qualitative interviews with clients from our treatment study examining the kinds of experiences clients have following treatment
- A case study of cultural sensitive adaptations to CBT for social anxiety
- Examining trajectories of mindfulness, acceptance, and valued living across therapy for GAD
- Examining levels of social anxiety among individuals self-identifying as a sexual minority
- A vignette study examining trust development across the first session of therapy for clients of color.
- A workshop study to examine the influence of self-compassion training on one's roommate

I am interested in mentoring a graduate student who has a long-term interest in studying anxiety, perinatal anxiety, and/or psychotherapy or the contextual factors affecting these. We are a team-oriented lab and so members of the lab mentor and work collaboratively on ongoing projects.

Jean Rhodes, PhD

The Rhodes Lab is focused on the role of both informal and formal mentoring in the lives of marginalized adolescents and young adults. In recent years, we have become particularly interested in strategies that help bridge gaps in mental health and other services. Across various projects and collaborating labs, volunteer and paid mentors are being trained to assume the role of paraprofessionals (i.e., helpers to whom an aspect of a professional task is delegated but who are not licensed to practice as professionals) who deliver appropriate engagement, support, and/or service delivery activities under the supervision of professional mental health providers. Particularly given the global shortage of mental health professionals, the length and cost of professional training, the expense and difficulties associated with accessing mental health and wellness services, and the stigma and distrust that professional services carry in many marginalized communities, mentoring programs are well-positioned to help bridge gaps. We are currently testing a model in which volunteer mentors provide opportunities for children and adolescents to practice new skills that they are learning in therapy. The hope is that this will raise the effects and integrate the skills into the day-to-day lives of youth and their families.

We are also exploring how mentors can support technology-delivered interventions. The potential of online interventions to offer accessible and low-cost support has been limited by low use and high rates of noncompletion of even the best technology-delivered tools. Engaging marginalized youth and their families in educational and mental health services has always been a challenge and self-administered interventions are no exception, even when teachers and mental health care providers recommend them. In the absence of coaching and support, as many as three quarters of youth disengage from educational and mental health apps after their initial installation. When blended with coaching. However, these tools can produce effects that are more than double those without coaching. That's why in the new mentoring models we are exploring, mentors are trained to boost students' engagement by providing them with what behavioral scientists refer to as "supportive accountability"--that is, regular check-ins, monitoring, troubleshooting, and other interactions.

We have developed a Supportive Accountability platform, MentorHub, and are testing it across multiple contexts from K-12 to higher education. We have several other projects underway. This includes the collection of the largest ever data set of children of incarcerated children, comprehensive meta-analyses of various types of mentoring, longitudinal analyses of the most recent wave of the Ad Health data, and evaluations of youth-initiated mentoring approaches across various schools.

Professor Rhodes also provides research training to her graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, along with funding for assistantships, summer salary, and travel to professional meetings and statistical workshops. Her students' rigorous work has been recognized both within and beyond the university including the Chancellor's Distinguished Dissertation Award and the APA Division 27's Dissertation of the Year Award. Many of her students now hold

tenured or tenure-track positions at top national and international universities. We are a grant-supported, research-oriented lab so I am particularly interested in mentoring graduate students who are obsessed with research, have research experience, and can work independently--but also want to work collaboratively on our ongoing projects!

Karen Suyemoto, PhD

Karen Suyemoto Research Team

I look forward to reviewing applications from potential Fall 2024 students to join my research team.

Overall, my current research areas emphasize the psychological effects of racism and oppression and processes related to resistance and activism to promote individual, interpersonal, and organizational change for people of color generally and Asian Americans in particular. I have a joint appointment in Clinical Psychology and Asian American Studies and am affiliated with the Critical Ethnic and Community Studies Master's program. My approach to education/training and scholarship/research is therefore strongly informed by critical race studies and centering connections of the individual (intra psychic), relationships, and systemic influences.

Visioning and Values

At the center of my vision of psychology and of justice are healing, empathy, care, and authentic loving relationships. Overall, I have a whole person mentoring approach and hope that students working with me will also have a whole person approach, recognizing that other students, as well as professors and mentors, are whole (and imperfect) people and that positive relationships are reciprocal and take investment from all involved.

Applicants who would be a good match with me are those who are:

- Motivated to take personal responsibility for their learning and development and to be independently accountable but also collaborative and relationship oriented. Seeking to become clinical psychologists to use those skills both to directly benefit individuals and communities of color and to challenge the discipline to become more responsive and just.
- Interested in exploring complex both/and understandings that resist the binaries and oversimplifications that are characteristic of capitalistic White male supremacy.
- Willing to explore their own positionality in relation to both privilege and oppression as an integral part of developing skills as a psychologist, recognizing that this is hard and takes courage and effort.
- Invested in building trust and relationships across differences in privilege and oppression with attention to intersectionality, understanding that we are all constantly growing, likely to make mistakes, and need help from each other to become better.

- Seeking to personally and professionally grow in ways that actively appreciate what mainstream psychology can offer while also integrating a critical analysis that pushes themselves and the discipline to more fully center psychological healing and authentic relational process to advance justice

I am hoping that an incoming student working with me will share these values and seek to develop in those directions, to continue what is truly a lifetime journey. I believe that these are values that can guide a particular kind of developing as a psychologist, whether your ultimate career goals are academic, education, research, practice, or something else. At our best, my work and my team have been deeply relational, collectively oriented, and willing to struggle together as whole people who are imperfect but committed to positive growth and personal, as well as structural, change.

Current Projects and Directions

My prior work and students on my team have had a wide range of foci within experiences of Asian American ethnocultural and racial identities and mental health. Currently, however, I am more specifically seeking a student whose interests focus on racism and resistance to racial and intersectional oppression, particularly (but not exclusively) for or with Asian Americans given their (our) complex positionality within racial construction.

Students who come to work with me would most likely focus their Master's thesis on data from the Resistance and Empowerment Against Racism project, most of which is quantitative. Although this data is survey data, much of my work and that of my team is interview based qualitative work (e.g., grounded theory, CQR). I encourage students to develop method skills in both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Possible research foci for projects and prospective students include:

- Examining how people of color (and Asian Americans specifically) actively resist and work to change systemic racism and intersectional oppression and exploring the effects of such action on mental health and healing from racial trauma.
- Examining developmental trajectories for people as allies/accomplices or as activists, including structural challenges to this development.
- Exploring relational dynamics in activism, including the complexities of developing intersectional understandings, relationships, and coalitions for action and solidarity. I am interested in how people develop the deeper conscientization that rejects simplistic cancel culture and oppression Olympics, challenges the divide and conquer strategy that pits people of color (and intersectional oppressions) against each other, and centers personal accountability and relationships. This relates to my ongoing interest and related publications addressing issues of negotiating relative and ascribed privilege and de-centering a single experience of oppression.
- Developing and evaluating interventions to promote resistance, activism, and the development of related conscientization and interpersonal skills. This includes

continuing to explore transformative education as an influence on identity development, healing from racial trauma, and promoting social justice activism.

My team often works collaboratively on research projects, engaging in undergraduate and peer mentoring, support, and consultation as well as leadership and service within the university, community and the disciplines.