

Counseling, Developmental & Educational Psychology Ph.D. Cohort 2011

BOSTON COLLEGE
LYNCH SCHOOL OF
EDUCATION

Sarah Ash

program: Counseling Psychology

advisor: Dr. Lisa Goodman
 assistantships: Dr. Lisa Goodman
 Dr. Julie MacEvoy
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Describe your academic background and professional experiences.

As an undergraduate, I had my first exposure to the field of psychology as a volunteer at GLADHouse, an outpatient treatment facility for low-income youths in Cincinnati. This clinical experience inspired me to gain a deeper understanding of the field, which led me to become involved in research projects surrounding the effectiveness of psychotherapy among youths and adolescents. As a graduate student in Boston College's Master's program, I had the opportunity to be trained as an advocate for R.O.A.D., a grassroots organization created to support low-income women dealing with depression and systemic barriers. Each of these experiences has contributed to my overall interest in working with oppressed groups and utilizing community-based interventions.

Why did you select Boston College for your doctoral studies?

I selected Boston College for my doctoral studies in part because I had such a positive experience in the Master's program. I'm especially drawn to BC's emphasis on social justice, which I have already learned is prominent in both its coursework and research ventures. I am also looking forward to being a part of research projects being conducted concerning community-based mental health interventions.

Describe your research interests.

I am interested in community-based interventions among low-income and diverse populations.

What are your interests outside of academia?

Outside of the world of academia, I enjoy a great book or yoga class as well as coaching and playing soccer.

Dericka Denise Canada

program: Counseling Psychology

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Describe your academic background and professional experiences.

I am a student with a strong passion for the study and research of human behavior and social justice. I became interested in Psychology at a very young age, and in high school decided to pursue it as an academic degree. After my BA and my Masters of Education in Counseling Psychology at University of Louisville, I chose to pursue the PhD in Counseling Psychology because I find its emphasis on personal and interpersonal functioning with regards to emotional, social, educational, developmental intriguing. My interests and aspirations include not only studying human thought, behavior, and development, but also exploring these factors within the context of family systems and social justice perspectives to better understand cross-cultural issues. I have had many opportunities for research on various cross cultural and social justice topics as well as for working with various clinical populations within Louisville. I have also presented my work at professional conferences including the American Psychological Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapists 2009 Conference. I look forward to continuing my education at Boston College and joining the counseling Psychology Department team.

Why did you select Boston College for your doctoral studies?

I chose Boston college because of the Counseling Psychology Program's strong emphasis on social justice in combination with understanding psychological issues that face individuals and groups within our society. This is important to me as an ethnic minority student who is passionate about understanding ethnic minority individual and group experiences in and outside of therapy. The program's focus on research and the compatibility of my research interests with those of the faculty also influenced my choice.

Describe your research interests.

I seek to understand the dynamics of multi-and cross-cultural issues within and outside of counseling, and the life experiences of ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans, within U.S. society. This includes racial/ethnic identity development and the psychological effects of discrimination and racism. I want to use my research to develop interventions that enhance the lives of ethnic minority and low SES at-risk communities, as well as contribute to research on African Americans.

What are your interests outside of academia?

I am interested in "all things crafts", e.g., jewelry making, scrapbooking and decorating and have a special interest in photography. I enjoy working with children through mentoring programs and spending time with my family and friends. I also enjoy cooking and getting recipes from the Food Network.

Melissa Collins

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advisor: Dr. Jackie Lerner

assistantships: Dr. Elida Laski
Dr. Rebekah Levine Coley

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Describe your academic background and professional experiences.

I graduated from Harvard in 2008 with a degree in Psychology, and over the past few years I've been involved in very different types of research. As an undergraduate, I worked as a research assistant in the Gilbert Lab, studying affective forecasting, and in the Cognitive Evolution Lab, studying the evolution of music and language through work with cottontop tamarins. After graduating, I worked as a research assistant at the Center for Social Development and Education at UMass Boston, where we were interested in the social development of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Most recently, I worked as the research & evaluation coordinator at Jumpstart, where I helped coordinate the assessment of over 6,000 preschool-aged children participating in Jumpstart all across the US.

Why did you select Boston College for your doctoral studies?

I remember looking through the faculty profiles on the ADEP website and feeling a connection with nearly every professor's research interests — it was so hard to choose! I love the flexibility of the PhD program and how students are encouraged to work with more than one professor over the course of their studies. Plus, I have always loved Boston College's beautiful campus and can't wait for football season.

Describe your research interests.

I am interested broadly in early education, particularly in exploring how young children learn and how teaching methods and learning environments may affect learning outcomes.

What are your interests outside of academia?

I love sports and the outdoors, so I try to play soccer, run, and hike as much as possible. I also play clarinet and am the proud owner of the world's most endearing beagle, Lady.

Meghan Colleen Commins

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assistantships: Dr. Belle Liang

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Describe your academic background and professional experiences.

I completed my undergraduate degree at Boston College as a double major in Economics and Human Development with a minor in Organizational Studies. My work focused on issues facing women and children in and from the developing world. I worked with Dr. Liang and other students to begin the GenerationPulse project in which I continue to be involved. After graduation I worked as a Research Analyst in a corporate setting, tutored emotionally disturbed children, and taught pre-school before returning to BC for a Masters in Counseling Psychology and certificate in Human Rights and International Justice. As a Masters student, I remained involved with Dr. Liang's team working to expand GenerationPulse and also working on research with Kay Children International regarding Bolivian street children. I served as an advocate for the ROAD program and interned at the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Why did you select Boston College for your doctoral studies?

Boston College was an obvious choice for my doctoral studies as I have had overwhelmingly positive experiences in both my undergraduate and Masters programs. Both the larger university and our smaller department share a focus on social justice with which I identified as a high school student searching for colleges. I have found the academic programs at Boston College help me to refine my passions, develop skills, and find ways to act as an agent for change.

Describe your research interests.

I am interested in research with low income and immigrant populations, especially women and children. I enjoy quantitative research though hope to learn more qualitative methods and further explore participatory action research.

What are your interests outside of academia?

Outside of academia I am involved in the Paulist Center church community and enjoy working with young students at the School of Peace on Saturdays. Also, I love to dance and am a Nia white belt. I enjoy traveling, exploring new places, meeting new people, cooking, crafting, and practicing Spanish.

Alice Connors Kellgren

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Dr. David Blustein

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Describe your academic background and professional experiences.

I received my Bachelors degree from Cornell University, where I majored in Human Development. While I was at Cornell I ran a small after school program for youth living in mobile home parks. Since receiving my BS in 2010 I have been living an detaching English in Tanzania.

Why did you select Boston College for your doctoral studies?

I love that BC's Counseling Psychology program is very focused on social justice and a holistic view of the field. The warmth and friendliness of the faculty just sealed the deal.

Describe your research interests.

I'm interested in investigating the different facets of growing up in poverty in order to develop counseling frameworks specifically for children from low socio-economic strata.

What are your interests outside of academia?

I love to cook (and eat!), do yoga and run, go on outdoor adventures, and read. I'm interested in politics and women's rights, as well as nutrition and wine.

Craig DiGiovanni

program: Counseling Psychology

advisor: Dr. Paul Poteat

assistantships: Dr. Paul Poteat

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Describe your academic background and professional experiences.

I attended Worcester Polytechnic Institute and graduated in 2009 with a B.S. in chemical engineering and a minor in psychology. It's here that my interest in research emerged — not only through my engineering training, but also through completing an eight week project for the Namibian Tourism Board to develop a prototype system to report the country's tourism trends. I then took up reading psychology books and came across the works of Maslow and Rogers, which quickly propelled me to pursue my inherent interest in the field. I was able to obtain a research assistantship in a social psychology lab at WPI where I ran and designed experiments, as well as presented our findings at various local conferences.

After deciding that engineering wasn't my calling, I applied to Boston College's program in Mental Health Counseling. With Dr. Paul Poteat I examined the effects of homophobic victimization on mental health and educational outcomes. My second year practicum took place at the Waltham House at a group home for LGBTQ teenagers in state custody. My practicum allowed me to combine my research interests in the LGBTQ population with clinical practice.

Why did you select Boston College for your doctoral studies?

Having left my undergraduate university as an engineer with little training in psychology, I was often anxious of the process of starting in a fresh field and learning the seemingly different "language" of psychology. However, I quickly found that the social justice atmosphere coupled with the compassionate faculty helped me explore my own identity, as well as aided in learning this new "language". I feel privileged to continue onto my doctorate at Boston College and learn from such a fantastic community of counselors and researchers.

Describe your research interests.

My research interests currently focus on sexual minority identity development, as well as the unique social processes of sexual minorities and its interaction with mental health.

What are your interests outside of academia?

I'm an aspiring genealogist and have traced my family history back at least four generations. My other spare time is filled with running, kayaking, hiking, biking, exploring new places, and cooking with friends.

Milena Doerfer

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Describe your academic background and professional experiences.

When I moved to the United States from Germany, I began working as a client advocate for survivors of sexual assault and became interested in trauma and human rights-related topics. As an undergraduate I worked in research at a Veterans' Affairs PTSD laboratory at Boston University and at the Trauma Center in Brookline, MA. I was intrigued by the subject matter and after graduating from Boston University, I became a full-time research assistant at Tufts Medical Center, exploring mental health issues of youth and families. There I decided to combine my interest for research, clinical practice, and advocacy in psychology, and I entered the mental health counseling MA program at Boston College. During that time, I was fortunate enough to join Dr. Tummala-Narra on research related to the unique experiences of immigration, including issues of acculturation, identity development, coping and resiliency. Cumulatively, these experiences strengthened my desire to become a psychologist and I look forward to further refine my interests during my doctoral studies.

Why did you select Boston College for your doctoral studies?

Besides the program's philosophy of training multi-culturally competent clinicians, researchers, and educators, I appreciated the mentoring relationships with faculty during my Master's studies. I felt well supported in my studies and as an additional plus, many of my own interests match current faculty research. I am particularly happy to continue working with Dr. Tummala-Narra to explore issues of psychological trauma; acculturation; and ethnic/racial discrimination amongst immigrant populations.

Describe your research interests.

My research foci encompass topics at the intersection of counseling psychology, human rights and social justice. During my doctoral training, I would like to (1) enhance my knowledge of ecologically-informed interventions in post-traumatic recover, (2) examine processes of acculturation in immigrants from a human rights perspective, and (3) promote social justice in the experiences of immigrant and ethnic minority groups by employing individual and community-based interventions.

What are your interests outside of academia?

I love to spend time with my husband, my friends, and my two yellow labs (Cuba and Mojo). We often go for long walks on the beach or do some hiking. I am also a passionate traveler who enjoys getting to know foreign cultures, meet other people and try new cuisines. I also teach German to children at the German Saturday School in Boston.

Anna Ermakova

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 assistantships: Dr. Marina Vasilyeva
 Dr. Elida Laski
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Describe your academic background and professional experiences.

My initial studies in Business and Management shifted when I realized that I would only feel satisfied with a career choice that would allow me to closely interact with and impact people on a day to day basis, leading me to the field of psychology. I have obtained both a second Bachelor's and a Master's in psychology and have been reassured that academic research and teaching naturally fit my personality and my talents. Most of all, I enjoy them!

I have gained research experience through involvement with the Tennessee Intervention for Pregnant Smokers project. As a part of my job, I especially enjoyed conducting developmental testing of 13-18 month-old children of the research participants, which contributed to my choice of Developmental Psychology as a focus for my PhD.

I was blessed with a delightful and rich semester-long experience of teaching an undergraduate Principles of Psychological Research laboratory which confirmed my decision to become a professor conducting research and teaching.

Why did you select Boston College for your doctoral studies?

Along with the well-recognized academic merit of the CDEP department at BC, what struck me the most about this department was the genuineness of its faculty. I saw people who love their jobs, are interested with their students, and care about the impact that their research will have on children's lives.

Describe your research interests.

Psychology and mathematics have been my two independent areas of expertise for quite a while now, and I am excited to join Dr. Vasilyeva and Dr. Laski in marrying the two into one as we research math strategies used by elementary school children, particularly in the context of cross-cultural difference.

What are your interests outside of academia?

I enjoy traveling with my husband and having long conversations with him on the road, singing with our friends in their living room, spending time alone, taking in the beauty of life. I enjoy making every day of my life count, whether it is by helping a stranger or encouraging a friend.

Miriam Heyman

program: Applied Developmental & Educational Psychology

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assistantships: Penny Hauser-Cram
Beth Casey

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Describe your academic background and professional experiences.

In 2004, I received a BA in political science and history from the University of Rochester. After graduating, I began work as an elementary school teacher in New York City. I taught in a self-contained special education classroom, and my students had a wide range of disabilities. I taught academics as well as social skills and functional daily living skills. After three years of teaching, I wanted to learn about education from a wider perspective. In order to do so, I accepted a job at Cicatelli Associates, Inc. (CAI), a nonprofit organization that provides education for employees of health and human services agencies. I worked at CAI for two years, and my responsibilities included coordinating training programs and producing reports for funders of these programs. After leaving CAI, I wanted to switch my focus to research so that I could better understand the contexts that affect learning processes. In 2009, I began the ADEP MA Program at the Lynch School. As I worked towards my MA, I worked as a research assistant on a project funded by the National Science Foundation entitled "the Social Ecology of the Home and first-Grade Girls' Spatial Skills and Early Math Strategies". Through working on this project, I was able to learn a great deal about the research process as well as develop and refine my own research interests.

Why did you select Boston College for your doctoral studies?

I chose Boston College because the research interests of faculty members align closely with my own research interests. Also, as a student in the ADEP MA Program, I learned that students and faculty members at Boston College have created an enormously supportive learning environment.

Describe your research interests.

I would like to explore the impact of the home environment on learning. Specifically, I am interested in home environment variables that relate to poverty, and I am especially interested in how these variables affect students with disabilities.

What are your interests outside of academia?

I enjoy reading, exercising, eating out, and spending time with family and friends.

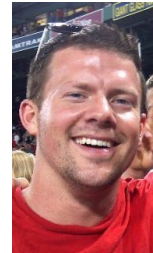
Evan Burton Michel

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Describe your academic background and professional experiences.

After graduating with a B.A. in Psychology from Bates College in 2005, I moved to Boston and began working as a research coordinator at Mass. General Hospital in the Pediatric Psychopharmacology Dept. Following this opportunity in 2007, I became a Supervisor/Mental Health Specialist on the CBAT Unit at Franciscan Hospital for Children. In 2009, I entered the M.A. Counseling Psychology program at BC with my internship at the McLean/Franciscan Child and Adolescent Inpatient Unit. I completed my M.A. in May 2011.

Why did you select Boston College for your doctoral studies?

Due to the high quality of professors and specific focus on social justice, BC provides tremendous opportunities for my personal and professional growth. Having earned my Master's at BC, I jumped at the opportunity to continue my education here. Working with the variety of professors, peers and clients, the diverse experiences will be tremendous.

Describe your research interests.

I would like to conduct research on systemic and social influences of child/adolescent depression, anger, self-harm and suicidal ideation/behavior.

What are your interests outside of academia?

I enjoy watching and participating in a variety of sports, spending time with family and friends, and exploring Boston and the surrounding area with all the experiences this brings.

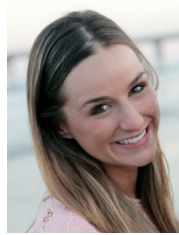
Jacqueline Prince Sims

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Describe your academic background and professional experiences.

As an undergraduate, I studied psychology and worked as both a Research Assistant and Independent Study in the Wilbourn Infant Lab at Duke. While conducting my thesis exploring early language development, I was also able to work closely with both health and educational issues abroad. As a research Assistant with the Duke Global Health Institute, I worked with the Women's Institute for Secondary Education and Research (WISER) in Muhuru Bay, Kenya conducting qualitative interviews assessing the origins of HIV misconceptions. Our research team worked to develop a family-based HIV intervention that included the entire local community. Following these experiences, I served in a joint position as Project Coordinator at Duke with the Family Life Project as well as Lab Manager in the Language Development Lab at Duke. With the Family Life Project, we examined how mother-child interactions vary as a function of income and race and how these interactions influence language development.

Why did you select Boston College for your doctoral studies?

From the moment I learned about the ADEP program, I was impressed by the program structure and by the faculty's research. The more I learned about the program, the more I felt comfortable envisioning myself working within it. The students and faculty were incredibly helpful, honest, and supportive every step of the application and decision-making process, and since selecting Boston College I have been more and more impressed with them! Most importantly, I am very excited about the research of multiple faculty members, particularly within the context of the multi-mentor model.

Describe your research interests.

While I know that my research interests will evolve through study at BC, I am broadly interested in studying the factors that affect development in diverse populations with the goal of better understanding social interventions.

What are your interests outside of academia?

I love doing anything with family and friends. I also love traveling, running, and reading. Last but not least, I have an unhealthy obsession with thrift stores!