

**Alea Corin Skwara, M.A.**

**Ph.D. Candidate**

Department of Psychology  
University of California, Davis

Center for Mind and Brain  
267 Cousteau Place  
Davis, CA 95618  
*askwara@ucdavis.edu* ☎ (828) 273-8595

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**EDUCATION**

- 2021 (expected) **Ph.D. in Psychology**, University of California, Davis  
Concentration in Cognitive Neuroscience  
Minor in Quantitative Psychology  
Advisor: Dr. Clifford Saron  
  
Dissertation topic: Implications for training compassion: Longitudinal EEG measures during 3-month meditation retreats  
*Advanced to Candidacy 2018*
- 2017 **M.A. in Psychology**, University of California, Davis
- 2009 **B.A. in Theatre**, Davidson College
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**RESEARCH TRAINING**

- 2014-Present *Graduate Student Researcher*  
University of California, Davis  
Saron Lab, Center for Mind and Brain, Clifford Saron *PI*
- 2012-2014 *Lab Manager*  
Harvard University  
Affective Neuroscience and Development Laboratory, Leah Somerville *PI*
- 2011-2012 *Research Assistant*  
New York University  
Contemplative Science Laboratory, Zoran Josipovic *PI*  
Social Perception and Evaluation Laboratory, Jay Van Bavel *PI*  
Social Neuroscience Laboratory, David Amodio *PI*
- 2008 *Undergraduate Research Assistant*  
University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill  
Peer Relations Laboratory, Mitch Prinstein *PI*
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**RESEARCH SUPPORT**

- 2020 University of California, Davis Academic Senate New Research Initiatives and Interdisciplinary Research Grant (\$25,000)  
*Building bridges: Narrowing the legal-scientific divide in immigration forensic assessments*  
Patrick Marius Koga, *PI*; Raquel Aldana, *PI*. Role: Co-I

- 2019 Fetzter Institute Research Partnership Support Grant (\$218,000)  
*Pathways for training compassion: Motivational salience of suffering and interpersonal resonance in daily life*  
Clifford Saron, PI. Role: Co-I
- 2018 Compassion Institute Research Program Grant (\$108,000)  
*Pathways for training compassion: Motivational salience of suffering and interpersonal resonance in daily life*  
Clifford D. Saron, PI. Role: Co-I
- 2013 Harvard University Mind/Brain/Behavior Graduate Student Research Award (\$10,000)  
*Effects of mindfulness meditation on moral cognition*  
Co-Awardees: Julia Lee; Oliver Hauser; Alek Chakroff; Gordon Kraft-Todd; and Adrian Ward  
Francesca Gino, Faculty Sponsor. Role: Co-I
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## PUBLICATIONS

### Articles in Peer Reviewed Journals

- Zanesco AP, **Skwara AC**, King BG, Powers CE, Wineberg KR, & Saron CD (2021). Meditation training modulates brain electric microstates and felt states of awareness. *Human Brain Mapping*.
- Shields GS, **Skwara AC**, King BG, Zanesco AP, & Saron CD (2020). Deconstructing the effects of concentration meditation practice on interference control: The roles of controlled attention and inflammatory activity. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 89, 256-267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbi.2020.06.034>
- Zanesco AP, King BG, **Skwara AC**, & Saron CD (2020). Within and between-person correlates of the temporal dynamics of resting EEG microstates. *NeuroImage*, 211, 116631. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroimage.2020.116631>
- Somerville LH, Haddara N, Sasse SF, **Skwara AC**, Moran JM, & Figner B (2018). Dissecting “peer presence” and “decisions” to deepen understanding of peer influence on adolescent risky choice. *Child Development*, 90(6), 2086-2103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13081>
- Somerville LH, van den Bulk BG, & **Skwara AC** (2014). Response to: The triadic model perspective for the study of adolescent motivated behavior. *Brain and Cognition*, 89, 112-113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandc.2014.01.003>

### Book Chapters

- Skwara AC**, King BG & Saron CD (2017). Studies of training compassion: What have we learned, what remains unknown? In E.M. Seppala, E. Simon-Thomas, S.L. Brown, M.C. Worline, C.D. Cameron, & J.R. Doty (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science* (pp. 219-236). New York: Oxford University Press.

### Submitted Manuscripts

- Skwara AC**, King BG, Zanesco AP, & Saron CD (*under review*). Changing baselines: Longitudinal reductions in EEG oscillatory beta power characterize resting brain activity in meditators.

### Manuscripts in Preparation for Peer Review

- Skwara AC**, Zanesco AP, King BG, & Saron CD (in prep). Widening the circle of care: Microstate correlates of compassion training.

Aldana RE, Koga PM, O'Donnell TW, Perris, C., & **Skwara AC** (*in prep*). Trauma as exclusion, trauma as inclusion: Examining the role of trauma in the US immigration system.

King BG, Zanesco AP, **Skwara AC**, & Saron CD (*in prep*). Cultivating concern for others' well-being: Meditation training and the motivation to engage with human suffering.

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## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

### Invited Talks

**Skwara AC** (2021, April). "Compassion is a skill that can be learned." Global Learning Conference, UC Davis, Davis CA.

Aldana RE, Howard SP, Koga PM, O'Donnell TW, Perris C, **Skwara AC**, & Velazquez C (2021, April). "Bridging the Legal Scientific Divide in Immigration Forensic Assessments." Global Migration Center Faculty Seminar, UC Davis, Davis, CA.

**Skwara AC** (2019, October). "Trauma and memory in the brain: Relevance neuroscience of neuroscience research in the case of refugees and asylum seekers". Second UC Davis Refugee Forum, UC Davis Medical Center, Sacramento, CA.

**Skwara AC** (2018, May). "From the self to the social: Contemplative practice as a path to compassion." Invited talk presented at The Historical Trauma and Transformation Studies Research Festival, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

### Talks and Papers

Aldana RE, Koga PM, O'Donnell TW, & **Skwara AC** (2021, October). "Trauma as exclusion: Trauma as inclusion." Panel presentation at the Latina and Latino Critical Legal Theory Biennial Conference, Online.

**Skwara AC**, Shields GS, King BG, Zanesco AP, & Saron, CD (2020, November). "Calm abiding meditation, inflammation, and attention: A computational modeling approach to understanding the effects of meditation retreat on attentional subprocesses." Talk presented at the Contemplative Research Conference, Online.

**Skwara AC** (2016, November). "Resting theta/beta ratio predicts emotional responses to suffering in the context of an intensive meditation retreat." Talk presented at the International Symposium for Contemplative Studies, San Diego, CA.

Somerville LH, Kastman, EK, Sasse SF, & **Skwara AC** (2014, May). "Sustained affective processes: Neural mechanisms and developmental trajectories." In *Biological Psychiatry*, 75, 9, 163S-163S, New York, NY.

### Poster Presentations

#### First Author Presentations

**Skwara AC**, King BG, Zanesco AP, Powers CE, Wineberg KR, & Saron CD (2018, November). "Retreat-related reductions in EEG beta band power observed during mindfulness of breathing practice are maintained at rest." International Symposium for Contemplative Research, Phoenix, AZ.

**Skwara AC**, King BG, Zanesco AP, Powers CD, Wineberg KR, Saggat M, Aichele SR, Bridwell DA, Jacobs TL, MacLean KA, Sahdra BK, Ferrer E, Wallace A, & Saron CD (2015, October). "Resting theta/beta ratios

increase reliably over the course of intensive three month meditation retreats.” Presentation at the Society for Neuroscience annual meeting, Chicago, IL.

**Skwara AC**, King BG, Zanesco AP, Powers CD, Wineberg KR, Sagar M, Aichele SR, Bridwell DA, Jacobs TL, MacLean KA, Sahdra BK, Ferrer E, Wallace A, & Saron CD (2015, August). “Resting theta/beta ratios increase reliably over the course of intensive three month meditation retreats.” Presentation at the Mind and Life Europe Summer Research Institute, Chiemsee, Germany.

**Skwara AC**, Kastman EK, Sasse SF, & Somerville LH. (2014, April). “Diffuse shifts in whole-brain functional connectivity during temporal uncertainty.” Presentation at the Cognitive Neuroscience Society annual meeting, Boston, MA.

#### Other Presentations

Zanesco AP, **Skwara AC**, King BG, & Saron CD (2019, June). “Meditation training modulates the strength and temporal dynamics of brain electric microstates.” Presentation at the Mind and Life Summer Research Institute, Garrison, NY.

Rodman AM, Insel C, **Skwara AC**, Kastman EK, Sasse SF, & Somerville, LH (2015, May). “Reduced cognitive interference by temporal uncertainty in adolescence.” Presentation at the Association for Psychological Science Annual Convention, New York, NY.

Shermohammed M, **Skwara AC**, Ezie C, Rabinowitz AG, & Somerville LH (2015, May). “Attenuation of physiological arousal to uncertainty during the adolescent transition.” Presentation at the Association for Psychological Science Annual Convention, New York, NY.

Insel C, Rodman AM, **Skwara AC**, Kastman EK, Sasse SF, & Somerville LH (2014, September). “Adolescents show unique behavioral and neural responses to unpredictable positive cues.” Presentation at Flux Developmental Neuroscience Society, Hollywood, CA.

Rodman AM, Insel C, **Skwara AC**, Kastman EK, Sasse SF, & Somerville LH (2014, September). “Temporal uncertainty differentially impacts concurrent task performance across development.” Presentation at Flux Developmental Neuroscience Society, Hollywood, CA.

Somerville LH, Kastman EK, Sasse SF, & **Skwara AC**. (2014, May). “Sustained affective processes: Neural mechanisms and developmental trajectories”. Talk at the Society for Biological Psychiatry, New York, NY.

Insel C, **Skwara AC**, Sasse SF, Kastman EK, & Somerville LH. (2014, April). “Heightened influence of unpredictability on emotional interference and striatal response to positive stimuli in adolescents.” Presentation at the Social and Affective Neuroscience Society, New York, NY.

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## TEACHING AND MENTORSHIP

### Course Instruction

#### **Teaching practicum in Cognitive Neuroscience – Spring, 2019**

Responsible for 20% of course instruction, including course development, lecture preparation and presentation, exam development, and grading. Successful completion will certify me to sole instruct Cognitive Neuroscience in the UC Davis Department of Psychology.

### Laboratory Instruction

## Statistical Analysis of Psychological Data – Fall 2016; Winter 2018

Prepare lectures and provide instruction on implementing basic statistical analyses in R

## Applied Psychometrics – Winter 2017

Provide instruction on conducting factor analysis in R package lavaan

### Teaching Assistantships

Applied Psychometrics – Winter 2017

Cognitive Neuroscience – Spring 2017; Fall 2017; Fall 2018; Spring 2019

Cognitive Psychology – Winter 2019

Introduction to Psychology – Summer 2017

Language and Cognition – Spring 2018

Personality Psychology – Summer 2017

Statistical Analysis of Psychological Data – Fall 2016; Winter 2018

### Guest Lectures

“Consciousness, Mindfulness, and Meditation” for Introduction to Psychology – Summer 2017

### Mentorship

I have mentored groups of undergraduates at both Harvard University and University of California Davis. This includes running group laboratory meetings and journal clubs, and one-on-one instruction and support.

#### UC Davis

Riddhi Barbhuiya (2019-Present)

ThanhThanh Vo (2019-Present)

Kasia Shebloski (2018-2020)

Rani Shah (2018-2020)

Kelsey Davinson (2018-2019)

Katherine Stein (2018-2019)

Alison Kwok (2015-2016)

#### Harvard

Chiemeka Ezie (2013-2014)

Kristen Osborne (2013-2014)

Zuzanna Wojcieszak (2012-2014)

Ariel Rabinowitz (2012-2013)

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### MEDIA AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

- 2021 UC Davis Grad Slam – Describe your dissertation in 3 minutes or less
- 2021 “On Consciousness with Bernard Baars” Podcast – Recurring guest and student interviewer
- 2020 Public comment on Proposed Rule RIN 1125 AA94: Procedure for Asylum and Withholding of Removal; Credible Fear and Reasonable Fear Review
- 2019 “Angry: All about feelings, pt. 3,” Brains On! Podcast, American Public Media.
- 2017 “Grads, grilled,” UC Davis Institute for Social Sciences, Davis CA  
<https://socialscience.ucdavis.edu/iss-journal/grads-grilled/26-alea-skwara>
- 2014-2015 “The adolescent brain,” Brain Awareness Week, Cambridge, MA
- 2014-2015 “The adolescent brain,” Harvard Affective Neuroscience and Development Laboratory youth educational workshops, Cambridge, MA
- 2013 “The adolescent brain,” PBS Nova Science Café, Cambridge MA
- 2012 “The feeling brain,” MedNeuro “VisualCME” series, Geld, N (producer), New York, NY
- 2011-2012 Early stage development and communications, MedNeuro, New York, NY

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### LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

- 2020-Present Mentor-Mentee Program in Humanities, Arts, Cultural Studies, and Social Sciences, *Mentor*
- 2018-Present Review Editor, “Blockchain for Good,” specialty section of *Frontiers in Blockchain*
- 2018-2020 N Street Cohousing Mediation Committee, *Co-chair*

2018	UC Davis Psychology Graduate Orientation, <i>Invited TA Panelist</i>
2017	International Rescue Committee, Sacramento, <i>Refugee Resettlement Volunteer</i>
2016-2017	UC Davis Psychology Student Association, <i>Treasurer</i>
2015-2016	UC Davis Psychology Student Association, <i>Graduate Student Representative</i>
2012	Social Brain Sciences Symposium (New England Area Meeting), <i>Assistant Organizer</i>
2011-2013	Society for Mind Brain Science, <i>Communications and Media Strategist</i>

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### TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS

2019	Compassion Cultivation Training, Online, <i>Student</i>
2019	Cortana Friends Todi Week, Todi Italy, <i>Research Fellow</i>
2018	Mind and Life Europe Summer Research Institute, Chiemsee Germany, <i>New Investigator</i>
2018	Varela Symposium, Santa Fe NM, <i>Research Fellow</i>
2016	Mind and Life Summer Research Institute, Garrison NY <i>New Investigator</i>
2015	Mind and Life Europe Summer Research Institute, Chiemsee Germany, <i>New Investigator</i>
2015	NIMH/UC Davis ERP Boot Camp, Davis CA, <i>Trainee</i>
2013	Stanford Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education Summer Research Institute, Telluride CO, <i>Research Fellow</i>
2013	Leadership for New Emergence, Boston MA, <i>Trainee</i>
2012	Mind and Life Summer Research Institute, Garrison NY, <i>New Investigator</i>

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### SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARDS

2021	UC Davis Grad Slam Dissertation Competition, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Place
2019	Todi Week Student Travel Scholarship, Cortana Friends (\$2,100)
2019	UC Davis Psychology Professional Development Award (\$400)
2018	International Symposium for Contemplative Research Student Scholarship (\$300)
2016	UC Davis Psychology Department Summer Research Fellowship (\$5,000)
2016	International Symposium for Contemplative Studies Student Scholarship (\$315)
2006-2008	Davidson College Harper Scholarship for Vocal Performance, <i>Awardee</i>

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### PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Fluent in English, conversational in French, basic Spanish; Proficient in Matlab, Python, and R; Statistical analysis including multilevel modeling, structural equation modeling, and longitudinal data analysis; EEG; fMRI; Psychophysiology; Psychological instrument development; Introductory meditation instruction; University level course instruction; Grant writing; Project and team management; Public speaking