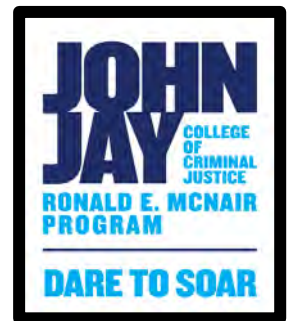


2021-2022



The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Ronald E. McNair Scholars'  
Research Journal



John Jay College of Criminal Justice  
City University of New York (CUNY)



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# Message From the Directors

Academic year 2021-2022 was a hybrid year under the COVID-19 Pandemic – more flexibility and pivoting needed. Our scholars as usual rose to the occasion, even as new strains of COVID hit. We mostly continued virtual conferences and graduate school fairs; oral presentations by video; bonding over WhatsApp.... We get better and better at digital and video communications – but they aren't very satisfying as the major or only form of communication. So we successfully held as much in person Spring 2022 as we could – the research methods class, posters and a presentation for research week; and our 2022 Roundtable and Awards program were all in person! We started out the academic year welcoming 8 new scholars to the program with our second virtual orientation. We hosted virtual workshops with several McNair Alumni from around the country. We learned together about graduate school, research strategies, and stress reduction practices.

We are quite proud of our McNair Scholars for all they have accomplished – especially under a continuing pandemic and all the struggles surrounding it. We are very impressed with how our Scholars have been supporting each other and the group chats.

Our second year Scholars (new graduates) finished their research and applied to graduate schools. Their work is featured in this journal; and readers will be impressed with the depth and breadth of topics our Scholars cover: from Political Science, Psychology, Criminal Justice, Sociology to English. Some participated in Summer Research Opportunities Programs at Michigan State University and the University of California, Irvine, in addition to McNair; and in addition to all the other honors, and extracurricular activities you will read about. Our graduates and alumnae have started Ph.D. and Master's programs, with a mix of in person and online experiences. Many of them were accepted to Ph.D. programs with full funding! We are very proud of all these accomplishments.

Our first years learned about the McNair program, found mentors and solidified their research projects. They completed our research methods course and are moving into their second year of the McNair Program. They have been bonding with each other. You will meet them briefly in these pages.

We also want to recognize our faculty mentors for their time and effort mentoring McNair Scholars, even with all the other responsibilities they had. Thank you for investing in our students. McNair mentors show each student that they believe in their potential. They have changed our students' lives for the better, and for good. The confidence our mentors have in our institution and our students brings John Jay to the next level of success. We know there have been challenges to keep up with the scholars virtually and during a pandemic, but each of our mentors have stepped up and continued to engage in excellent mentoring. You will meet them in these pages.

This program does not run without our full time Associate Director and part time graduate assistants. Thanks to them for their commitment, hard work, and flexibility.

Congratulations Scholars! Please read about their research and accomplishments – and enjoy.

- *Jessica Gordon-Nembhard*

- *S. Ernest Lee*

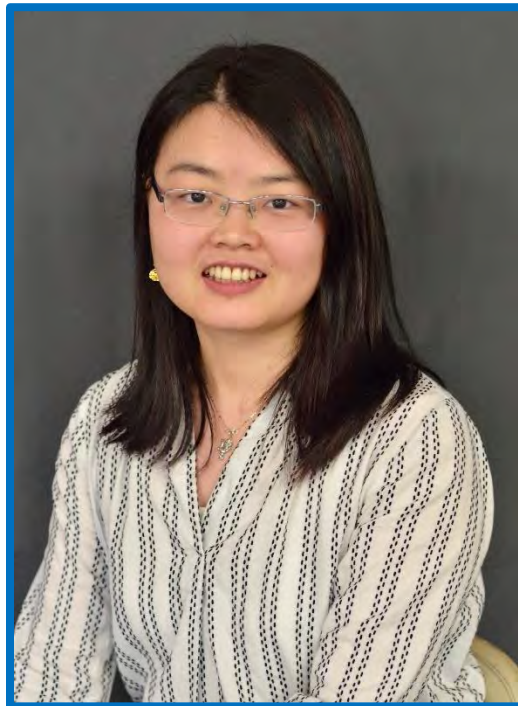
Jessica Gordon-Nembhard, Ph.D., Director

S. Ernest Lee, Ph.D., Associate Director

# Alumni Spotlight

This year the McNair Program recognizes an alumnus who received her PhD during the 2021-2022 academic year. She is:

**Dr. Qian Li** ('16) earned her PhD in Clinical Psychology from the Department of Psychology at the University of Memphis. She previously received a Bachelor of Arts in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Her dissertation is entitled “Behavioral Addiction from the Asian Americans Perspective: Exploration of Public and Help-Seeking Stigma” examined public stigma toward behavioral addictions and the impact of both public stigma and help-seeking stigma on Asian Americans’ willingness to seek mental health services. Currently, Dr. Li is a postdoctoral fellow at the Northport VA Medical Center, working in Primary Care Mental Health Integration and Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.





# McNair Awards

**Dr. Ronald E. McNair** was born in Lake City, South Carolina in 1950. He picked cotton and tobacco as a child to help his family's finances. He graduated *magna cum laude* in 1971 with a B.S. in Physics. He enrolled in a Ph.D. program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As his dissertation was nearing completion, he lost all of his research data and re-created it within a few months. He received his Ph.D. in Physics in 1976 and was selected as a NASA astronaut candidate in 1978. The second African American in space, McNair logged a total of 191 hours in orbit before he died in the *Challenger* disaster in 1984. He was a married father of two, a fifth-degree black belt, and an accomplished jazz saxophonist.

**The Spirit of McNair Award** has been established to honor McNair Scholars who best exemplify the qualities of Dr. Ronald E. McNair. This year, the award is given to **Ms. Angelina Benli**.



One of the most impressive things about Ms. Benli is her perseverance and determination to pursue a PhD. For most of her undergraduate career Ms. Benli has worked almost full time to support herself and was able to maintain excellent marks. However, when the pandemic hit, Ms. Benli worked as a front line and essential worker in a pharmacy, where she was tasked with taking on additional hours and working directly with customers. Her work schedule increased even more after the approval of the vaccine. While the personal and financial effects of the pandemic impacted Ms. Benli greatly, she never lost track of her focus of preparing for doctoral study and she was able to engage in research throughout. She was accepted into Michigan State University's Summer Research Opportunity (SROP) and she presented at eight scholarly conferences. Ms. Benli's hard work paid off as she was accepted into several

doctoral programs in Political Science throughout the United States with full funding. She has decided to accept admission to Michigan State University, where she will start in fall 2022.

The **One-of-A Kind McNair Awards** were established to honor the special qualities in each and every Second Year Scholar. We would also like to recognize some of our First Year Scholars who went **Above and Beyond** over the past year.

*Presented at the McNair Research Roundtable Reception– May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022*

### **Second Year Scholars**

**Alexa Abruzese-** *The “Optimistic Scholar” Award*

For your cheerful and optimistic approach in both your research and the graduate school process.

**Laura Alarcon** – *The “Punctual Scholar” Award*

In recognition of your consistently prompt and timely responses to any McNair requests and your leadership to benefit your fellow scholars.

**D’Andrah Almanzar** – *The “Reserved Scholar” Award*

For the quiet yet determined manner by which you pursued both your research and graduate school objectives.

**Sam Ascencio** – *The “Supportive Scholar” Award*

For your consistent support and willingness to share resources with your fellow McNair Scholars.

**Kateira Dickinson-** *The “Independent Scholar” Award*

In recognition of your autonomous and steadfast efforts to continue your research while obtaining a new mentor.

**Jia-Yi Mai** – *The “Flourishing Scholar” Award*

In recognition of your personal and academic growth and the persistence you displayed in your research and your graduate school preparation.

**Katherine Marin** – *The “Resolute Scholar” Award*

For your unwavering efforts to complete the McNair Program and gain admission to graduate school.

**Yareli Perez** – *The “Diligent Scholar” Award*

For your meticulous and thorough nature in research and the graduate school application process.

**Alijah Sepulveda** – *The “Persevering Scholar” Award*

In recognition of your determined efforts to balance your responsibilities and the commitments of being a McNair Scholar.

**Ashanti Vanier-Waldron** – *The “Too Cool for School” Award*

In recognition of your unflappable and levelheaded approach to the research process.

**Yan Shan Yu** – *The “Focused Scholar” Award*

In recognition of your resolute and unyielding determined efforts to complete your research and gain admission to graduate school.

### **First Year Scholars**

**Cynthia Gonzalez** – *The “Diligent Scholar Attendance” Award*

In recognition of your outstanding attendance and participation during the Spring 2022 McNair Research Seminar.

**Avii Van Praagh** – *The “Diligent Scholar Attendance” Award*

In recognition of your outstanding performance and participation during the Spring 2022 McNair Research Seminar.

The **McNair Mentor Awards** were established to honor the encouragement, dedication, and guidance given by a mentor to their McNair Scholar student.

***Presented at the McNair Research Roundtable Reception – May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022***

**Dr. Elizabeth Jeglic** – *The “Kwando Kinshasa Excellence in Mentoring” Award\**

For the tireless effort and commitment to excellence you displayed as a mentor in the John Jay College McNair Program.

❖ Dr. Jeglic was nominated by scholars Yareli Perez and Yan Shan Yu

\*The Kwando Kinshasa Excellence in Mentoring Award was established in 2014 in honor of Dr. Kwando Kinshasa, who retired as a Professor in John Jay’s Department of Africana Studies in 2014. In addition to being a faculty member, Dr. Kinshasa was a mentor with the McNair Program from its inception at the college in 1992 until his retirement. He also served as Interim McNair Director.

**Dr. Amy Adamczyk** – *The “Above and Beyond” Mentor Award*

For the commitment to excellence you displayed as a mentor in the John Jay College McNair Program.

❖ Dr. Adamczyk was nominated by scholar Alexa Abruzese

**Prof. Jeremiah Perez-Torres** – *The “Above and Beyond” Mentor Award*

For the commitment to excellence you displayed as a mentor in the John Jay College McNair Program.

❖ Prof. Perez-Torres was nominated by scholar Alexa Abruzese

**Dr. Andrew Sidman** – *The “Above and Beyond” Mentor Award*

For the commitment to excellence you displayed as a mentor in the John Jay College McNair Program.

❖ Dr. Sidman was nominated by scholar Angelina Benli

**Dr. Keith Taylor** – *The “Above and Beyond” Mentor Award*

For the commitment to excellence you displayed as a mentor in the John Jay College McNair Program.

❖ Dr. Taylor was nominated by Jia-Yi Mai



# Meet the Scholars



The Second Year Scholars pictured with Dr. Lee at the Roundtable event.



The First Year Scholars at the Research & Creativity Expo.



## Research Roundtable (May 2022)









# SAEOPP McNair Research Conference – Atlanta (June 2022)







## Associate McNair Scholar



### One Man, No Vote: The Legacy of Felon Disenfranchisement

**Angelina Benli** (she/her)

Major: Criminology & Forensic Psychology

Minor: English

Mentor: **Andrew Sidman, PhD**, Political Science Dept.

#### Biography

Angelina Benli is a graduating senior in the Honors Program at John Jay College of Criminal Justice where she is double majoring in Criminology and Forensic Psychology with a minor in English. She is a McNair Research Associate, researching the political implications of felon disenfranchisement in the United States over the last twenty years with Dr. Andrew Sidman. She's presented her research at eight conferences, including Mercy College, CalState, University of Maryland, University of Virginia, Michigan State University, and UCLA. She is a teaching assistant in the Sociology Department at John Jay College, working with Dr. Liza Steele. She has served as the treasurer of SEEK Society and as a Peer Advocate for Urban Male Initiative on campus. She is a 2018 America Needs You Fellow and a 2019 Futures Initiative Leadership and Democracy Fellow. She completed a legislative and communications internship with the office of New York City Council Member, Robert E. Cornegy, Jr. She's completed additional internships with non-profit organizations such as Let's Get Ready!, Generation Citizen, and Reading Partners. She is the recipient of the CUNY Chancellor's Global Scholarship and CUNY SEEK Global Scholarship. She is the 2022 winner of the Malcolm/ King Leadership Award and Carl Williams Service Award. Last summer she completed Michigan State University's Summer Research Opportunity Program, working as a research assistant for Dr. Matt Grossman, researching the education gap between American voters. This summer, she will be starting her PhD in Political Science at Michigan State University, funded by the Early Start Fellowship and Academic Achievement Graduate Assistantship.



## Project Description

**Introduction:** Over the past half century the population of those incarcerated in the United States has increased to 2.2 million. The state laws that govern whether felons can vote are not uniform, which leads to an unequal participation and unfair disparity in elections based on where an individual resides. Due to variant felon disenfranchising policies across the country, an estimated 6.1 million Americans are unable to cast ballots, which is 3% of the voting population. Past research shows that the formerly incarcerated have very low voter turnout. Executive Order 181 and subsequent Senate bill SB830 in New York State “automatically restored voting rights to people on parole, as well as provide notice to individuals of their voting rights and a process for voter registration upon their release from prison,” (Brennan Center for Justice, 2019). This project seeks to look at the involvement of community organizations in regards to the passing of re-enfranchisement legislation in New York State. By tracking the legislative history of re-enfranchisement bills in New York State, along with community organization involvement, and preliminary voter turnout data following Executive Order 181, this study can provide a greater understanding of how the political participation of ex-felons, or lack thereof, along with community organizations can inform future election and voter policy at the county, state, and federal levels.

**Lit. Review:** Felon disenfranchisement originated with the medieval European practice of civil death, imposed on criminal offenders, which carried the loss of many citizenship rights, including the right to vote. These implications of felon disenfranchisement policies have rendered over 6 million American citizens ineligible to vote in their states. Uggen & Manza (2010) provided a number of estimates of the effects of felon disenfranchisement in the United States; their latest study showing that as of 2010, about 2.5 percent of the US voting-age population are disenfranchised due to a current or former felony conviction. It is critical to note the racial makeup of the individuals impacted by state felon disenfranchisement policies, as they are a long standing reminder of Jim Crow era laws continuing stronghold in America. The incarcerated population is drawn from a pool of individuals unlikely to vote even prior to their incarceration.

**Methods:** A mixed methods approach was utilized for this research project by tracking the history of legislative efforts to address felon re-enfranchisement in New York State, along with the community organizations that supported these efforts. The history of legislative efforts has been accessed via the Brennan Center of Justice and the New York State Senate Bill Portal. This is influenced by the work of Owens (2014) and the commentary provided about OpenDoors, a non-profit organization in Providence, Rhode Island.

**Findings:** Throughout the legislative history of voting rights for the formerly incarcerated in New York State, there have been over 50 organizations that have expressed support for it. These groups range from unions, voting advocacy groups, community organizations, and professional associations. They formed a broad coalition to successfully lobby this legislation, with Senate Bill S830B being signed into law by former Governor Andrew Cuomo on May 5, 2021. Of the many organizations that have supported felon re-enfranchisement efforts in New York State, I have chosen Exodus Transitional Community to highlight and

examine the advocacy and organizing efforts of these groups. Similar to Rhode Island's OpenDoors (Owens, 2014), which has combined their service work with advocacy, this group follows a similar model.

**Discussion:** The passing of Executive Order 181 and the subsequent bill in 2021 has not been enough to ensure higher voter turnout. In preliminary research following the signing of 181 it was seen that there was marginal improvement (Morris, 2021). The efficacy of community organizations providing services and advocating on behalf/alongside the formerly incarcerated has set them up for success. "Restoring voting rights to individuals currently on parole and probation is a necessary step at dismantling the disenfranchisement that disproportionately affects communities of color," (Morris, 2021).

**Conclusion:** The reintegration of the formerly incarcerated into society is critical, as the vast majority of those currently incarcerated will be released from prison. It is not enough to pass legislation re-enfranchising the formerly incarcerated, and work must continue to ensure that these communities are aware of the changes in legislation and are motivated to engage civically. Political work through organizations by and for ex-offenders mobilizes citizenship to promote reintegration into civic society.



## Second Year McNair Scholars



### Perceptions of Progressive Criminal Justice Policies and the Link to Justice Education

**Alexa Abruzese** (she/her)

Major: Criminal Justice

Minors: English & Sociology

Mentor: **Amy Adamczyk, PhD**, Sociology Dept.

#### Biography

Alexa Abruzese is a first-generation student who recently graduated with her Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, with both an English and Sociology minor. She graduated *summa cum laude* and with Honors in her major. She is a research assistant on projects pertaining to criminal justice and terrorism, and currently conducts her own project centered on perceptions of criminal justice policies. She will be attending John Jay in the fall for her Master's in Criminal Justice, and hopes to go on to Ph.D. and eventually work for the Innocence Project.

#### Project Description

Progressive criminal justice policies are widely considered by experts to move the criminal justice system forward. This project focuses on the debate surrounding three progressive policies thought to bring about reform: abolishing capital punishment, implementing bail reform, and implementing drug decriminalization. Despite expert support for these policies, they have not been implemented nationwide and individuals still remain skeptical of them. This study addresses the question of how college students in a justice oriented academic institution perceive progressive criminal justice policies compared to college students in a non-justice oriented academic institution. Additionally, this study seeks to address the role justice education has in shaping these views. Surveys were sent to three different groups: criminal justice majors at John Jay, non-criminal justice majors at John Jay, and all majors at College of Staten Island. This survey gauged both student support for and perception of these policies, as well as their extent of justice education on these policies. Preliminary analysis has found that all three groups are neutral in their support for policy but are otherwise informed of the disparities within policies. This may demonstrate misinformation is not the issue, suggesting that more work needs to be done in future research to uncover why these students remain neutral on these policies, even with a justice education.



## Culturally Distinct Psychological Stress: COVID-19's Impact on Latinx Subgroups' Distress Levels

**Laura Alarcon** (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology & English

Mentor: **Rebecca Weiss, PhD**, Psychology Dept.

### Biography

Laura Alarcon was born in Panama and grew up in the Bronx. She graduated from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City's CUNY system as a 22-year-old first-generation student in May 2022. She double majored in forensic psychology and English, received a Bachelor of Arts, and finished with a cumulative GPA of 3.9, and *summa cum laude* honors. Laura was an Honors Program, McNair, and OSRC (Office for Student Research and Creativity) scholar. She has received various scholarships, awards, and distinctions during her time at John Jay including a \$3,000 scholarship from Psi Chi National, an award for both of her majors, and an award recognizing her service to the college. She was a member of various student clubs, was the Vice President of John Jay's chapter of Psi Chi (the International Honor Society in Psychology) for two consecutive years, and was an Honors Peer Mentor. Additionally, Laura has and continues to work as a research assistant on various projects. She was part of Professor Evan Mandery's Listening Curriculum project, is currently a research assistant within Dr. Rebecca Weiss' assessment lab, and is working on the Brain Health Project within Dr. Casey LaDuke's traumatic brain injury lab. Moreover, she has completed two research projects of her own within Dr. Weiss's lab. In September 2022, Laura will travel to Ireland to pursue a Master's in English at Queen's University Belfast. Some of her academic goals are to graduate with a Master's in English from Queen's University Belfast, continue gaining research experience, gather work experience in the English and publishing fields, obtain a Master's in social work and start practicing, and eventually get a doctorate in psychology. Laura hopes to work in the book publishing industry, continue her education, and eventually work as a clinical practitioner to help young adults. Outside of academia, Laura loves reading and writing stories, spending time with friends and family, befriending animals, bookbinding and other arts and crafts, trying new things, and traveling.

## Project Description

The Latinx community encompasses a range of culturally distinct groups who experience distress differently, and thus may have been differentially affected by COVID-19. This study sought to examine the distress levels of Latinx subgroups both prior to and during the pandemic to see how COVID-19 impacted their distress levels. The study used an existing database and aimed to run a two-way ANOVA statistical analysis to discover and compare changes in distress levels between subgroups during specified timeframes. It was hypothesized that the data would suggest an increase in distress levels in the collective Latinx community and an increase in distress levels for each subgroup from their usual levels. More specifically, higher distress levels for subgroups like Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, who have a historically established/stronger cultural presence in New York, and lower distress levels for subgroups like Central and South Americans, who do not have as strong a historical presence/whose presence has grown relatively recently, were anticipated. Additionally, high distress levels for subgroups like Mexicans, who face pointed discrimination despite having a historically strong cultural presence/social support, were also predicted. Results neither supported nor did not support these hypotheses as the sample size was too small for inferential statistics to be conducted. The overall Latinx sample was stressed—with almost 85% operating under moderate or higher levels of stress—thus suggesting that other Latinx students were stressed during these time frames as well. Further generalizations concerning the differences between ethnic subgroups within the Latinx community, this study's goal, cannot be made. Given the small sample size and the lack of participants' identifying their cultural affiliations beyond belonging to the Latinx community, more in-depth research investigating the subgroups that comprise the community, their experiences of distress, and how they were impacted by COVID-19 is needed.



## **Juvenile Justice and Mental Health: Examining Racial Disparities in the Juvenile Justice on Mental Health and Substance Abuse**

**D'Andrah Almanzar** (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minor: Addiction Studies

Mentor: **Kevin Nadal, PhD**, Psychology Dept.

### **Biography**

D'Andrah Almanzar is a graduating senior at John Jay College of Criminal Justice majoring in Forensic Psychology with a minor in Addiction Studies. D'Andrah is working towards completing her CASAC-T certification for Substance Abuse. D'Andrah is a Cultural Corps Alumni and a Service Corps Alumni. D'Andrah currently works at Outreach Building Healthy Lives as a Per Diem Counselor working with adolescents with co-occurring mental illnesses and substance use disorders. D'Andrah is a member of the Chi Alpha Epsilon and Psi Chi Honor Societies. Additionally, D'Andrah is a member of Dr. Nadal's research lab and is currently working on research projects such as Gendered Racial Microaggressions on Latinx Women. D'Andrah was recently accepted to Fordham University Graduate School of Social Science for Master's in Clinical Social Work with a scholarship and graduate assistantship. After, she plans to obtain a Ph.D in Clinical Psychology on the Forensic concentration to advocate for at-risk youth throughout New York City. She plans to continue working with individuals involved in the justice system and potentially start her own nonprofit and private practice surrounding incarceration alternatives and evidence-based practice for those in the justice system.

### **Project Description**

**Introduction:** Recent research has found that mental health and substance use problems has increased significantly for youth in the juvenile justice system over time (Lopez, Nuno 2018). In addition to the higher rates of mental illnesses and substance abuse among these youth in general, youth of color are disproportionately underserved and have lack of access to mental health and substance use services (Lopez, Nuno 2018). Many of the treatment centers in the juvenile justice settings have limited access to services for youth (Herz, 2001). The objective of the research is to bring more awareness on racial disparities towards juvenile youth and the barrier between those youth with access to treatment.

**Lit. Review:** Treatment programs and assessments are needed to distinguish the mental disorders among these youth. Juvenile youth who show these disorders should be admitted correctly and get the necessary services to have a better understanding of their disorders. In many states, youths do not receive a needs



assessment until after commitment to a correctional facility, and that only one-third of all states used a formal needs assessment instrument, that only half assess the emotional and psychological needs of the youth (Mears, 2001). Two issues on the lack of mental health needs among juvenile youth is the lack of assessment and purposes of the assessments when providing them upon entry. Teplin et al., (2002) had a specific approach to recognizing the mental health assessments and treatments that are put in place for juvenile youth. The challenge to the mental health of these youth is to provide accessible and effective treatments to juvenile detainees.

**Methods:** The research design of the study is qualitative in order to study the youth's perception and experience with mental health. The participants will be asking to fill out the consent form prior to completing the interview. Before the start of each interview, each participant will fill out a demographic form and given a list of possible counseling resources and substance abuse resources in the event that the discussion causes any discomfort. The facilitator will explain the nature of the study and that participation is completely voluntary. The participant will be reminded that confidentiality is intact and kept in the interview session. Participants are given the choice to skip questions if they do not feel comfortable sharing. Each participant will be given ample time to respond and explain their experiences, as well as to respond to follow-up questions when appropriate. The interview will last for about 30 minutes. The study focuses on perceptions of racial disparities and service utilization on juvenile youth along with youth who are not in the system and their own separate experiences with mental health and substance abuse.

**Expected Findings:** Expected findings include that youth are not comfortable with the system when it comes to seeking services for mental health and substance abuse, racial disparities as a barrier for the youth and assessments are not being distributed or provided to youth due to racial disparities.

**Future Research:** For future research, there should be more research on juveniles and their personal experiences with seeking treatment for mental health and substance abuse. There should be more research on finding ways for youth to access these services due to disparities such as insurance, race and comfortability. More implications such as collecting data from multiple child/youth serving systems to determine whether these youth can be successfully identified and served in the community prior to their contact with the juvenile justice system. Further research is needed on the availability of how effective and culturally competent these treatments are to serve these youth.

**Discussion:** Research and studies mentioned have shown the racial disparities among minority incarcerated youth in reference to non-minority incarcerated youth. The studies support the significant numbers and distinctions among minority youth. Numbers and data in the studies have shown in juvenile facilities that incarcerated minority youth are less likely to receive mental health treatment services alongside rehabilitation in substance abuse cases. This research highlights the importance of racial disparities and the need for services for youth. It also highlights the need to improve the quality of mental health and substance abuse treatments and service access. Understanding racial disparities in substance abuse and mental health experiences can provide more practitioners with more evaluative information on the disparities of mental health and substance abuse among youth involved in the system.



## From the Ones Doing the Work: Exploring the LGBTQ+ Service Landscape in Urban Higher Education

**Sam Ascencio** (xe/xem/xyrs)

Major: Queer Education Reform and Social Activism and Innovation

Mentors: **Emalinda McSpadden, PhD**, Social Sciences Dept. & **Nina Rose-Fischer, PhD**, Interdisciplinary Studies Dept.

### Biography

Sam Ascencio is a genderfluid senior in the CUNY BA pursuing Queer Education and Social Advocacy and Innovation at xyr home college of John Jay. Xe is a current McNair scholar, CUNY Peer Leader, and HASTACS Scholar. Xyrs projects include the creation of Q'onnections, a paid stipend queer peer mentorship program, and spearheading the creation of John Jay's new LGBTQ+ center. Sam's current research interest is in LGBTQ+ pedagogy, education, program development, and assessment, and xe is currently working xyr current research titled: From the Ones Doing the Work: Exploring the LGBTQ+ Service Landscape in Urban Higher Education under Dr. Emily McSpadden. Sam's work can be found on the CUNY Peer Leaders website, HASTACS digital Friday, Spotify, and in various other forms of media publication.

### Abstract

The nature of this research is to provide and inquire about the basic best practice standards for LGBTQ+ services on college campuses. Including the creation of an assessment inventory for current practices. The aim is to provide some guidance toward better understanding which types of professional and academic preparation are most appropriate for this brand of leadership. Using thematic analysis, we aim to interview CUNY-wide entities accessed via the CUNY LGBTQI+ Council, Comprised of LGBTQ+ service providers and support staff from various CUNY campuses to determine any trends or patterns in credential or preparation among them. Results will serve as the foundation to develop an assessment tool specific to the needs of CUNY LGBTQ+ students and to determine the nature and quality of campus-based LGBTQ+ service provision through its inquiry.



## **Linking Race-Based Traumatic Stress and Academic Performance in Black College Students: Racial Socialization as a Moderator**

**Katiera Dickinson** (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minor: Africana Studies

Mentor: **Veronica Johnson, PhD**, Psychology Dept.

### **Biography**

Katiera Dickinson is a junior at the Macaulay Honors College at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where she is majoring in Forensic Psychology, and minoring in Africana Studies. As a hard-working student, she has earned a spot on the Dean's list since the Fall of her freshman year. Early in her college career, an Interdisciplinary Studies class focusing on stereotypes in the U.S., spurred her interest in exploring social issues, specifically within the Black community.

Her research interests include race-based traumatic stress, racial socialization, and Black identity. Her current research project focuses on the relationship between racial socialization and academic success, and investigating the role of race-based stress as a moderator. The most interesting process of this research project for Katiera has been immersing herself in previous literature, and envisioning how her research would contribute to the knowledge of these issues. She is currently conducting her research under the guidance of Dr. Veronica Johnson.

Katiera is also involved with TEDxCUNY, a group aimed to bring TED's mission of "Ideas worth spreading" to the CUNY community. She began as the Head of Community Partnerships in 2019. Katiera eventually rose to become the Organizer and Licensee. In this role, she serves as a liaison between school administration and the group. She has also planned and hosted two successful TEDxCUNYSalons. Her time with TEDxCUNY has taught her the value of giving others the platform to share novel ideas.

### **Project Description**

Research has identified a specific form of stress experienced by racial groups. This form of stress is known as Race-Based Traumatic Stress (RBTS). The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between RBTS and academic performance in Black college students, and how experiences of racial socialization might buffer this relationship. Data from 150 Black college student are to be collected using

the Racial Socialization Scale and the Race-Based Traumatic Stress Symptom Scale. A linear regression analysis will be conducted to examine if racial socialization moderates the relationship between RBTS and academic performance. Previous research has shown that racial socialization dictates how one might cope with racism (Blackmon et. al, 2016) and how individuals who received messages about the existence of racism were involved in more prosocial activities on campus (White-Johnson, 2015). The results will show if and to what extent racial socialization moderates the relationship between RBTS and academic performance in Black college students. The findings of this study could be applied to the education system, where often Black students are encouraged to push through challenges they might face, without recognizing the harmful effects it could have on them. Limitations and implications for future research are discussed.



# An Analysis of Correctional Staff Perception

**Jia-Yi Mai** (she/her)

Major: Criminal Justice

Mentor: **Keith Taylor, PhD**, Psychology Dept.

## Biography

Jia-Yi Mai is a first-generation Chinese student who will graduate in 2022 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice. During her time as an undergraduate, she was inducted into both Chi Alpha Epsilon and the National Society of Leadership and Success and has also spent a summer working for the CUNY Launch Program. In terms of research, she worked on a study revolving around the perceptions of the New York State correctional staff in regards to their work environment and how they perceive their job has affected their well-being. The study also discusses certain implications that can be made to improve their environment and the correctional staff's well-being. She has been accepted and plans to attend John Jay in Fall of 2022 where she will study for her Master of Arts degree in criminal justice.

## Project Description

**Introduction:** With the prison population continuously increasing year by year, it is no surprise that the environment in prison continues to deteriorate. Because prisoners make up the correctional population, many researchers have conducted studies based on their perceptions of the correctional environment and how it has affected their well-being. However, even though their opinions and perceptions are important, it is also crucial to consider the perceptions of other people who have connections to the prison system. These people include the correctional staff. Because most researchers do not study the correctional staff members and very little is known about their perception of the prison environment and how it has had an impact on their well-being, this research will study just how correctional staff perceive working in a prison environment has affected their well-being. Studying how the correctional staff's perception of the correctional environment and how working in one affects their well-being is crucial. Even though correctional staff members are not at the prison facility daily, they do work there at least eight hours a day, five days a week. The amount of time a correctional staff member spends at a prison facility is important to this study because they are exposed to several aspects of the prison environment. This exposure often gives

them an opportunity to formulate their own perceptions of the prison environment and how it may have impacted them in certain ways. This research conducted on this paper focuses on a correctional officer's perception of their work environment and how they perceive working in that environment impacted their well-being. It also questions what they believe can be done to improve their well-being and the overall environment if they believe that either of the two need improvement. The goal of this research is to assess the relationship between the correctional environment and the perceptions of the staff members who participated in this study.

**Literature Review:** Multiple research studies have been conducted on the correctional environment. So it does not come as a surprise that the conditions of most facilities are not the best. Even some of the correctional whose conditions are known to be exceptional have been proven to be not so exceptional and are actually quite similar to the facilities in other jurisdictions (Johnson et al., 2011). These conditions include but are not limited to prison harshness, isolation, and sanitary conditions (Drago et al., 2008; Mardu et al., 2019). All of these conditions are aspects of the correctional facility that people need to be attentive to because they may lead to unwanted outcomes. Because prisoners are the ones who spend the most time in the facility, it does not come as a surprise that they are the people who are affected the most by these horrible prison conditions. Because they are the ones who spend the most time in prison, they are the ones who are affected the most, they are the ones who have the best understanding and perception of the correctional environment, especially in regards to their well-being. Take for example Iversen et. al. (2014) and their study of prisoners' health and well-being. According to Iversen et al. (2014), perceived health is a subjective measure of an individual's health based on self-reported and self-knowledge about one's health status. It is related to one's functional status, morbidity, and mortality and serves as an important indicator in determining an individual's health status and health-related quality of life. In Iverson et. al.'s (2014) study in Norway, the researchers asked the 144 prisoners participating in a questionnaire to rate their present state of health on a 4 point scale where 1 and 2 represented a good perception of health, and 3 and 4 represented a poor perception of health. Of the 144 prisoners that participated, 38% of the prisoners rated their health as poor, and this rating depended on several factors including prison conditions. In a different study, researchers asked the female prisoners about their concept of health, illness, and the well-being of the prisoners. The women who participated revealed a great deal of knowledge that they gained from personal experience or observation of their fellow prisoners. This knowledge included knowledge about drug dependence and mental health. In terms of drug dependence, the women acknowledge the negative impact of it. However, even though they acknowledge the damage it does, they also understand the difficulty of withdrawal. In terms of mental health, the women were aware that many women in prison had mental health problems and questioned the appropriateness of incarcerating unwell women (Plugge et al., 2008). However, despite the fact that these prisoners' well-being continue to deteriorate because of the horrible correctional conditions, some prisons do offer healthcare services and healthcare provisions as a way to improve the well-being of the prisoners. These healthcare services and healthcare provisions include mental health professionals, mental health services, infectious disease testing, cardiovascular risk testing, mental health screenings, internal in-reach programs, external in-reach programs, visiting specialists, and more (Bewley et al., 2011; Chari et al., 2016; Forrester et al., 2013; Gojkovic et al., 2008; Samale et al., 2016). Some countries, like Nigeria, have non-governmental organizations and prison support services that provide their



ill prisoners with different kinds of medical necessities (Imhabekhai, 2002). While the prisoners are the ones who spend the most time in the correctional facilities, people must keep in mind that they are not the only ones that spend a lot of time there. Other people who happen to spend a lot of time there are the correctional staff. While the correctional staff may not be there on a daily basis, they do spend a lot of time there because of their job which can affect their perceptions and their perceived well-being on many levels. (Misis et al., 2013). This statement is supported in a cross-sectional study conducted by Akbari et al. (2014). In this study, it was revealed that because of the nature of the job and the work environment, prison staff, especially employees from the correction and rehabilitation center, are exposed to high levels of occupational stress. The word stress has many definitions. However, the main definition of stress can be described as an individual experience dictated by the way certain stressors are perceived. The stressors mentioned in this definition include many individual characteristics and perceptions. These characteristics and perceptions include but are not limited to age, gender, race, tenure, and perceptions of inmates. While the relationship age, gender, and race have with job stress is unclear, researchers are confident about the relationship job stress has with tenure and perceptions of inmates. According to researchers, staff members with high tenure and who perceive inmates as amiable are more likely to have higher stress levels. On the other hand, staff members who perceive inmates as manageable are more likely to have lower stress levels (Misis et al., 2013). The levels of stress that most staff members go through while working in an environment under such conditions can lead to unwanted circumstances. These unwanted circumstances include but are not limited to a higher risk of sick leave, higher levels of cortisol and symptoms of ill health, mental health problems, job dissatisfaction, drug and alcohol abuse, substandard job performance, fatalities, and dilapidation in staff physical and psychological symptomatology (Harenstam et al., 1988; Steiner et al., 2015; Kiran et al., 2019). However, despite the stressful work environment and harsh working conditions, there are ways to improve the well-being of the correctional staff. These ways include but are not limited to workplace support, organizational support, psychological capital, and the use of necessary facilities. Workplace support can be beneficial to the prison staff because it can offer effective and instrumental assistance to officers and buffer stressful situations and events by providing resources that facilitate coping. Organizational support and psychological capital can be beneficial to the prison staff because they serve as positive resources for combatting depressive symptoms. Last but not least, the use of necessary facilities. These facilities can be beneficial to the correctional staff because they reduce the chances of the prison staff contracting infections and diseases. They include the use of hand washing basins, soaps, disinfectants, and disinfestations (Steiner et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2013; Mardu et al., 2019).

**Methods:** This research study was done through the use of a survey. The survey was sent to multiple New York State correctional officers and, in the end, received a total of 21 answers. Within the survey, there were questions regarding the correctional officers perception of their work environment, how their job has affected their well-being, and what they believe can be done to improve the work environment and their well-being. The methodology used was a phenomenology methodology that allowed for a better understanding of the participant's thought, feelings, and experiences.

**Results:** Regarding their perceptions about their work environment, the participants responded negatively and cited reasons such as involvement of politics, poor management, lack of accountability, and poor

treatment. When asked about their perceptions on how their well-being may have been affected, the results were once again negative with the officers citing reasons such as citing poor work environment and other aspects that eventually led to a decline in their health. When asked about how the environment can be improved, the participants cited better accountability and changes in politics. As for how their well-being can be improved, the majority of the participants cited improvements to the work environment and more rewards. Only one participant cited resignation.

**Discussion:** The findings of this study are important and will benefit the research field because it expands on the topic of the correctional environment and its effect on staff. By conducting this study, we are able to give people a broader understanding of the correctional system and what can be done to improve the environment for the staff members. With that being said, there are some things that should be made clear. The participants of this study were all New York State correctional officers. Because the participants of this study were all correctional officers from New York, there is a limitation. The limitation would be that the end results do not represent the correctional staff as a whole.



# Digital Revolution: How Instagram Influences Body Image Satisfaction in Black College Women

**Katherine Marin** (she/her)

Major: English

Minors: Art & Africana Studies

Mentor: **Crystal Endsley, PhD**, Africana Studies Dept.

## Biography

Katherine A. Marin is a first-generation Latina college graduate. She earned her Bachelor's in English with a minor in Art and Africana Studies from John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Katherine has worked four years with CUNY Explorers teaching middle school and high school students about college and helping them take the steps now to prepare for higher education. She has also worked on a research project with the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Program with Dr. Crystal Endsley on social media, Body satisfaction and Black college women. Katherine will be entering the CUNY Graduate Center in the Fall of 2022 to study Liberal Arts with a concentration in Africana Studies.

## Project Description

**Introduction:** Instagram is one of the technologies that has dominated the world, with teenagers and young adults using this platform to share photos and videos with friends and family. Social media has become the ruler for trends on body image and has controlled most of the minds of young people through the addiction of constantly scrolling through Instagram mindlessly, pressing like, and watching videos and photos as a form of entertainment.

**Literature Review:** Woodland and Petrie measure the representation of ethnic identity, societal pressures regarding thinness, internalization of societal beauty ideals, body image concerns, and disordered eating (Rogers Wood, N. A., & Petrie, T. A., 2010). The findings state that the pressure in society to be thin is related to greater body image concerns. The results also state that ethnic identity is important in determining the risk of developing eating disorders. This connects to the topic of body image and body dissatisfaction

because it explains how eating disorders are common to women because it shows the unhealthy and idealistic images the female audience consumes from the media.

**Methodology:** Participants in this study will be Black undergraduate college women, age eighteen and over, who attend John Jay College of Criminal Justice. In this study, I will create a focus group of ten participants who identify as Black and female. My focus in doing a qualitative study is to get the narrative of my ten participants and be able to hear their story. And listen to things Black college women feel about social media and body image through their perspective.

**Expected Findings:** One can predict that families will have a larger influence on Black college women's body satisfaction rather than Instagram because guardians teach their children how to love themselves and have confidence in who they are and how they look. Another thing that is expected to be found is that Black college women have high body satisfaction due to influence of religion and Black media influences on Black love and self-pride.

**Further Research:** Further research on this topic will have to be searched to learn about how body image, and body dissatisfaction, and self-esteem are influenced by social media on Black college.

**Discussion:** They are important because it shows how big of an influence social media platforms have been on the self- perception of Black women, specifically those in college. This project contributes to the bigger discussion of Africana studies since it digs deeper into the Black women's experience with their bodies.



## **Adult Perception of Severity in a Sexual Abuse Case: The Impact of Gender of the Perpetrator and the Victim**

**Yareli Perez** (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minor: Criminology

Mentor: **Elizabeth Jeglic, PhD**, Psychology Dept.

### **Biography**

Yareli Perez received her BA in Forensic Psychology while minoring in Criminology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (JJC, City University of New York) in the Fall of 2021. She was a part of the Honors Program, Psi Chi, INSPIRE Lab, and McNair Program but now works in the Office for Student Research and Creativity as an Administrative and Research Assistant at JJC. She has a deep passion for learning about human behavior, specifically, the reasoning behind criminals' actions. Initially inspired by popular shows such as Criminal Minds and Law and Order, she decided to explore the field of forensic psychology in more depth as an undergraduate student. Being a part of the McNair and Honors Programs at JJC allowed her to research the relationship between victim/perpetrator characteristics and sexual abuse. More specifically, she studied male sexual abuse and its connection to gender, specifically when committed by female perpetrators in addition to the impact of victim age on perceptions of sexual abuse. In addition to her research experience, she was a mentor for Psi Chi, the International Honor Society of Psychology. She met bi-weekly with her mentee to discuss her academic and career goals and created plans to achieve them. She hopes to be able to provide the best advice and help she can, based on her own experiences, to future scholars. Yareli is also currently a Bilingual Research Assistant in Dr. Weiss' study, which hopes to research the mental health system and its effectiveness for Spanish-speaking individuals. Her tasks include reviewing and coding participants' responses for the end goal of figuring out how to improve mental health treatment for a highly underrepresented group. Yareli's ultimate goal is to become a clinical psychologist and possibly work in a prison setting. Keeping this in mind, she will be pursuing her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at St. John's University this fall. With her future career she hopes to gain a better understanding of particularly heinous crimes and participate in some form of activism for victims.

## Project Description

Sexual abuse is a serious problem in the United States and it is estimated that one in four girls and one in thirteen boys will experience abuse by the time they are 18. However, the majority of cases of sexual abuse do not result in conviction. This may be because perceptions of sexual abuse cases vary according to the different characteristics of the perpetrator and victim involved. For this reason, this project investigated whether victim and perpetrator gender impacted adult's perceptions of severity in a sexual abuse case. U.S. adults were obtained via mTurk and randomly assigned to read one of four case vignettes in which the gender of the victim and perpetrator varied, and were asked to complete a series of questions about the case. They were asked the degree to which they attributed responsibility/blame to the people involved, if any, and if the case displayed a sexual abuse act. It was anticipated that cases in which there was a female perpetrator and male victim, the perpetrator would be seen as less responsible/blameworthy for the situation whereas the male victim would be attributed more responsibility/blame. However, the hypothesis was not supported as there was no significant difference found in the perceived severity, responsibility to victim/perpetrator, or blame to perpetrator/victim. While this could demonstrate that no stigma is associated with sexual abuse cases and that all cases of sexual abuse are seen as severe, further research is needed to see if the perceptions of professionals are affected which would, in turn, impact the treatment that is offered to victims. Overall, there is much to consider but it seems cases of sexual abuse do not depend on gender. Therefore it is expected that victims and perpetrators will be given the help they require and an availability of services offered in order for them to continue past their experience.





## Parental Influences on Juvenile Plea Bargaining

**Alijah Sepulveda** (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Mentor: **Emily Haney-Caron, PhD**, Psychology Dept.

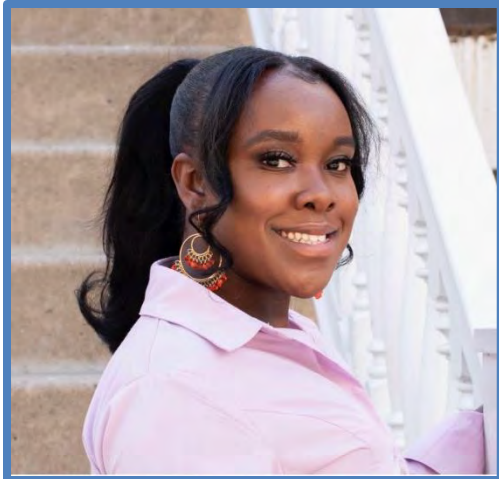
### Biography

Alijah Sepulveda is a third-year undergraduate student under the Macaulay Honors College at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. She was awarded the Access Path to Psychology and Law Experience (AP) Program in 2022. She is currently conducting research on the effect that parental advice can have on youth's plea bargain decision making. Her research is exploring differences between African American and White parents' perceptions and advice concerning plea bargains for their children. After graduating from John Jay in 2023, Alijah intends to pursue her Ph.D. in clinical psychology with a focus in forensics.

### Abstract

Plea bargains are a vital and common occurrence within both juvenile and adult courts, resolving about 97% of cases. As a part of the plea bargain agreement the individual agreed to the plea has to knowingly give up their rights to trial and plead guilty for the crime they are accused of. Plea bargains in juvenile court pose additional issues for youth, as it requires them to make a rational and logical decision that can alter their future. This is particularly distressing in youth cases as youth have more difficulty than adults when it comes to understanding court languages, the charges against them, and the way they approach legal involvement. One of the most powerful influences for juveniles facing charges is parental advice. Parents are not legally allowed to make plea decisions for their child, however, parents can still have a great influence on the youth's plea decision making. The importance of parental presence in juvenile cases is a topic that needs to be explored more, especially considering the differences in perspectives and life experiences some parents may have that can influence their advice given to their children. Race and status can dramatically impact the extent to which people understand their rights, as well as the legal process. With previous research showing differences in how race can affect the interactions with the law, it is important to study the racial impact in parental advice as well. As a result of a long history of racial bias in the justice system, trust in the system

from Black individuals is notoriously vacant. Black children are taught to fear the government, whereas White children are taught to confide and trust the system. With findings such as these, it is important to study the differences in advice given to youth depending on the race of the parent. This study will explore the differences between parental advice from Black or African American and White parents when their child is offered a plea bargain. This study will additionally explore whether parental advice changes if the child in question professes their innocence. The importance of this study is to determine certain patterns in the justice system when it comes to race, juvenile plea bargains and parental influence. In this study we are expecting to find that Black participants advise their child to take the plea bargain more than White parents. In addition to this we expect to find results indicating that trust in the justice system mediates the advice parents give to their justice-involved youth. The current study is currently active and is almost ready for interpretation.



## Discourse Analysis of Identity Construction by Youth Involved with CASA

**Ashanti Vanier-Waldron** (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minor: Criminology

Mentor: **Keith Marcus, PhD**, Psychology Dept.

### Biography

Ashanti Waldron is a first-generation college student. She will graduate *cum laude* with a forensic psychology major and a minor in criminology. Ashanti has made the dean's list every semester since Fall 2018. She was accepted into the Psi Chi Honors Society Fall 2021 as well. Ashanti currently applied for the CUNY Launch internship program for Summer 2022 with a goal of working in the mental health field. She was accepted into Fordham's Clinical Research Master program for fall 2022, but ultimately decided to take a semester off to gain additional research and work experience in the mental health field. Ashanti plans to apply for graduate school programs in the fall with a concentration in either clinical psychology or social work.

### Project Description

Many youth who are in the foster care system have had traumatic childhood experiences. Their actions and personalities could be a result of the trauma they endured. While being in the foster care system, obstacles faced by these youth include the lack of a safety net, meaning not having people to rely on and trust and aging out, where some states start as early as eighteen and other states at twenty-one. With over 200,000 youth placed into the foster care system in 2020 the most common reasons included neglect, parental drug abuse, and the caretaker's inability to cope (AFCARS report, 2020). Luckily, policies have been passed to provide better resources to the foster care system to improve the lives of thousands of youths in and aging out of the system. Along with policies, programs filled with thousands of volunteers have emerged across the country to help on a more personal level through face-to-face interactions. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is a nation-wide program that works with the foster care system. Volunteers sign up, and they are assigned to children who are at risk of aging out of the foster care system, and do not have adequate resources. These volunteers work with youth on a more personal level to understand their situation, and how to effectively set them back on the right track.

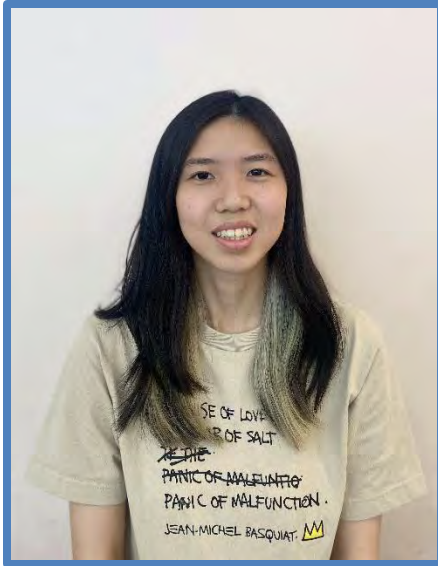
The literature review consisted of information from scholars about language and identity. Campbell (2013) shared how language can be used in numerous ways to communicate with others. Oral Language, written language, body language and more can all have various levels of significance within different cultures. I focused on Erik Erikson's fifth stage of psychosocial development known as identity versus role confusion. At this stage, adolescents begin to tackle who they truly are, and how that will relate and contribute to society. Areas such as career, relationships, families, and more are often discussed as youth begin to think about their future within these areas (McLeod, 2018). Lastly, I looked at the difficulties youth in the foster care system could have with developing their identities. Previous research showed how youth who were in the system were more likely to have limited to no access to their immediate and extended family. This leads to attachment issues, difficulty trusting others, lower self-esteem, and a poor sense of self (Moss, 2009).

In this study, I looked at how youth in the foster care system used language to create and establish their own personal identities. I looked for keywords, or other linguistic markers of how the youth described their identity after their CASA intervention, and what it was like before and after the intervention. To find these differences, I used discourse analysis, a method that analyzes how language is used through communication. The data came from CASA testimonials across various states in the United States of America As well as CASA's national book. Using these two sources, I had a total sample size of forty testimonials. Twenty were from the perspectives of youth participants, and twenty came from volunteers. I started by using ten participants testimonial and created concept maps. The concept maps were used to see if there was a pattern on how after their CASA intervention, youth described their identity changes before and after CASA. After using the first ten testimonials, I looked at all the similarities and differences in expressed identities from various testimonials to create and refine a typology consisting of three sections: beginning, middle, and end, with additional categories of identity-expressing behavioral. After completing the first set of participant's data, I used an additional ten testimonials to determine if the typology needed any additional changes. Rather than use concept maps for the second set of ten testimonials, I used text analysis and read each testimonial and broke it down by paragraph then by passage and sentence. For the volunteers, a separate typology was created and I used text analysis for both sets of data. The data that derived from the forty testimonials were further analyzed using R-studio (R Core Team, 2021).

After using the concept maps for the first set of participant's data, I saw that many of the participants used similar language. Many of the participants used a similar structure to write their testimonials where they would reflect on their childhood trauma, discuss how their CASA Volunteer helped them in their life, any current or future plans they had, and more. After using text analysis for the data, I was able to see where certain passages fell into the typology depending on if it was in the beginning, middle, or end of the paragraphs. By using R-Studio to further analyze my data, I was able to create configuration plots to show relationships between the different categories within the typology. Overall, each participant has their own unique testimonial, so there may not be just one way to write that testimonial to show identity changes. The typology did demonstrate how participants often used similar wording/phrasing to express these changes throughout the beginning, middle, and concluding paragraphs.

Refugee youth are under research. A potential future study could look at youth in the foster care system who were refugees and/or asylum seeking and look at how assimilating to the western culture could factor into identity changes. Using surveys, interviews, screenings for mental health disorders, stressors and more could be used to look at how assimilating to a new culture could impact a youths personal, community, or cultural identity.

The concept maps, typologies, and text analysis each had an important role in demonstrating how youth describe their identity changes using language. The concept maps allowed the first typology for youth to be produced. The concept maps demonstrated how youth from the same foster care program can use similar words and phrasing to express how their identity changed with a CASA intervention. The text analysis allowed the testimonials to be broken down into paragraphs and passages. From that, at least 86% or more of the passages fit into one of the beginning, middle, or end typologies. The text analysis demonstrated a unique relationship between the different categories and how they are presented within the typologies.



## Sexual Grooming Behaviors of Offenders: Identifying Its Relation to the Victim's Age

**Yan Shan Yu** (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minor: Criminology

Mentor: **Elizabeth Jeglic, PhD**, Psychology Dept.

### Biography

Yan Shan Yu is a recent graduate with a BA in forensic psychology and a minor in criminology. She will continue her education in the Forensic Psychology MA program at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (JJC, City University of New York). As an undergraduate, she was accepted into Psi Chi, The International Honor Society in Psychology, the Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, and was an APA ambassador. Yan currently works at the Office for Student Research and Creativity (OSRC) at JJC as a Research and Administrative Assistant. Aside from the honor societies, Yan has been part of the Dean's list every semester and graduated as a McNair and Honors scholar. Within the McNair Program, she was provided an opportunity to conduct her own research. Specifically, her project focused on the crime of sexual grooming and how it impacts victims of different ages. Her interest in this particular topic stems from her realization that this area continues to be a taboo topic in many ways and, therefore, remains underreported. With the completion of her project, Yan is currently working on publishing her research. As a Research and Administrative Assistant, Yan recently co-planned the EXPO, which is a two-week long event that focused mainly on the accomplishments of students across various disciplines and programs. In addition to the EXPO, Yan's role includes supervising and guiding the research scholarship cohort, creating and analyzing comprehensive metrics data sets for the OSRC community, managing two OSRC websites, and coordinating workshops and events. She strives to provide guidance and help for anyone who is interested in the research process. After obtaining her Master's degree, Yan plans to pursue her PhD in clinical psychology and practice as a licensed psychologist, providing services to assist those with serious mental illnesses. She also plans to advocate for better treatment regarding the mentally ill.



## Project Description

Sexual grooming is the deceptive process by which an offender selects a vulnerable victim and prepares them for sexual abuse to avoid detection. It is estimated that most cases of child sexual abuse (CSA) involve sexual grooming. Recently a content validated model of sexual grooming, the Sexual Grooming Model (SGM), has been developed in which 42 of grooming behaviors have been identified. However, it is believed that these behaviors may differ by the age of the victim. The present study explores the changing behaviors of the offenders depending upon the age of the child victim. Undergraduate students who experienced CSA were asked to complete a self-report survey based on the SGM and the reported grooming behaviors were examined across three developmental age groups using a chi-square test of association. Findings show significant differences between the groups as children under the age of 11 were more likely to report that they were compliant and/or trusting of adults, lacked adult supervision, engaged in childlike activities with the offender, were given rewards, bribes, or were allowed to avoid punishment, and had the offender misstate moral standards to them. Children ages 11 to 14 were more likely to be given rewards and compliments, while children ages 15 and older were more likely to have thought the offender was charming, nice, and/or likeable, been shown favoritism and formed a relationship with the offender, been asked about their sexual relationships, and were told about sexual things the offender has done. These findings provide more insight for the community to understand the process of grooming and increases awareness of detecting the behaviors. Some limitations within this study are the sample is not representative of the general population, the groups were separated based on age guidelines used to determine sexual development, and the responses of the questionnaire cannot be verified. In order to address these limitations, future studies can focus on other victim groups, find other ways to separate the victims into age groups, or replicate this study to examine the validity and reliability of the results.

## First Year McNair Scholars



### Analyzing the Prevalence of Domestic Violence Centers in Minority Neighborhoods Compared to Predominantly White Neighborhoods

**Gabrielle Andrade** (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minors: Counseling and Sociology

Mentor: **Jayne Mooney, PhD**, Sociology Dept.

### Biography

Gabrielle Andrade is an upper junior majoring in forensic psychology and double minoring in counseling and sociology. Gabrielle is a SEEK student and a 1st year McNair scholar working with Dr. Jayne Mooney from the sociology department. Her independent research project focuses on Latinx women domestic abuse survivors and their experience with DV outreach programs.

### Abstract

This study seeks to better understand domestic violence in specific areas in New York City (NYC) by analyzing the prevalence of domestic violence centers in minority neighborhoods compared to predominantly white neighborhoods. Another aim of the study will be to analyze the difference between the domestic violence centers and the services they provide. For this study, annual reports from domestic violence centers will be utilized. In addition, surveys will be distributed to LatinX women from two specific domestic violence centers in NYC to see their experiences with these centers. It is hypothesized that domestic violence centers in a predominantly white area will have more funding, but not the services that will cater to LatinX clients. It is important to look at this topic because it continues to be a crucial legal and public health topic and can shed light on a situation in need and improve the current domestic violence centers.



## **An Examination of the Impact of Type of Network on Counteracting Malware: Does a Convoluted Neural Network Provide more Efficiency than an Antivirus Software?**

**Cynthia Gonzalez** (she/her)

Major: Computer Science

Minor: Art

Mentor: **Aftab Ahmad, PhD**, Mathematics and Computer Science Dept.

### **Biography**

Cynthia Gonzalez is a senior at John Jay College currently studying Computer Science while minoring in Art. During her free time she likes to delve into different mediums of art from music to drawing and painting. A few accomplishments to note would be participating in CodePath's iOS Development program in the Fall of 2021. Cynthia completed the course with honors which lead toward her training to become a Tech Fellow for the course. Cynthia completed the training and was able to become an official Tech Fellow for CodePath's iOS Development Course and finished off with a certificate of leadership for being a Tech Fellow. Cynthia is also proud to note that she is a Peer Advisor for the Computer Science department which has been something new for this major and she is proudly the only female Peer Advisor for the Computer Science Department and strive to keep helping students get to where they would like to be when they graduate.

### **Abstract**

Due to an increased need for better security in technology, more efforts have been made to detect when a malware attack is happening in an efficient or timely manner. Many researchers have looked into Machine Learning as a better way of understanding attacks. Machine learning is a subset of Artificial Intelligence that focuses heavily on very complex techniques that simulate human thinking. A lot of models that use machine learning utilize algorithms, which have provided consistent results and determine a certain flow for the network to understand. This study aims to continue understanding Artificial Intelligence by creating a convolutional neural network to understand its performance rate. Since a lot of new research focuses on neural networks, it is be important to understand if the Anti-Virus Software that already exist performs better than a neural network. My study aims to see whether a convolutional neural network will outperform an antivirus software and in which ways does it display its effectiveness.



# An Examination of the Impact of Social Media on Political Engagement during COVID

**Laiba Ghumman** (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minor: Addiction Studies and Counseling

Mentor: **Rebecca Weiss, PhD**, Psychology Dept.

## Biography

Laiba Ghumman, is a recent graduate having received her bachelor's in Forensic Psychology with a minor in Addiction Studies and Counseling from John Jay. As a McNair scholar Laiba had the opportunity to work under the guidance of Dr. Rebecca Weiss. Under Dr. Weiss's mentorship Laiba studied the impacts technology can have on one's well-being, particularly how social media usage during a time of isolation may have impacted political engagement in young adults. Laiba plans to continue her studies in this interdisciplinary field of computer science and psychology.

## Abstract

The deadly nature of COVID-19 led to varying forms of restrictions across the world. Discouraging social interactions to varying degrees, while simultaneously encouraging the digitizing of all social engagement. This study examined how the digitalization of life may have affected political engagement in young adults. The researchers were particularly interested in how stress caused by online engagement during a time of social isolation may have impacted political extremism amongst youth. To examine this a secondary analysis of an online survey was conducted amongst a diverse sample of college students. Stress levels were assessed using the Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS10; Cohen & Williamson, 1988). Descriptive information was used to assess political extremist features, under the sub-definition of violent extremism and ideological extremism (Kruglanski et al., 2017). In accordance with previous research it is argued that increased social isolation was expected to increase social media usage, this conjunction predicts stress, potentially increasing an individual's vulnerability to political extremism. The study confirmed a correlation between stress and political engagement, such impacts on stress were shown to have been higher in 2020 a time of social isolation for many. The results were discussed in reference to previous literature, where a potential causal relationship intertwining these factors was developed.



## **Interrater Reliability in Competency to Stand Trial (CST) Evaluations in New York**

**Ly Thien Hoang**

Major: Forensic Psychology B.A./M.A.

Minor: Interdisciplinary Studies

Mentor: **Rebecca Weiss, PhD**, Psychology Dept.

### **Biography**

Ly Thien Hoang is an upper senior at John Jay College of Criminal Justice studying in the BA/MA Forensic Psychology program with a minor in Interdisciplinary Studies. Ly Hoang is under the mentorship of Dr. Rebecca Weiss, Ph.D. conducting a secondary analysis on the interrater reliability on competency to stand trial evaluations in New York. She is interested in becoming a forensic evaluator and hopes to enter a Ph.D. or PsyD program in Fall 2023. She hopes to obtain in the program a Clinical Psychology degree with a focus in forensics to becoming a neuropsychologist and trial consultant. Ly Hoang was awarded the ISP Award for Excellence in May 2022. Ly Hoang is currently externing with the New York Counseling for Change, LLC (QCC/NYCC) and has become a research assistant in Dr. Margaret Bull Kovera Lab. Ly Hoang will graduate in December 2022.

### **Abstract**

Competency to stand trial (CST) relates to a defendant's ability to participate in court, which necessitates the ability to understand the charges against them, as well as court proceedings (Collins, 2019). Mental health clinicians can assist in determining a defendant's competence, and CST evaluations are one of the most common evaluations in forensic psychology (Robinson & Acklin, 2010). The legal determination often relies upon the evaluation outcome (Robinson & Acklin, 2010). With increasing competency evaluations requested by the court (Tansy et al., 2021), further investigation of the consistencies of these types of evaluations is warranted. New York is one of the eleven states to require two evaluators for all initial CST evaluations, thus allowing for research to examine inter-rater agreement. From an archival sample of 46 men who each received at least two CST evaluations in New York, the Fleiss kappa inter-rater agreement method will be used with the SPSS software to investigate the consistencies in interrater agreement.



## The Effect of a Department's Requirement for Evidence-Based Suspicion on Jurors' Perceptions of Pre-Identification Evidence

**Jaleel King** (he/him)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minor: Africana Studies

Mentor: **Margaret Kovera, PhD**, Psychology Dept.

### Biography

Jaleel King is a senior at John Jay College and expects to graduate in May 2023. He majors in Forensic Psychology with a minor in Africana Studies. Jaleel has taken advantage of multiple resources and programs at John Jay College including the Alumni Mentoring Program, The Pinkerton Fellow, and the McNair Program. As a Pinkerton fellow, Jaleel interned at exalt, a non-profit organization that provides alternatives to incarceration services for court-involved youth. The mission of exalt is to transform the lives of these youth by equipping them with skills and experience to become self-sufficient members of society. Through the McNair program, Jaleel is conducting research on eyewitness testimony and jurors' perception of the evidence against suspects placed in lineups.

Currently, Jaleel is an intern at Michigan State University Big Ten intensive summer research program that provides student the opportunity to conduct research with a mentor of their choice. This summer Jaleel will be focusing on the different types of factors that contributes to psychological distress prevalence and severity among Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African adults during COVID -19 lockdown. Jaleel will serve as a second author of research that focuses on the role of resilient coping and family functioning on the presence and severity of opioid misuse during COVID-19 lockdown. After graduating from John Jay College, Jaleel plans to go into a Ph.D. program with a focus on social psychology.

### Abstract

Eyewitness testimony is the leading cause of wrongful convictions. The research's purpose is to examine jurors' sensitivity to situations in which police officers have insufficient evidence to place a suspect in a lineup depending on the department's requirement for evidence-based suspicion. Participants watched a recorded mock trial with varied scenarios in the presence of evidentiary connection (weak vs. strong), and the department's requirement for evidence-based suspicion. It is hypothesized that a main effect of evidence connection and an interaction between evidence connection and the department's requirement would be found. These findings would suggest that guidelines would potentially lower the rate at which innocent suspects are placed in identification procedures.





## **Sex Trafficking: An Insight on the Laws, Policies, and Programs between the U.S. and International States**

**Osmeily Luna** (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology B.A./M.A.

Minor: Criminology

Mentor: **Jayne Mooney, PhD**, Sociology Dept.

### **Biography**

Osmeily Luna is a junior at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where she is majoring in Forensic Psychology and minoring in Criminology. Osmeily is a first-year Ronald E. McNair scholar, where she will be conducting independent research while learning all that she can about grad school. Osmeily is researching violence against women with a concentration on sex trafficking from an international lens and is also a part of the Forensic Psychology BA/MA Program, where she will be taking an extra year to complete her bachelor's and master's degrees simultaneously.

### **Abstract**

Sex trafficking is a widely known phenomenon that has been around for many years—resulting in the traumatization of many individuals. Throughout the United States and international states, efforts have been made to deter its occurrence. However, the global differentiating interpretation of what sex trafficking is has caused some issues on how to combat this phenomenon. This study examines the laws, policies, and programs created to aid victims of sex trafficking-- with a concentration on women. This study will be carried out using the qualitative method-- where data will be acquired through textual analysis of interviews, surveys, and observations gathered from different sex trafficking courts in New York City after attending hearings and talking to the lawyers, judges, and social workers, and possibly the victims. Findings will be analyzed to answer the following question: What are the mental health outcomes of sex trafficked victims, and what policies and services are being enforced to aid these women?



## What's in Your (Cyber)Pants?: Queer Identity Negotiation on TikTok

**Avii Van Praagh** (they/them)

Majors: Sex, Gender, and Sexuality studies & Structural Violence and Critical Othering studies

Mentor: **Amy Adamczyk, PhD**, Sociology Dept.

### Biography

Avii Van Praagh is a junior in the CUNY BA program Vis a Vis John Jay. They are majoring in both Sex, Gender, and Sexuality studies, and Structural Violence and Critical Othering studies. They are a McNair Fellow, Vera Fellow, and Moelis Fellow, as well as a CUNY Peer Leader and intern with both NYBCAP and the Urban Justice Center. Avii is also a member of both the honors program DEI club and the honors program LGBTQIA+ club. In addition to their academic pursuits, Avii is also an artist who has been featured in zines and has received multiple merit scholarships for their creative ventures. They aspire to be a part-time professor and part-time intimacy coordinator with extensive nonprofit involvement on the side.

### Abstract

In the age of the internet, social media platforms have become the premiere method of communicating personal identity markers to others. For folks in marginalized communities, social media offers a space to negotiate one's identity, both within their relevant ingroups and to the general public. One such social media platform, named TikTok, has become a thriving hub of gender and sexuality discourse, so much so that there are distinct subgroups which go by collective identifiers, including "straighttok" and "queertok." These subgroup identifiers are usually included in an individual's post in the form of hashtags at the end of their post's caption. By coding different hashtag and caption identifiers of both individuals describing their personal identities and individuals describing themselves as part of the identity of a larger collective and analyzing the subsequent identification or lack thereof by commenters on the posts, research will explore the relationships between individual identity and group identity formation in gender nonconforming groups on social media.

## McNair Mentors



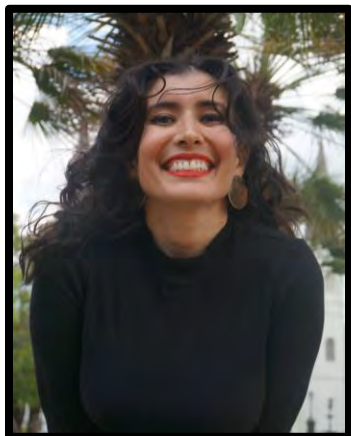
**Dr. Aftab Ahmad**  
Mathematics & Computer  
Science Dept.



**Dr. Amy Adamczyk**  
Sociology Dept.



**Dr. Maureen Allwood**  
Psychology Dept.



**Dr. Crystal Endsley**  
Africana Studies Dept.



**Dr. Emily Haney-Caron**  
Psychology Dept.



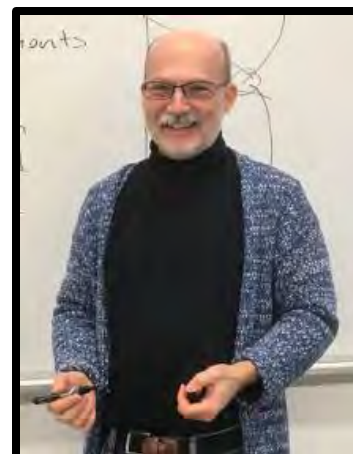
**Dr. Elizabeth Jeglic**  
Psychology Dept.



**Dr. Margaret Kovera**  
Psychology Dept.



**Dr. Randall LaSalle**  
Public Management Dept.



**Dr. Keith Markus**  
Psychology Dept.





**Dr. Emalina McSpadden**  
Social Sciences Dept.



**Dr. Mickey Melendez**  
Counseling and Human Services Dept.



**Dr. Alexandra Moffet-Bateau**  
Political Science Dept.



**Dr. Jayne Mooney**  
Sociology Dept.



**Dr. Kevin Nadal**  
Psychology Dept.



**Dr. Richard Ocejo**  
Sociology Dept.



**Dr. Nina Rose-Fischer**  
Interdisciplinary Studies Dept.



**Dr. Andrew Sidman**  
Political Science Dept.



**Dr. Keith Taylor**  
Law & Police Science Dept.



**Dr. Rebecca Weiss**  
**Psychology Dept.**



# McNair in Graduate School

*“You’re eagles! Stretch your wings and fly to the sky.”*

~Dr. Ronald E. McNair



The following McNair Scholars have been accepted to the listed graduate schools and programs for the **Fall 2022** semester. Congrats scholars!

**Alexa Abruzese** graduated with her degree in Criminal Justice. She has been accepted into John Jay’s Master’s Program in Criminal Justice.

**Laura Alarcon** graduated with a double major in English and Forensic Psychology. She has been accepted to Queen’s University Belfast Master’s Program in English.

**D’Andrah Almanzar** graduated with her degree in Criminal Justice. She has been accepted into Fordham University’s Graduate School of Social Science Master’s Program in Clinical Social Work.

**Angelina Benli** graduated with a double major in Criminology and Forensic Psychology. She has been accepted into Michigan State University’s Ph.D. program in Political Science.

**Jia-Yi Mai** graduated with her degree in Criminal Justice. She has been accepted into John Jay's Master's Program in Criminal Justice.

**Katherine Marin** graduated with her degree in English. She has been accepted into CUNY Graduate Center's Master's Program in Liberal Studies with a concentration in Africana Studies.

**Yareli Perez** graduated with her degree in Forensic Psychology. She has been accepted into St. John University's Ph.D. program in Clinical Psychology.

**Yan Shan Yu** graduated with her degree in Forensic Psychology. She has been accepted into John Jay's Master's Program in Forensic Psychology.

### ***McNair Alumni***

**Erica Klafehn ('16)** has been accepted into the University of Nevada, Reno's Ph.D. program in Anthropology. She earned her Master's degree in Forensic Science from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 2021.

**Idalina Marin ('20)** has been accepted into Howard University College of Medicine MD/Ph.D. program in microbiology. She earned her Bachelor's degree in English from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 2020.



Thank you to all of our McNair Mentors!

*Congratulations Class of 2022!*

## McNair Program Staff & Journal Editors



**Dr. Jessica Gordon-Nembhard**  
Director, McNair Program  
Professor Africana Studies

Dr. Jessica Gordon-Nembhard became director of the McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program in September 2011. In her first year she held the first McNair mentor's retreat and solidified the mentor-Scholar benchmarks and contract process. She and Dr. Lee have been working to create a comfortable up-to-date computer lab space - allowing scholars to spend longer hours working on their research and socializing with their peers. Dr. Gordon-Nembhard is Professor of Community Justice and Social Economic Development in the Department of Africana Studies (the department that founded John Jay's McNair Program). She is a political economist whose research focuses on community economic development, worker ownership and cooperative economics; wealth inequality; Black Political Economy; popular economic literacy; and community-based approaches to justice. She is an affiliate faculty member in the Environmental Psychology Ph.D. program in the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, The Graduate Center, CUNY; and with the Economics Master's Program at John Jay. Author of *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* and 2016 Inductee into the US Cooperative Hall of Fame, she is also an Affiliate Scholar at The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan (Canada), and a Faculty Fellow and Mentor with the Institute for the Study of Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing at Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations. She earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in Economics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; an M.A.T. in Elementary Curriculum and Teaching at Howard University; and her B.A. in Literature and African American Studies at Yale University.



**Dr. S. Ernest Lee, Jr.**

Associate Director, McNair Program  
Adjunct Professor Political Science &  
Africana Studies

Dr. Lee is responsible for the day to day operations of the Program including teaching the fall Graduate School labs and spring McNair Research Seminar as well as providing academic counseling for McNair Scholars. He also works with the director on grant writing and scholar and mentor recruitment. Dr. Lee wants to ensure that the Program provides a great source of information and support to scholars during the process of their research projects and graduate program applications. In addition to his McNair responsibilities, Dr. Lee also serves as an Adjunct Assistant Professor in both the Political Science and Africana Studies Departments. He earned his B.A. in Government and Law from Lafayette College and his M.A., M.Phil, and Ph.D. from the Graduate Center, CUNY. He also has a Certificate in Africana Studies from the Graduate Center.



**Rachel Rosado, B.A.**

Graduate Program Assistant

Ms. Rosado joined the McNair staff in early 2022 where she assists with the program's administration and helps the program's scholars navigate their undergraduate careers. As an undergraduate Ms. Rosado was an English major while double minoring in Art and Criminology. She completed research on how the film *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) is a contemporary media product embedded in a history of politics and economics that shape mainstream media under the mentorship of Dr. Olivera Jokić. Ms. Rosado is pursuing her M.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies at the Department of Experimental Humanities and Social Engagement at New York University's Graduate School of Arts and Science. Her thesis will focus on the possibilities of sustainability the United States' transportation industry can achieve in relation to the climate crisis. She also serves as the Senior Art Editor for *Caustic Frolic*, a student-run interdisciplinary journal that is supported and funded by NYU's XE department.

## In Remembrance of 36 Years since the Space Shuttle Challenger's Last Voyage



“Whether or not you reach your goals in life depends entirely on how well you prepare for them and how badly you want them. You’re eagles! Stretch your wings and fly to the sky.”

- Ronald E. McNair

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Special thanks to outgoing City Council Member **Inez Barron** and incoming City Council Member **Charles Barron** for their support of our program.

Lastly, thank you to **Ms. Erica Klafehn**, McNair Alumnus and former Graduate Program Assistant of the McNair Program, for the cover designs.

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