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Autism Spectrum and Developmental Disabilities  
Special Interest Group

## November 2019 Newsletter

ABCT 2019 is right around the corner! We hope to see many of you in Atlanta next week. When making your conference plans, please check out the stellar line-up of ASDD content below! ABCT is an excellent time to catch up with friends, network with colleagues and leaders in the field, and learn new things to bring back to your home institution.

We would like to highlight 3 events that are particularly geared toward networking:

- 1) The Thursday night ASDD SIG Happy Hour at the Painted Pin ([www.paintedpin.com](http://www.paintedpin.com)), immediately following the SIG Pre-Conference. This will be a great opportunity to catch up with your colleagues and continue conversations from the PreCon (and squeeze in a round of bowling, ping pong, or jumbo jenga!).
- 2) The Friday night Cocktail Party/SIG Exposition (6:30-8:30 pm), where 12 of our SIG members are presenting their interesting work.
- 3) The Friday morning (6:30 am) fun run/walk ([http://www.abct.org/conv2019/docs/Fun\\_Run.pdf](http://www.abct.org/conv2019/docs/Fun_Run.pdf)). Our SIG is sponsoring the fun run/walk this year, so we would really like to see a good turn-out! We also hope that the ASDD SIG business meeting (Friday 10:30-noon) is on your calendars – you don't want to miss the keynote from Dr. Ami Klin!

If you haven't already, please register for our pre-conference ([www.abctautism.com](http://www.abctautism.com)). We have a lot of exciting talks and activities planned for you all. We are grateful for the opportunity to gather at the Marcus Autism Center and learn about their cutting-edge research and clinical services. We

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Lindsey Burrell, and Hannah Morton) for all their efforts to make our time together in Atlanta as valuable and fun as possible!

We would like to thank the five SIG members who volunteered to spotlight their labs during the ASDD SIG takeover week of the ABCT listserv. They put together an impressive collection of content and helpful resources to disseminate to the broader ABCT community, which is a primary goal of our SIG. They also showed great patience and understanding as ABCT leadership worked through some technical difficulties with posting on the listserv, so thank you again to Drs. Susan White, Nicole Stadnick, Connor Kerns, Lindsey Burrell, and Cara Pugliese!

If you have any questions that we could answer about the upcoming conference, please don't hesitate to reach out!

Safe travels to Atlanta!

-Karen Bearss and Brenna Maddox, your SIG Co-Leaders

## Student & Faculty ASDD Spotlight



**Jessica Granieri**  
(Stony Brook University)

**Brief bio:** I am a psychology Master's student at Stony Brook University on



**Rebecca Handsman**  
(Children's National Hospital)

**Brief bio:** I am a clinical research assistant at the Center for Autism

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research assistant in Stony Brook's Social Competence and Treatment Lab, under the direct mentorship of Dr. Matthew Lerner.

**Current research/future directions:**

Broadly speaking, our research in the Social Competence and Treatment Lab explores various factors that influence "real world" social functioning, how those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) navigate and understand their social environment, as well as the effects of a peer-mediated, performance based intervention on socialization skills. Specifically, I am interested in exploring the effects that stigma surrounding ASD have on peer relationships, and whether factors and efforts to alleviate stigma (e.g. inclusion and psycho-education) subsequently have an effect on friendship between those with ASD and their typically developing peers. Relatedly, I am currently working on a project examining how patterns of nonverbal behavior that are particular to those with ASD may influence their friendships with other peers with ASD in unique ways. Additionally, I am interested in interventions which target socialization of those with ASD, as well as comorbid anxiety disorders.

**Fun fact?** A fun fact about myself is that I am completely obsessed with

from Briarcliff Manor, New York and attended the University of Rochester for my undergraduate degrees. In college, I studied brain and cognitive science and worked with Dr. Loisa Bennetto studying attentional preferences in kids with and without autism spectrum disorder.

**Current research/future directions:** I am currently working on a study with Dr. Cara Pugliese, which examines the influence of an executive functioning intervention on various functional outcomes in adolescents with ASD. Additionally, I am working on a study with Dr. Lauren Kenworthy looking at various learning mechanisms in children with ASD. In the future, I hope to continue investigating learning in ASD and how we can tailor our interventions to best support children in the classroom.

**Fun hobbies?** Outside of psychology, I really enjoy travelling, reading, and exploring all that D.C. has to offer!

**Advice for other students?** Some advice that I have for other students working on research is to make sure to manage your time well and take breaks when needed. It can be easy to get carried away with all of your projects so it's very important to take time for yourself

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extracurricular activities, hanging out or going on “adventures” with them!

**Advice for other students?** My advice for other students working on research is to really find an area that you are not only interested in, but passionate about. Also, do not be afraid or embarrassed to ask questions or learn from those with more experience than you.

**What are you looking forward to at ABCT this year?** For this year’s conference, I am really excited for my talk at ABCT-ASDD SIG’s preconference event. I am also excited to see all the other research in and outside my specific area of research.

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We are looking forward to seeing everyone at ABCT! In preparation, please click on the button below to access a list of the following:

- ASDD SIG Posters
- Symposia, panels, and posters on ASD and DD topics

learn about other research within this field. I think it will be a great learning opportunity to hear from professionals that are studying very different things than what I have personally explored!



**Dr. Judy Reaven**  
(University of Colorado Denver)

**Brief bio:** I am originally from St. Louis, MO (go Cardinals!). I completed my undergraduate work at Vanderbilt University and doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Missouri – Columbia. I am currently Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Also, I am Associate Director of JFK Partners, and Director of Research at JFK Partners (University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities).

**Current research/future directions:**

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## ASDD topics!

subsequently studying, a group CBT intervention for youth with ASD and anxiety (Facing Your Fears). Results of a number of different treatment trials have indicated the youth participants have demonstrated significant reductions in anxiety following participation in FYF in the clinic setting as well as in schools. Our group has not only been interested in modifying this intervention for children and teens with anxiety across the spectrum, but we are particularly interested in working to implement FYF in “real world” settings such as schools to increase access to mental health care for many youth with ASD, especially traditionally underserved youth.

**Fun fact?** I enjoy many typical Colorado hobbies – like biking, hiking and camping, as well as seeing live theater (especially musical theater). Fun fact: I am really into watching BBC thrillers on Netflix.

**Advice for other students?** Follow your curiosity and be patient.

**What are you looking forward to at ABCT this year?** I always learn something new at ABCT!– so I am looking forward to attending clinical roundtables/symposia/keynotes on

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## Advice for Networking at Conferences: An Interview with Matt Lerner

By Megan Bracconier



We had the opportunity to talk to Matt Lerner, Ph.D., from Stony Brook University to get his advice for students on networking at conferences. He believes that networking is important, not only for finding graduate school mentors or jump-starting your career, but for making personal connections with potential colleagues and collaborators, and that conferences provide a unique opportunity to engage in conversations with people who share your interests and passions. Here are some of his best tips for successful networking:

### How to Network: From Approach to Follow-Up

- Professors and researchers *want* to connect with the next generation of researchers to share ideas and are usually fine with being approached by students.
- At conferences, the goal should be to follow the 80/20 rule. This means that you should aim to spend about 80% of your time at conferences networking and about 20% of your time attending presentations. It is important to be okay with deviating from your planned itinerary to prioritize a meaningful personal interaction.
- Have a “bucket list” of researchers and clinicians that you would like to meet and look for opportunities to introduce yourself.
- Go beyond the “elevator pitch.” You should be prepared to talk about: (1) what is important about you (who are you, what stage of your training you are in) (2) what helps you stand out (training experiences you have had, novel data collection or intervention methods you have used), and (3) why this person’s work specifically interests you. You want to cater the conversation to the

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- Be authentic and genuine! Think about what you genuinely want to say to this person to spark a meaningful conversation. Focus on starting conversations with people that you *want to* talk to, not people that you feel you *should* talk to.
- If the individual seems to have time to talk further, ask him/her to sit and chat for a few minutes.
- Have questions prepared regarding their current research, talks or events that they are excited about at the conference, or process/methodological topics in their recent work.
- At the end of the conversation, do not necessarily ask for anything, but ask about remaining connected or following up about a subject that you discussed and then follow through on the plan to remain in touch.

### Dealing with Anxiety

- Networking can be anxiety provoking for students and early career researchers who see more senior researchers as rock stars, but it is important to remember that these individuals are not generally treated that way in their everyday lives, and conferences are the one place where our research idols actually get approached about their work, so they are generally happy to have students and colleagues approach them.
- If you are feeling anxious about networking, then use our best empirically-supported treatment for anxiety: exposure! Tell yourself that you *will* talk to 3 of the people on your bucket list and follow through on your plan.

### How Not to Network: Common Networking Mistakes

- Pay attention to social cues. Assess whether or not this is a good time for this person to be approached or engage in conversation. There's a difference between approaching someone in the line for coffee or while they are waiting for a presentation to start and approaching someone while they are rushing to get to a meeting or an event. If the individual seems busy or has a group of people waiting to speak with him/her, it is okay to say, "If you have the opportunity, I'd love to follow up with you later."
- Don't miss the opportunity to make a meaningful connection by introducing yourself and then walking away without attempting to start a conversation.
- Dress appropriately and in a way that demonstrates professionalism.
- Don't be too clingy – leave your new research friends wanting to hear from you again!
- Most importantly, be nice to everyone! Don't criticize other people/programs/projects. Not only will you come off as a negative person, but you never know who is standing nearby.

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## Upcoming Events & Announcements

- **Grad School Opportunity:** Undergrads and post-bacs! Are you looking to apply to graduate school and want to continue your work with children on the autism spectrum? Dr. Lauren Quetsch is a new Assistant Professor at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville in the Department of Psychological Science's Clinical Psychology PhD program. Her research focuses on providing evidence-based treatments for children on the autism spectrum with disruptive behavior disorders. Consider applying! Applications due December 1st, 2019. <https://fci.uark.edu>
- **Post Doc Opportunity:** The Postdoctoral Psychology Fellowship in Autism Spectrum Disorders at Children's National will provide focused experience in the evaluation and treatment of, as well as research with, children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder and related conditions. The fellow will have the opportunity to provide diagnostic, developmental, and neuropsychological evaluations within the context of multidisciplinary teams. Clinical activities will also include advanced training in ADOS-2/ ADI-R and opportunities for individual and group therapy. Weekly didactics, case conferences, and individual and group supervision are all provided. The fellow will participate in ongoing research projects through CASD, which can include neuroimaging, cognitive phenotyping, intervention studies focusing on executive functions, medical populations at risk for ASD, females with autism, and gender variance. For more details visit: <https://childrensnational.org/research-and-education/healthcare-education/residencies-and-fellowships/fellowship-programs/autism-clinical-postdoctoral-fellowship>



- **Student Spotlight/Award:** Please join Dr. Angela Scarpa in congratulating this year's 2019-20 Virginia Tech Center for Autism Research SEED Student Award recipient. Tyler McFayden is working with mentor Dr. Robin Panneton and co-mentor Dr. Tom Ollendick. Her study is titled "Social & Nonsocial Multisensory Integration in Toddlers with Autism Spectrum Disorder." Tyler has also been named the VTCAR Student Fellow of the Year!
- **Virginia Tech Mobile Autism Clinic (MAC):** Click [HERE](#) to read recent updates about VT's outreach initiative!

## Featured ASDD SIG Publications

- Black, M., Mahdi, S., Milbourn, B., Thompson, C., D'Angelo, A., Strom, E., Falkmer, M., Falkmer, T., Lerner, M.D., Halladay, A., Gerber, A.H., Esposito, C.M., Girdler, S., Bolte, S. (*in press*). **Perspectives of key stakeholders on employment of autistic adults across the USA, Australia and Sweden.** *Autism Research*.
- Gerber, A.H., Girard, J.M., Scott, S.B., & Lerner, M.D. (*in press*). **Alexithymia – not Autism – is associated with frequency of social interactions in adults.** *Behaviour Research and Therapy*.
- Goldstein, T.R. Lerner, M.D., Paterson, S., Jaggi, L., Toub, T.S., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R.M. (*in press*). **Stakeholder Perceptions of the Effects of a Public School-Based Theatre Program for Children with ASD.** *Journal of Learning Through the Arts*.
- Kang, E., Clarkson, T., Keifer, C.M., Rosen, T.E., Lerner, M.D. (*in press*). **Discrete electrocortical predictors of anxiety and anxiety-related treatment response in youth with autism spectrum disorder.** *Biological Psychology*.
- Kang, E., Gadow, K.D., & Lerner, M.D. (*in press*). **Atypical communication characteristics, differential diagnosis, and the autism spectrum disorder clinical phenotype in youth.** *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*.
- Keifer, C.M., Dichter, G.A., McPartland, J.C., Lerner, M.D. (*in press*). **Social motivation in autism: gaps and directions for measurement of a putative core construct** [Commentary on

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**the late positive potential and P300 to emotional faces in individuals with autism spectrum disorder.** *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders.*

- Kerns, CM, Berkowitz, SJ, Moskowitz, L, Drahotka, A, Lerner, MD, UCAS Consortium, Newschaffer, CJ. (in press) **Screening and treatment of trauma-related symptoms in youth with autism spectrum disorder amongst community providers.** *Autism.*
- Kim, H., Greene, A., Eaton, N.R., Lerner, M.D., & Gadow, K.D. (in press). **Is There a General Factor of the Autism Symptom Phenotype?** *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.*
- Kim, H., Keifer, C.M., Rodriguez-Seijas, C., Eaton, N.R., Lerner, M.D., & Gadow, K.D. (in press). **Quantifying the optimal structure of the autism phenotype: a comprehensive comparison of dimensional, categorical, and hybrid models.** *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2018.09.431>
- Maddox, B. B., Crabbe, S., Beidas, R. S., Brookman-Frazee, L., Cannuscio, C. C., Miller, J. S., Nicolaidis, C., & Mandell, D. S. (in press). **“I wouldn’t know where to start”: Perspectives from clinicians, agency leaders, and autistic adults on improving community mental health services for autistic adults.** *Autism.*
- Maddox, B. B., Crabbe, S., Fishman, J. M., Beidas, R. S., Brookman-Frazee, L., Miller, J. S., Nicolaidis, C., & Mandell, D. S. (2019). **Factors influencing the use of cognitive-behavioral therapy with autistic adults: A survey of community mental health clinicians.** *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders.* Advance online publication. doi:10.1007/s10803-019-04156-0
- Marro, B.M.,Kang, E.,Hauschild, K.M., Normansell, K.M., Abu-Ramadan, T.M., Lerner, M.D. (in press). **Social performance-based interventions promote gains in social knowledge in the absence of explicit training for youth with autism spectrum disorder.** *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic.*
- Mikami, A.Y., Miller, M., Lerner, M.D. (in press). **Social functioning in youth with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and autism spectrum disorder: transdiagnostic commonalities and differences.** *Clinical Psychology Review.*
- Rodriguez-Seijas, C., Gadow, K. D., Rosen, T.E., Kim, H., Lerner, M.D., Eaton, N. R. (in press). **A transdiagnostic model of psychiatric symptom co-occurrence and autism spectrum disorder.** *Autism Research.*
- Rosen, T.E.,Spaulding, C.J.,Gates, J.A.,Gadow, K.D., & Lerner, M.D. (in press). **Autism severity, co-occurring psychopathology, and intellectual functioning predict supportive school services for youth with ASD.** *Autism.*
- Russo-Ponsaran, N.M., Lerner, M.D., McKown, C., Weber, R.J., Karls, A., Kang, E., Sommer, S.L. (in press). **Web-based assessment of social cognition in school-age youth with autism spectrum disorder.** *Autism Research.*
- Scott, M., Milbourn, B., Falkmer, M., Bölte, S., Halladay, A., Lerner. M.D., Lounds-Taylor, J., Girdler, S. (in press). **Factors impacting employment for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A scoping review.** *Autism.*

**We'd like to give a big THANK YOU to the hard work of the  
ASDD SIG Communications Committee:**

Megan Braconnier

Rebecca Lindsey

Hannah Rea

Isaac Smith

Deanna Swain (Committee Chair)

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Brenna Maddox

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