



ImPrints

MPSI IS PART OF THE DIVISION OF RESEARCH AT WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY, DETROIT, MI

FALL 2019

Newest Faculty Member Talks Trauma, Relationships, and Making Statistics Exciting

Jennifer M. Gómez PhD, came to MPSI two years ago as one of Wayne State's first fellows in its new postdoctoral to faculty transition program. The program provides stipends, benefits and mentors for up to three years to carefully selected candidates whose research shows extreme promise. Fellows who win external funding during this period can earn a tenure-track appointment.

Dr. Gómez was awarded the Ford Fellowship, administered by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, & Medicine, during her first year, and, after only two years, she



"I love teaching. I get really enriched from students."

– Dr. Gómez

has been promoted to assistant professor at MPSI and the Department of Psychology. The Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory (CBTT) she created is gaining ground. This year, she and collaborator Dr. Robyn Gobin published a theoretical peer-reviewed journal article

about CBTT, tying it to black women and the #MeToo movement.

In 2019 alone, Dr. Gómez authored four publications and co-authored one; won a WSU Certificate of Appreciation for helping build an inclusive community; finalized one book chapter and co-authored another; sat on the editorial board of three journals; is lead co-editor

of an upcoming special issue of *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* on discrimination, violence, and healing; and was selected by Academy members to present at the National Academy of Sciences Kavli Frontiers

see [TRAUMA](#) page 2

Identifying Barriers to Father Involvement

Children can reap great benefits when their fathers are involved. Research shows improved social-emotional and cognitive development when a father is a regular part of a young child's life. But some Michigan laws and policies make it difficult for fathers, especially low-income fathers, to stay connected to their children. Child support debt, for example, can invoke severe punishment, even incarceration, that restricts a non-custodial father's right to visit his children.

Carolyn Dayton, PhD, an associate professor in the School of Social Work and the associate director of MPSI's Infant Mental Health Program, would like to change that. This summer she and colleagues from the U-M organized a Fatherhood Policy Forum to identify Michigan policies and laws that

see [FATHERS](#) page 5



Participants in the 2019 Michigan Infant Mental Health Conference, including WSU Infant Mental Health Program leaders.

It's been 30 years since Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute graduated its first Infant Mental Health Certificate student. This landmark makes it one of the longest running programs of its kind in the country. "Our program provides expert interdisciplinary training to help students better understand and support the infant-caregiver relationship," said IMH Director Ann Stacks, PhD, IMH-E(IV). In 30 years, it has helped to create nearly 200 professionals working in the field of infant mental health. "With longevity comes impact," she said.

Infant Mental Health Program Celebrates 30 Years

see [30 YEARS](#) page 3

Trauma from page 1

of Science Symposium, thus making her a Fellow. “I guess I’ve been pretty busy,” she said with a laugh.

What is Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory?

CBTT considers the factors that contribute to the severity of trauma in minority populations, especially the betrayal of trust within that cultural community. “Rape can be traumatic for anyone,” Dr. Gómez explained. “But if the rapist is also Black the trauma is deepened by the profound breach of within-group trust.” Her Ford Foundation Fellowship funded her work on the creation of the Cultural Betrayal Multi-dimensional Inventory for Black Emerging Adults, which tests CBTT. The scale covers multiple types of trauma, including racial discrimination, police violence, sex trafficking, and witnessing abuse. She and her collaborator, WSU Psychology Assistant Professor Dr. Lars Johnson, tested the CBMI with 300 African American emerging adults and will validate it with about another 150.

“We include measures of (intra)cultural support and post-traumatic growth,” Dr. Gómez said. “Understanding traits like individual and group-level strength and resilience can help when developing interventions.” Questions on the CBMI are worded carefully. “A young woman may say no to being ‘raped,’ but say yes, that she has been forced to have sex. A teen may deny ever having been ‘abused,’ but admit that he has been hit multiple times.” By avoiding labels and describing behavior, Dr. Gómez hopes the scale will capture information more accurately.

Research at the Margins

Much of Dr. Gómez’ work focuses on how violence impacts marginalized, emerging adults. As a clinical psychology trainee, she worked with female survivors of interpersonal violence. “I saw how race, class, gender, and culture all come into play,” she said. “I take an evidence-informed, feminist approach known as relational cultural therapy that puts the problem in context without assigning pathology.” For example, a Latina woman is the victim of domestic violence from her Latino husband. Rather than focus on an illness, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, Dr. Gómez would discuss the interpersonal and cultural betrayals within the violence

Dr. Gómez (3rd from the left) and fellow women scientists at the National Academy of Sciences, Kavli Frontier of Sciences Symposium. The women strike powerful poses to mirror the background portrait of NAS’ all-male founders



“*For me, the theory strives to make sense out of what happens to marginalized people. Now it’s time to send it outward and see if other people agree.*”

– Dr. Gómez

and how the couple regularly encounters workplace discrimination. “In that context, the woman is not seen as diseased or damaged. Her feelings are a natural response to all that is going on,” Gómez said.

She finds the emerging adult period fascinating. “You aren’t fully grown but you aren’t an adolescent. Violence and discrimination are more likely and mental health problems increase.” Identifying traumas and cultural betrayal during this critical period could lead to earlier and more effective interventions.

Up Next

Teaching starts winter semester with two classes: *Ethics & Diversity* for graduate students, and *Statistical Methods in Psychology* for undergrads. “I love teaching,” Dr. Gómez said. “I get really enriched from students.” She wanted to teach stats, “be-

cause it scares people. It scared me. I do not love stats for the sake of it; I love how it produces knowledge that can change the world.” She hopes to pass that excitement and appreciation to her students. “The nation would benefit if we all had a better understanding of statistics.”

Though she will have more tasks to juggle, she doesn’t feel overwhelmed. A former ballerina with the Dance Theatre of Harlem, she relaxes with cardio exercise, music, visiting lakes, and watching gymnastics. She’s developed strong communities at MPSI and the Department of Psychology. “I feel respected and supported. It’s a joy to come to work,” she said.

Dr. Gómez is also committed to public scholarship, like her piece on discrimination on the job market (excluding WSU) in *Inside Higher Ed* and her op-ed to about 7,000 readers in *The Conversation* on “The Unique Harm of Sexual Abuse in the Black Community.” She hopes her Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory will be embraced by researchers and clinicians to critique and expand it. “Multiple minds will improve it, give it more depth and make it more nuanced,” she said. “For me, the theory strives to make sense out of what happens to marginalized people. Now it’s time to send it outward and see if other people agree.”

Follow Dr. Gómez’ work through her website at <http://jmgomez.org> or on her Twitter account @JenniferMGmez1



MERRILL PALMER
SKILLMAN INSTITUTE

100 YEARS

for Child & Family
Development

Time to get ready!



You're Invited to our
100th Birthday!

*Attend our once-in-a-century
celebration of MPSI's centennial,
held on WSU's campus.*

May 20 – Evening reception in the atrium of the Walter Reuther Library. View our exhibit charting the history of Merrill Palmer and its impact on Detroit across the century. Panels summarize multiple themes, including: *The Bequest*, *Struggling for Direction*, *The Daring Experiment*, *Science for Change* and *Exclusion & Inclusion*.

Dr. Kyle Ciani, Professor, Department of History at Illinois State University, will provide remarks. Dr. Ciani specializes in the histories of women and gender across the Americas and has written about the women of the Merrill-Palmer School.

May 21 – Symposium at McGregor Conference Center. Keynote is renowned developmental psychologist Dr. Vonnie McLoyd, professor in the U-M department of psychology and recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, known also as a “genius” grant. The esteemed five-year fellowship is awarded to individuals who show exceptional creativity.

Questions or RSVP to
CaitlinLyons@wayne.edu or
313-664-2505. Or go to Eventbrite.com
and search “Merrill Palmer”
in Detroit for online registration.

30 Years from page 1

MPSI's infant mental health program has survived and thrived by responding to changing student and community needs. An extensive review of the certificate program in 2010 pointed to the need for more depth and integration with students' majors and an increased focus on research. The new Dual-Title Degree in Infant Mental Health, launched in 2012, became the first such program in the country. Courses fit well with major coursework and meet the Michigan Association for Infant Mental health endorsement criteria.

“The change to a dual-title option was a response to the changing needs of students and MPSI,” said Dr. Carla Barron, IMH's clinical coordinator. Approximately 10 graduate students each year, from psychology, nursing or social work, choose the dual-title degree. While some IMH programs have struggled, MPSI's shift with the times has kept the program vibrant and successful.

Karol Wilson, LMSW, is a 1993 graduate of the original certificate program. Now a supervisor with Starfish Family Services, Karol finds students from the dual-title program “have been immersed in what attachment means” and understand the importance of early relationships. They are encouraged to not always have the answers but “to be present with the family.” She appreciates the practicum where students make home visits, parent-child observations and experience real-life situations. “We recruit students from the dual-title because we know they have these intrinsic qualities.”

Dr. Stacks also credits MPSI's Director Peter Lichtenberg with the IMH's continued success. He organized the



Dr. Mickey Sperlich, now an assistant professor at the University at Buffalo, was the first to earn a dual-title PhD in social work. Shown here with her newborn in 2013.

program review committee and helped revise the program in response to feedback. “Dr. Lichtenberg gets major credit for our longstanding success,” she said. “He took the program review seriously, supported me during difficult decisions and was willing to invest in the program and its staff. I am ever grateful.”

MPSI is particularly indebted to the early impassioned vision of Deborah Weatherston, PhD, who co-founded its Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate Program in Infant Mental Health in 1988 and served as its director until 2004. The training program included graduate level coursework, clinical field placements, observations of infant development in relationships, and space for clinicians to reflect on their work. Nearly 100 students earned their Infant Mental Health Certificate during Dr. Weatherston's tenure, and she co-authored the first *Manual for Infant Mental Health Home Visiting*, now in its third edition. MPSI recently established an endowed scholarship for students in the dual-title program in her honor (see page 4).

The first 1,000 days of a child's life are critical to lifelong mental and physical health. Happy Birthday to MPSI's Infant Mental Health program. May the education and experience it provides reap rewards for countless infants and families to come.



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY • CRITICAL PERIODS STUDY

HELP US LEARN ABOUT
YOUR CHILD'S
DEVELOPMENT

Now recruiting families of 8-9 year olds
PAID RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

cpbd.wayne@gmail.com | (586) 275-7584

Weatherston Endowment

Scholarship Help for Students Studying Infant Mental Health

The Deborah Weatherston Scholarship in Infant Mental Health is now endowed with a balance of more than \$30,000, and will generate funds for generations of students without ever diminishing in principal. The scholarship provides financial support to students in MPSI's Dual-Title Program in Infant Mental Health who struggle to afford the additional coursework and expenses required for completion.

Dr. Weatherston created MPSI's Infant Mental Health program 30 years ago and directed it until 2004. She has had a far-reaching and transformative impact on persons who work with infants and toddlers, and on the field of Infant Mental Health. Her early career at MPSI culminat-

ed in a lifetime of leadership, mentoring, and developmental and clinical work – all in the service of infant mental health. MPSI created a scholarship in her name to honor these profound achievements.

Dr. Weatherston's achievements measurably improved the welfare of infants in Michigan, the United States and around the world.

A gift to the Weatherston Scholarship supports graduate students enrolled in MPSI's Infant Mental Health Dual-Title program, a track that requires them to add a concentration in infant mental health to

their major in psychology, social work, or nursing. All students, whether pursuing a master's or doctoral degree, must take at least four additional classes to graduate with the IMH dual-title. Many dual-title students are single parents and the first generation in their family to attend college.

The average cost to take coursework associated with a master's degree at Wayne State University is \$50,000. Students often struggle to afford the coursework and expenses required for their primary degree, not to mention the additional expenses of the dual-title option. They work hard, driven by their passion to support nurturing caregiver-child relationships and promote the healthy development of infants.

After graduation, the majority of dual-title students become infant mental health colleagues, working as IMH clinicians in the metro Detroit area and often moving on to supervisory or training roles.

Please help us by considering a donation toward the Weatherston Scholarship in Infant Mental Health and sharing this information with others who might wish to contribute toward this important scholarship. We couldn't do it without you.



Student research assistants practice setting up video equipment to capture caregiver-child interactions for the infant mental health study *Hearts and minds on Babies*.

Make a gift at online at: <https://giving.wayne.edu/donate>.

Click **Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute** in the dropdown for designation.

Then in "Other designation or notes about gift," type "**Weather19**".

Dr. Weatherston and our students in Infant Mental Health thank you.

Together We Can Make Our Mark on History



**MAIL YOUR
GIFT TO:**

WSU, Beecher House
c/o Fund Office
5475 Woodward Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202

2019 Print
MPSI FALL
NEWSLETTER

Name _____

Address _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Make checks payable to: MPSI/WSU-Weatherston, Check # _____

CREDIT: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ American Express

Card# _____

Exp.Date _____ Amount

Signature _____



**MERRILL PALMER
SKILLMAN INSTITUTE**
for Child & Family Development

mpsi

NEWS & HONORS



Drinking, Drugs & Pregnancy

– MPSI faculty members **Steve Ondersma, PhD**, and **John Hannigan, PhD**, published separate research

recently examining how healthcare providers determine substance abuse in pregnant patients. Dr. Ondersma found that screening questionnaires used by physicians may not accurately identify the nearly 25% of pregnant women using alcohol, tobacco or other substances. His research, *Accuracy of Five Self-report Screening Instruments for Substance Use in Pregnancy*, was published in the June 19 issues of *Addiction*.

Dr. Hannigan's research found that many prenatal care providers inadequately inform their patients about the risks of drinking during pregnancy. No amount of alcohol use during pregnancy has been proven safe, yet more than one-third of midwives and nurses surveyed thought that some level of drinking was acceptable. Dr. Hannigan's study, *Prenatal Alcohol Screening during Pregnancy by Midwives and Nurses* appeared in the June 11 issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*.



Notable Woman of 2019 – Hilary Marusak, PhD, a former predoctoral research fellow at MPSI, was selected by *Crain's Detroit Business* magazine as one of 2019's Notable Women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). She works extensively with Kids Kicking Cancer to test whether meditation and martial arts therapy reduce pain and anxiety in children with cancer. Dr. Marusak's research into the effects of childhood cancer and trauma on brain development has been funded by the National

Institute of Mental Health and the American Cancer Society. Award recipients were selected by career accomplishments, successes in the field, contributions to their community, and mentorship of others. Dr. Marusak is a tenure-track assistant professor in WSU's department of psychiatry and behavioral neuro-science.

Infant Mental Health Superstar – The winner of the 2019 Hiram Fitzgerald Award from the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health is MPSI's **Carla Barron, PhD, IMH-E@(IV)**. As the IMH clinical coordinator, Dr. Barron co-facilitates an infant mental health seminar for advanced students and works with faculty and community agencies to support student growth and learning. She has conducted trainings and co-authored a number of publications on reflective supervision, home visiting, and early parenting. The Fitzgerald Award recognizes an emerging scholar whose innovative research enhances the quality for life for infants, young children and families. Dr. Barron has worked as an IMH specialist since 1996.



Dr. Barron receives her PhD at WSU's spring ceremony.



Fathers

from page 1

keep fathers from remaining active in the lives of their children. "We invited stakeholders from throughout Detroit who want to promote fathers' involvement with their families," Dr. Dayton said. The 40 participants included researchers from several universities, lawyers and court officials, directors of fatherhood intervention programs, and fathers who received support-

ive services from fatherhood programs.

Billed as an "action oriented meeting," participants prepped beforehand to make the meeting more productive. "Everyone wrote answers to core questions a few weeks before the forum, to get them thinking about policy obstacles and alternative ideas," Dr. Dayton said. "Then we all joined forces to develop, revise and enhance father-friendly policies." One idea was to forgive a portion of child sup-

port debt for fathers who participate in workforce development or parent training programs. Other ideas included the establishment of a state level fatherhood commission to coordinate fatherhood initiatives across the state, and using social and electronic media to implement early paternity education programs for unmarried and expectant mothers and fathers.

Follow up meetings will refine the ideas and determine next steps toward change. "I am passionate about helping dads be more central in their children's care," Dr. Dayton said. "Babies are biologically primed to connect with both parents. Fathers shouldn't be left out."

If you are a stakeholder and interested in sharing ideas, please contact Dr. Carolyn Dayton at carolyn.dayton@wayne.edu. The forum is a collaboration with the advisory group of the Michigan Action Plan for Father Involvement, tasked with achieving greater inclusivity for fathers.

The Freer House
71 E. Ferry St.
Detroit, MI 48202
313-664-2500

Non-Profit
US Postage
PAID
Detroit, MI
Permit #3844

2019 FALL NEWSLETTER



Editor: Cheryl Deep
Designer: Catherine Blasio

WSU Board of Governors

Bryan Barnhill II
Michael Busuito
Mark Gaffney
Marilyn Kelly
Anil Kumar
Sandra Hughes O'Brien
Dana Thompson
Kim Trent, *chair*
M. Roy Wilson, *ex-officio*

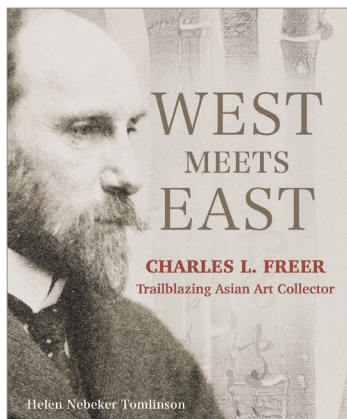


MERRILL PALMER SKILLMAN INSTITUTE, WSU, DETROIT MI | www.mpsi.wayne.edu

The historic Freer House is home to MPSI faculty, administrative offices and meeting rooms.

Freer House: Home to Enduring Legacies

On Sunday, November 10, the Freer House will mark the centennial of Charles Freer's death (1854-1919) with a very special lecture by Helen Tomlinson, the author of an exciting new biography entitled: *Charles L. Freer: Trailblazing Collector of Asian Art* (Mascot Press, 2019). Dr. Tomlinson's book is the first biography on Freer in more than 25 years.



Tomlinson



Brunk

In 1979, Dr. Tomlinson wrote one of the first doctoral theses on Freer and has now fulfilled her lifelong goal of writing an authoritative account of Freer's fascinating life and legacy. Dr. Tomlinson is a former college professor of history who also spent time in the business world. She has had a long fascination with Freer's extraordinary acumen as a businessman and a pioneering collector devoted to American and Asian art, research and education.

In addition to marking the centennial of Freer's passing, this special lecture program is dedicated to the memory of Freer House historian, scholar and supporter Dr. Thomas W. Brunk, on the one-year anniversary of his death (1947-1918).



EVENT DETAILS

Lecture: Sunday, Nov. 10, 2:00 pm
Reception & house tours: 3:30-5:00 pm
\$15 general public
\$10 Freer House members & students

The Freer House
(Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute)
71 E. Ferry St., Detroit MI, 48202

Parking is available in WSU Lot # 35, behind the Freer House/MPSI complex. Entrance off John R between E. Palmer and E. Ferry. \$8.50 with credit card at the gate. No cash accepted.

Seating is limited and RSVP with advance payment is required. Contact **Rose Foster** at 313-664-2509 or rmfoster@wayne.edu