

The 13th Annual Ronald E. McNair Scholars' Research Journal



2022-2023

John Jay College CUNY
City University of New York



Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate
Achievement Program



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Message From the Directors

Academic year 2022-2023 marked a couple of milestones. First, in the spring of 2023, our program commemorated the 30th anniversary of the first student cohort of McNair Scholars at John Jay. We are very proud of the longevity of our program. The year was also our first fully in-person academic year since before the COVID-19 Pandemic, and our McNair Scholars certainly took advantage of the opportunities this afforded. We were able to conduct our Orientation for new scholars, fall labs, spring McNair Research Seminar, and summer graduate school workshops in person. But we were also able to supplement this with continuing virtual workshops with McNair Alumni, virtual conferences and a virtual summer graduate preparation series. This best of both worlds approach not only signaled the future of how our program will operate, but it also offered our scholars many more opportunities. Being in person allowed our McNair Scholars more occasions to bond with each other, and virtual events offered more opportunities that they otherwise would not have been able to take advantage.

When it came to conferences, we were finally able to resume travel with our scholars. We travelled with Second Year Scholars to conferences sponsored by UMBC, where they explored local graduate schools and cruised the Baltimore harbor, and the University of Washington, where they were able to see the campus as well as the great Northwestern part of the country. In addition, one of our Second Year Scholar's poster presentation won an award at the latter conference. For our First Year Scholars, we were able to take a group to the SAEOPP McNair Conference in Atlanta, GA, where two of our scholars won awards for their presentations. All of our scholars travelled locally to Kean University in New Jersey, where the Fifth NY/NJ Metro McNair Research Conference was held in-person for the first time since before the pandemic in 2020.

In terms of graduate school, two First Year Scholars were accepted to summer SROPs. In addition, two Second Year Scholars were accepted to PhD programs, John Jay and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, with full funding. Another scholar was accepted to Columbia University's School of Social Work with a scholarship. We also had one alumni who was accepted to a PhD program with full funding; to the CUNY Graduate Center's PhD in Educational Psychology (with a NSF Fellowship) and one alumni who was accepted to John Jay's Master program. Finally, six alumni earned their PhD this year. All of these stories will be featured throughout this journal.

We are very proud of what our McNair Scholars have accomplished this year. And as we move forward with our 31st cohort of McNair Scholars, our program is stronger than ever.

- 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 his PhD during the 2022-2023 academic year. He is:

Dr. Sam Choi ('17) earned his Master's and doctorate degrees in Psychology and Law from the University of Wyoming. He previously received a Bachelor of Arts in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Dr. Choi is a first-generation, Korean-American, cis-gender man, born and raised in Queens, NY. In his sophomore year of college, he took a class in Forensic Psychology and fell in love with the field of Psychology and Law. Dr. Choi recalls entering the McNair Program



as an awkward, sweatpants-and-hoodie-wearing undergraduate student and learning how to act and present himself as a professional. His dissertation is entitled, "Not So Black and Yellow: The Impact of Race and Sexual Identity on Marginalized People's Experience with Aggression." Dr. Choi was recently hired as a Research Analyst at the Criminal Justice Research Institute in Honolulu, Hawaii. Thank you, McNair!!!

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. Cynthia Gonzalez**.

When she entered our McNair Program, Cynthia was already unique in her status of one of the few STEM majors in her cohort. However, it quickly became apparent that she was unique in other ways. From the start, Cynthia stood out for her infectious smile and inquisitive mind. She was always willing to help others and even volunteered to create stickers of our McNair logo for our Scholars. As we moved into the research component of the program, Cynthia really displayed her determination. After not being able to reach her mentor, she found out that he was out for the spring semester on medical leave. For



many students this would have stopped their research. However, Cynthia never let this stop her progress and was able to work independently and to reach out to other faculty for support. The result was an excellent research proposal that was recognized with an award at the SAEOPP McNair Research Conference. She was also recognized by John Jay with the Distinguished Service Commencement Award. Cynthia has been accepted to Rensselaer Polytechnic

Institute's PhD Program in Computer Science for Fall 2023 with full financial support.

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 24th, 2023

Second Year Scholars

Gabrielle Andrade- *The “Passionate Scholar” Award*

For the passionate manner by which you pursued both your research and graduate school objectives.

Cynthia Gonzalez – *The “Relentless Scholar” Award*

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

Ly Hoang – *The “Meticulous Scholar” Award*

For the diligent and thorough nature in which you engaged in the research and graduate school application process.

Jaleel King - *The “Pied Piper” Award*

In recognition of your leadership and interpersonal skills and your ability to attract a network and to create opportunities.

Osmeily Luna – *The McNair “Spirit” Award*

In recognition of your compassion and the consistent and unwavering support you provided to your fellow McNair Scholars.

First Year Scholars

Kimberely Mejia – *The “Diligent Scholar Attendance” Award*

In recognition of your outstanding performance and participation during the Spring 2023 McNair Research Seminar.

Anjelika Soriano – *The “Diligent Scholar Attendance” Award*

In recognition of your consistent efforts in the Spring 2023 McNair Research Seminar and your persistent efforts at finding a research mentor.

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 24th, 2023

Dr. Margaret Kovera – *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. Kovera was nominated by scholar Jaleel King

*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. Aftab Ahmad – *The “Above and Beyond” Mentor Award*

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

❖ Dr. Ahmad was nominated by scholar Cynthia Gonzalez

Dr. Jayne Mooney – *The “Above and Beyond” Mentor Award*

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

Dr. Rebecca Weiss– *The “Above and Beyond” Mentor Award*

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

Meet the Scholars



The Second Year Scholars pictured with Dr. Lee at the UMBC McNair Research Conference.



The First Year Scholars at the NY/NJ McNair Metro Conference.

Orientation August 2022



UMBC McNair Conference

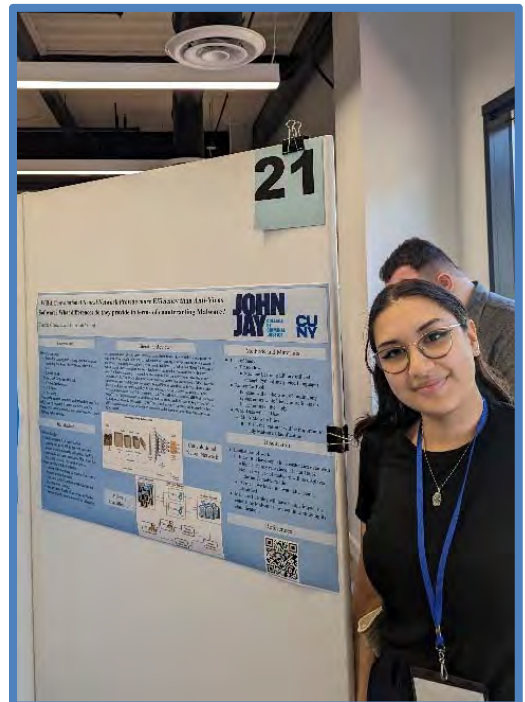
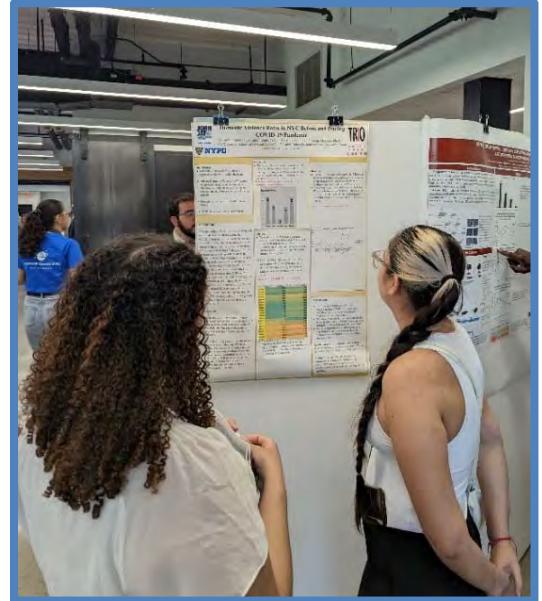
September 2022



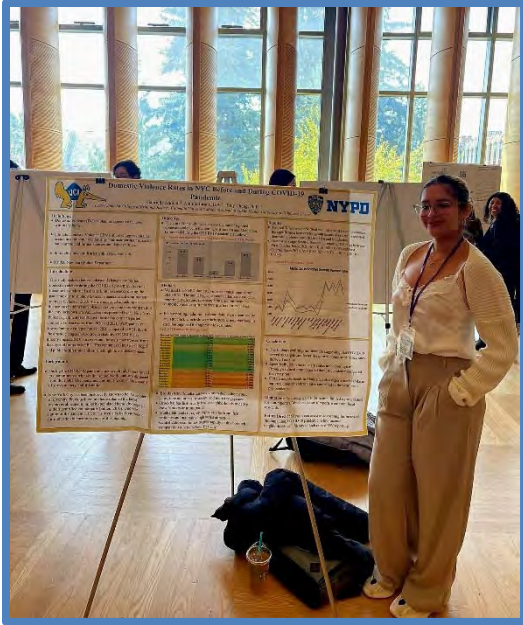
Alumni Reunion October 2022



NY/NJ McNair Metro Conference and Graduate Fair – Kean University April 2023



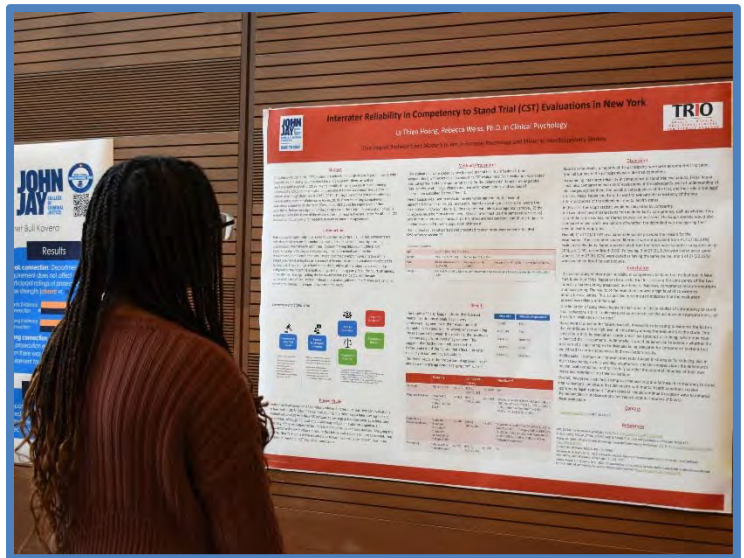
Student Leadership & Advocacy Symposium – University of Washington April 2023



Research & Creativity Expo

May 2023





50 Years of Black Studies: A Milestone Celebration

May 2023





Research Roundtable & Awards Ceremony May 2023

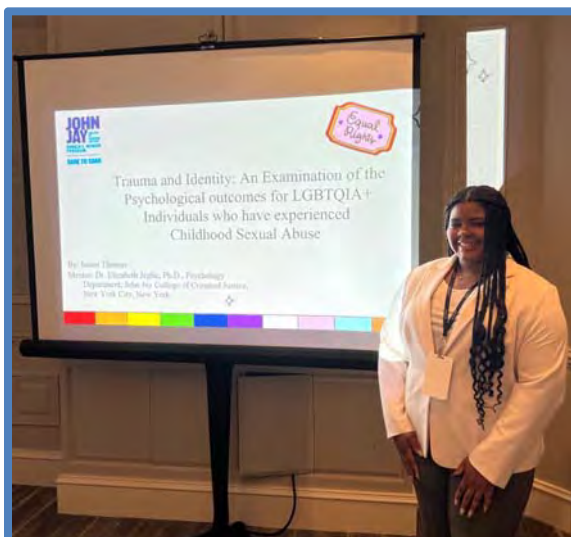






SAEOPP McNair SSS Research Conference

June 2023





Second Year McNair Scholars



Domestic Violence Rates in NYC Before and During COVID-19 Pandemic

Gabrielle Andrade (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minors: Counseling & Sociology

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

Biography

Gabrielle Andrade is a first gen-American/college student that majored in Forensic Psychology and double minored in Counseling and Sociology. As a McNair scholar, she is working with Dr. Jayne Mooney from the sociology department. Her independent research project focuses on domestic violence rates in NYC before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. A few accomplishments to note would be she was a peer mentor for 3 years at the SEEK department. Gaby spent the summer at the University of California Irvine in 2022 to conduct a research project under Dr. Tony Cheng from the Law and society department, focusing on the history of the Chicago police department. She was also a research assistant for Dr. Virginia Díaz in the SEEK department reviewing the benefits of higher education programs for low-income / underrepresented students in a college setting and how mentorship programs can benefit college students during their freshmen year. Gaby has presented at multiple conferences on both the East and West coast and was awarded a certificate for Public Health's best poster at GEG23 hosted at Washington University. She is also in both PSI CHI and CHI ALPHA EPSILON honor societies. Gaby was accepted to Columbia University's Masters in Social Work Program!

Project Description

This study seeks to better understand changes in reported domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous literature has indicated a drastic limit in resources during the pandemic due to shutdown, vaccine mandates, and employment shortages (Schosser, 2022). We are interested in looking at fluctuations in domestic violence rates pre-pandemic compared to the city lockdown era. Annual reports provided by the New York Police Department (NYPD) will be used to extract reported domestic violence rates from 2020 and 2021. We hypothesize lower domestic violence rates in 2020 compared to 2021, due to the drastic changes in resource availability. COVID-19 has directly impacted DV survivors and the

assistance received from the city and from the NYPD. This continues to be a crucial legal and public health topic and can shed light on a situation in need. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals were forced to quarantine, switch to online school/work, and were displaced from their jobs. The pandemic continues to cause high amounts of stress, anxiety, and frustration. New York City has been historically known to be the epicenter of diversity. Previous literature has explained the lack of resources allocated to minority-populated boroughs compared to their gentrified counterparts (Sutton, 2019). Due to the nature of the pandemic, there has been a lack of representation for domestic violence survivors, as it is ongoing. We used the NYPD domestic violence annual report from 2020-2021. The annual report contained domestic violence reporting, radio runs, rape complaints, and intimate domestic violence split into three quarters for each year. Each reporting, radio run, and complaint were organized by each precinct, which shows which specific neighborhood in each borough had the highest or lowest rates. Brooklyn and Manhattan were chosen due to the income gaps, housing prices, residents, and tourist engagement. Brooklyn has historically been a neighborhood for native New Yorkers or immigrants. Manhattan tends to report higher salaries from its residents and maintains high tourist attraction. Gentrification continues to grow rapidly in this borough compared to others in New York City. Two tail T-Test was performed with Microsoft Excel to examine the significance between the group means over time in reported domestic violence rates in Brooklyn and Manhattan. There was a significant difference in reported DV rates between First Quarter Rates 2020 ($M = 0.13$, $SD = 0.07$) and First Quarter Rates 2021 ($M = 0.15$, $SD = 0.07$); $t(46) = 2.01$, $p = 0.004$). The findings confirm prior literature suggesting that COVID-19 served as a significant factor in reported domestic violence rates in New York City. Specifically, low-income zip codes in the borough of Brooklyn suffered more reported domestic violence compared to the year prior. Certain neighborhoods in Manhattan also experienced a spike in reported domestic violence rates compared to the year prior, pre-pandemic. A few limitations of the study were there was no demographic information and limited representation of non-reporters. We do not know if the reports were from local residents. For future Directions, these results can assist in advocating for increased funding during the COVID-19 pandemic in low-income neighborhoods with a history of high rates of DV reporting.



How will the Parameters of Data Splitting Influence the Improvement of Validation Performance on the Beth Cybersecurity Dataset?

Cynthia Gonzalez (she/her)

Major: Computer Science

Minor: Art

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

Biography

Cynthia Gonzalez graduated John Jay in the Fall of 2022 with Magna Cum Laude and as a Dean's List recipient majoring in Computer Science. Cynthia is working alongside Dr. Aftab Ahmed in conducting research in AI and Cybersecurity. Her research focuses on Data Anomalies and Influence of Parameters in Data Splitting. 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 then became an official Tech Fellow for CodePath's iOS Development Course and finished off with a certificate of leadership. This summer she will also be working as a Tech Fellow for CodePath's Technical Interview Course preparing students of other colleges for their Computer Science careers. Cynthia is proud to note that she was a Peer Advisor for the Computer Science department here at John Jay which has been something new for this major. She is proudly the first female Peer Advisor for the Computer Science Department. While being a Peer Advisor, she was assigned to work on a special project that entails networking Computer Science Alumni with current students at John Jay. Her goal is to help students have better job opportunities through this work. Cynthia is the recipient of the Distinguished Service award which recognizes exceptional service contributions to the college community. Cynthia was accepted to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's PhD Program in Computer Science!

Project Description

Introduction: Cyberattacks are constantly evolving and finding new ways to attack different sources. Machine learning is becoming a useful way to learn behaviors of cyberattacks to better prevent them. ML is a subset of Artificial Intelligence that takes and learns data to produce specific outputs depending on what the research entails. With machine learning, studies are being conducted on larger datasets to pinpoint

outliers and inconsistencies drawn from the data. This method allows for a better understanding of what malicious behavior will look like. The goal of a larger dataset analysis is to provide more accuracy when searching for malicious behavior on a system. Utilizing existing datasets will allow researchers to train, test, and develop better machine learning algorithms to prevent future attacks. This study focuses on the BETH Dataset which is the most modern and cleanest security dataset so far. According to the researchers, the BETH dataset contains labels, as well as network and kernel activity which is not as common with other datasets researchers use. Because of this dataset's uniqueness, it makes it the perfect target of parameter manipulation. With the dataset utilized in this study, the goal will be to continue to gather information pertaining toward how different deep learning algorithms affect its precision, accuracy, and other results. The implication of this work is to target better anomaly detection as it will count any sorts of outliers presented within a dataset.

Methods: The research has been done using Python and utilizing libraries such as pandas, sklearn, and a few others. Python is a very versatile platform that allows a user to upload certain libraries to utilize. It is especially proficient for machine learning. I utilized the BETH dataset carrying large amounts of data. With the data, I will combine the files of the testing, training, and validation to create my own parameters. They have their data split 60 training, 20 testing, and 20 validation. The objective is to see what will happen with different parameter splits. Once put together, I will try 80/10/10 and 40/30/30. I will be using the Isolation Tree to read the outputs of the data and see how the outliers are impacted. Isolation Tree uses smaller binary trees to see outliers in datasets. Utilizing the Isolation Tree will provide the recall, f-1 score, and precision which are values that are tied to one another. The f-1 score gives the combination of precision and recall. The recall entails finding the real number of predictions determined correctly and the precision is the number of predictions that are correct. These values play an important role as they will allow me to see how the performance in my data splitting manipulation is affected.

Results: While utilizing different parameters. I noticed slight differences in data. When the researchers use their parameters. There is a bit of a difference between the test value and the precision by 10 values. For my parameters, they seem to lie very closely with one another. Their values only deviate by 1 or 2 values. Although my parameters have yet to be better than the researchers, I am looking into how it can improve. One of the reasons for this could be the order of the data split. For their data, their data stays consistent in a certain order. My data is split randomly into different categories. An important part of my results was to see that my testing data was improving while having the validation data to further test before going on into that stage.

Discussion: Determining outliers is not only important in cybersecurity, but in many other fields as well. The world is turning toward big data as it helps the training data become more accurate when it is going into other stages. This can be used in the medical, business, finance fields and many more. The objective of their outliers will determine how they should approach their next hurdle. In the circumstance of cybersecurity, it is important to utilize these outliers as cyber-attacks will continue to enhance. These inconsistencies will allow for better protection of user data especially for government facilities and big companies. Along with outliers being important in research, there is also a significance in data splitting and

validation testing. Many works have only training and testing variables. The purpose of the validation is to further benefit the results of the data being trained. The data splitting is also important as it can improve the accuracy of the data being learned within the dataset.

Future Implications: One of my future implications would be to utilize other regressors to see if they will perform well with detecting outliers in this dataset. One of the regressors I would like to look more into is the SGDRegressor which is emerging to become a more common way to utilize outliers within the dataset. I would also like to gather data in graphs utilizing different formats to visualize the outliers and differences within the data.





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 a graduate at John Jay College of Criminal Justice who studied in the BA/MA Forensic Psychology Program with a minor in Interdisciplinary Studies. Ly Hoang was 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. During her studies, she participated in the Vera Fellows Program 2021-2022 where she worked with the Urban Research Institute Pals. In the later months of 2022, she externed at the New York Counseling for Change, LLC (QCC/NYCC) through the MA externship track and participated as a research assistant in Dr. Margaret Bull Kovera Lab. Ly Thien Hoang is now working as a full-time functional family therapist with The New York Foundling and will continue her education in the Fall of 2024 in her pursuit to becoming a forensic evaluator.

Project Description

Introduction: Forensic psychologists provide professional expertise in judicial, administrative, and educational systems. An evaluatee's plea or sentence might be determined based on the relevance and/or influence of an evaluatee's described symptom presentation of the alleged criminal act or legal case. Competency is the defendant's ability to "participate" in court, to understand the charges against them, and the court proceedings. In *Dusky vs United States* (1960), the Court held that the defendant's competency: "Has sufficient present ability to consult with his lawyer with a reasonable degree of rational understanding and ... a rational as well as factual understanding of the proceedings against him." (pp. 402)

The legal outcome is often aligned with the forensic psychologists' evaluation opinion. Multiple evaluations, each examiner with a separate report, are required in New York (CPL §730 section 111.3).

Methods: The current study utilized archival data including 54 CST evaluations for 27 individuals. Each individual underwent two CST evaluations. The evaluations were coded by two licensed mental health professionals with experience in conducting CST evaluations. Each evaluation was coded into categories for the defendants' demographic, charges and reason for examination, and sources of information consulted. The defendants were randomly selected in a population of those who received inpatient treatment for restoration in 2015 at a large psychiatric center in New York. The archival sample included 27 criminal defendants aged from 21 to 75 ($M = 38.4$, $SD = 13.9$). The defendants included were male ($n = 26$, 96.3%) and female ($n = 1$, 3.7%). The defendants race were African American ($n = 12$, 44.4%), Caucasian ($n = 4$, 14.8%), Hispanic ($n = 5$, 18.5%), and other ($n = 5$, 18.5%). The defendants faced charges ranging from Criminal Mischief to Murder, with maximum penalties ranging from 4 years to life ($M = 16.1$, $SD = 17.9$).

Results: Based on the results, a majority of the participants were seen as competent indicated from all but one of the participants were deemed competent. Fleiss' kappa was run to determine if there was agreement between licensed mental health professionals on an individuals' competency. When assessing an individual's competency, each unique rater's CST was categorized and coded: competency, cause, diagnosis category, competency recommendations, and malingering.

Discussion: In examining inter-rater reliability in competency to stand trial evaluations, Fleiss' kappa could also compare the two raters' evaluations of the defendant's level of understanding of the charges against them, the possible consequences of the trial, and their role in the legal process. Additionally, Fleiss' kappa was used to assess the consistency of the two raters' recommendations for the defendant's competency to stand trial. In this case, the kappa statistic would be calculated by comparing the two raters' recommendations for the defendant's competency, such as whether they shared the same sources, no shared sources, or not listed. The type of sources can help analyze the raters' recommendation if the defendant is found competent to stand trial, requires further evaluation, or is deemed incompetent to stand trial. Overall, the use of Fleiss' kappa in an inter-rater reliability study of competency to stand trial evaluations can provide valuable information about the consistency of the two raters' evaluations in key areas such as rationale, diagnosis, competency recommendations, and malingering.

Future Implications: One limitation of using Fleiss' kappa in inter-rater reliability studies of competency to stand trial evaluations is that it only measures consistency, not the accuracy or appropriateness of the raters' evaluation as "correct." While inconsistency among raters can be problematic, a consistent but inappropriate result, such as two evaluators both finding a competent defendant to be incompetent, is also problematic and can lead to unfair legal outcomes for defendants with mental health conditions. As a potential direction for future research, one possibility is that the evaluators shared similar backgrounds or training, which may have influenced their assessments. Additionally, it would be beneficial to examine whether the inclusion of a larger sample of individuals. In addition the study found that the independence of observations is an important factor in reducing potential bias in these evaluations. This is important because it ensures that each rater is making their own assessment of the defendant's competency, rather than being influenced by the assessments of other raters. One way to increase the independence of observations in competency to

stand trial evaluations is to use a structured evaluation process that ensures that each rater receives the same information and independent from each other. Overall, this research can help to improve the accuracy and fairness of competency to stand trial evaluations and ensure that defendants with mental health conditions receive appropriate legal treatment. Future research should continue to explore ways to enhance the independence of observations and reduce potential sources of bias in these evaluations.





A Department Required for Evidence-Based Suspicion Increased Juror Sensitivity to the Base-Rate of Guilty Suspects in ID Procedures

Jaleel King (he/him)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minor: Africana Studies

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

Biography

Jaleel King is a senior majoring in Forensic Psychology with a minor in Africana Studies. At the beginning of his undergraduate studies, Jaleel was optimistic about being a special agent in the FBI. To take the necessary steps in achieving this goal, he participated in the first Alumni Mentoring Program where he was mentored by a retired Marshal. During his junior year Jaleel was accepted as a Pinkerton fellow and as a fellow, Jaleel was placed at Exalt where their main purpose is to transform the lives of court-involved youth by gaining knowledgeable skill sets and experience that can allow them to be self-sufficient members of society. Jaleel is currently a second year Ronald E. McNair student where he is mentored by Dr. Margaret Kovera. Jaleel's research focuses on evidenced-based suspicion and police officers placing suspects in lineups without enough evidence. As a McNair student, Jaleel has presented his research at multiple conferences in states such as Michigan, Washington, and Philadelphia. Jaleel is the recipient of the Bernard Locke award which recognizes academic excellence in forensic psychology. Lastly, Jaleel was recently accepted as Ph.D. student at the CUNY graduate center where he will be joining the Psychology and Law department at John Jay College under the mentorship of Dr. Margaret Kovera.

Project Description

Abstract: Eyewitness misidentification is a leading cause of wrongful conviction. Although the prior-probability of guilt (i.e., pre-identification evidence strength) is the most important factor relating to a defendant's actual guilt status, no study has examined whether it affects juror decisions. This oversight is problematic because when officers place suspects in lineups when there is little evidence connecting them to the crime, it falls on jurors to examine the probative value of identification evidence. The purpose of this

study is to examine whether jurors are sensitive to variations in pre-identification evidence strength and to explore an intervention that may increase their sensitivity.

Introduction: Recognizing that officers might fall victim to base rate neglect when making decisions about who to place in a lineup, the most recent scientific review paper with recommendations for best practice in collecting eyewitness identifications outlined a need for evidence-based suspicion before conducting an identification procedure (Wells et al., 2020). Wells and colleagues argued that there should be “evidence-based grounds to suspect that an individual is guilty of the specific crime being investigated before including that individual in an identification procedure” (Wells et al., 2020, p.11). If officers are required to have extrinsic evidence against a suspect before asking a witness to attempt an identification, it reduces the likelihood that an innocent suspect will be subjected to a lineup procedure and misidentified. However, evidence suggests that officers place suspects in lineups when there is little evidence that they are guilty, and education about this issue may not help them (Katzman & Kovera, 2022).

When a case resting on eyewitness identification evidence goes to trial, the burden of interpreting the probative value of an identification falls to jurors. Yet, it is likely that jurors are no better than officers at incorporating base rate information into their verdict decisions. Social psychologists find that laypeople fall victim to base rate neglect (Lehman, Lempert, & Nisbett, 1988) and sitting in a courtroom does not seem to improve laypeople’s methodological reasoning skills (Levett & Kovera, 2008). Therefore, it is unlikely that jurors will be sensitive to the present base rate issue when left to their own devices.

The development of injunctive norms, through the adoption of an evidence-based suspicion standard, may be a mechanism for sensitizing jurors to the base rate of guilt (Cialdini et al., 1990). Specifically, police adoption of an evidence-based suspicion standard may clue jurors into the importance of police conducting identification procedures only when suspects have a high evidentiary connection to the crime under investigation. The creation of policy can lead to norm development, and people are motivated to punish norm violators when the sanctioning decision can be seen by others, as in a jury room (Willer et al., 2009). Thus, if jurors heard that a particular department had a requirement for evidence-based suspicion, but an officer flouted this requirement, jurors might be less likely to vote to convict the defendant than if an officer’s department did not have this requirement when they engaged in the problematic behavior. Importantly, this pattern of results would support police adoption of an evidence-based suspicion standard, regardless of whether it improves officer decisions. We predicted that:

H1: Participants will be more likely to convict the defendant when the evidence connection is strong rather than weak.

H2: Participants will be more likely to convict the defendant when there is a department requirement for evidence-based suspicion than when there is no such requirement.

H3: When there is a department requirement for evidence-based suspicion, participants will be more sensitive to variations in the strength of the evidentiary connection between the defendant and the crime prior to the positive identification. Specifically, participants who view the trial in which

there is a department requirement for evidence-based suspicion will be less likely to render a guilty verdict when the evidence connection is weak rather than strong than will participants who view a trial in which the officer's department did not have a requirement for evidence-based suspicion.

Method:

Participants: We collected data from a total of 578 participants ($N = 360$ participants after excluding participants who failed at least one manipulation check) from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online crowdsourcing platform through which "requestors" post tasks that "workers" complete for payment. MTurk posted the advertisement for the study, informing workers that they would be rewarded \$3.50 if they chose to participate in and completed the study.

Design: The study has a 2 (Pre-Identification Evidence: weak vs. strong) \times 2 (Departmental Requirement: present vs. absent) between-subjects factorial design. We randomly assigned participants to a condition. The research protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Materials: Study materials (i.e., trial transcript and dependent measures) are available to view on the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/3tpq5/?view_only=42227ce9cedd4f78a7b3f950a3e6c354). Participants viewed a video-recorded mock trial. The video depicted a defendant accused of an armed robbery based on an eyewitness identification.

Results: Participants were significantly more likely to vote guilty when pre-identification evidence was strong (53%) than weak (17%), $c^2(1, N = 358) = 15.24, p < .001, OR = 3.9, 95\% CI [1.97, 7.72]$. Our regression analysis did not reveal a significant main effect of the departmental requirement. Participants were equally likely to vote guilty when the department requirement was present (39%) than when it was absent (32%), $c^2(1, N = 358) = .04, p = .84, OR = .93, 95\% CI [.43, 2.01]$.

Discussions: Results showed a main effect of evidence in all conditions. Specifically, participants were more likely to render a guilty verdict when the evidence connecting the suspect to the crime was strong rather than weak. Our second hypothesis was not supported in that the presence of a departmental requirement did not affect participant's evaluations in any of the conditions. Lastly, our third hypothesis was partially supported because the prosecution's case was rated stronger when there was a departmental requirement in place and the evidence connection was strong.

Future Implication: This research has the ability to influence public policy. The proposed studies evaluate specific types of training that have the potential to lower the rate at which innocent suspects are placed in identification procedures, consequently lowering the risk of misidentifications. Moreover, the training in the proposed research itself could benefit attorneys in our sample if it successfully sensitizes them to the probative value of eyewitness evidence based on the prior probability of guilt. Future research should include expert testimonies to explain the meaning of base rates so that lay people can understand the risk of putting someone in a lineup without enough evidence.



Sex Trafficking: From a Communal and International Perspective

Osmeily Luna (she/her)

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

Minor: Criminology

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

Biography

Osmeily Luna is a senior at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and is majoring in Forensic Psychology with a minor in Criminology. Osmeily Luna is under the mentorship of Dr. Jayne Mooney, Ph.D. conducting research and learning all that she can about graduate school through the McNair Program. Osmeily is researching violence against women with a concentration on sex trafficking from a communal and international perspective. Osmeily 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. She is interested in obtaining a Ph.D. in Law and psychology after graduating and soon after joining the FBI Academy. Aside from academia, Osmeily Luna is also a scholar-athlete and has received certificates and awards for her academic and athletic achievements.

Project Description

Sex trafficking is a worldwide phenomenon affecting thousands of individuals— as it encompasses the detrimental effects as follows: physical and mental torture, rape, threats against themselves and their families, identity fraud, and death. Its impact spreads far beyond individual victims; it jeopardizes all countries' safety and environment. Given that this is a crucial matter, a primary issue concerns the blurred lines of differentiating sex trafficking and sex workers as definitions differ globally, resulting in the victim's experiences and trauma being confused with voluntary sex employment. The current study aims to shed light on the effects of sex trafficking, as sex trafficking is a significant crime against humanity and human rights. And it examines the internal differences in laws and policies, feminist theories surrounding this topic, the limitations/implications of the restriction of international laws, and the impact of social workers and law enforcement.

The research method and design are comprised of qualitative research— which means that I will be going to sex trafficking courts and obtaining textual analysis, observations, and surveys. The participants will be women, and they will each provide their ethnic or racial identification, age, and working status. Moreover, existing literature suggests that the blurred distinction between sex trafficking and sex work has led to policing and social workers' inability to rehabilitate and prevent further trafficking properly. And that the severe psychological and physical effects of sex trafficking have led to the implementation of laws, policies, programs, and services for victims of this crime. In addition, a consistent finding amongst previous and current literature indicates some limitations/implications concerning social/trends, political and empirical obstacles in data gathering, and the restrictions of international law. Current international law excessively addresses criminal indictment of traffickers at the cost of trafficking victims' human rights, which indicates that it has not reached its total capacity in the battle over human sex trafficking. Other limitations have been found from the sociological perspective of sex trafficking and its policies. Lerum et al. (2016) found that social researchers and intellectuals have presented critical critiques of prevailing human trafficking narratives and policies. These critiques are split into the following four sections: “1) unreliable data, 2) anti-sex work ideology, 3) rescue industry & carceral state critiques, and 4) global health and human rights.” And Jakobsson et al. (2011) found that laws governing commercial sex impact the profitability of human trafficking and, as a result, the amount of trafficking that enters a country. Ultimately finding that perceived trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, as predicted by the data sets, is least prevalent in countries where prostitution is illegal.

My research's potential societal or broader impacts remind us why we need to end sex trafficking, as it is a modern-day slavery crime and affects everyone around us. The widespread nature of sex trafficking is notoriously difficult to prosecute due to its inherent complexities, encompassing difficulties with victim identification, reluctance to seek assistance, and a lack of suitable aid services. For these reasons, it is essential to see how effective such policies, programs, and laws are in helping victims regain their lives and receive adequate long-term life services for the mental and physical harm they have endured, especially as literature reveals implications for law enforcement and social workers and their relationship with the victims. Furthermore, some future and current implications can be seen in domestic and abroad circumstances as victims of trafficking are exploited, leading to physical and psychological abuse, reprisal, debt servitude (unstable financial circumstances), and federal justice agencies (and even immigration). All of which add to the long-lasting effects on the victims' mental and physical health.

First Year McNair Scholars



Crimes Against Humanity: A Systematic Analysis of the American Bipartisan Divide in Response to the Anthropocene

Daven Asafo-Agyei (he/him)

Major: Security Management

Minor: Sustainability and Environmental Justice

Mentor: **Jennifer Rutledge, PhD**, Political Science Dept.

Biography

Daven Asafo-Agyei is the recent recipient of the Caliph & Arlette Mathis Scholarship for Global Security Studies, as well as the 2023 Malcolm/King Leadership Award, and was recently published in John Jay's *Finest* Vol. 38. Along with being a McNair scholar he was recently accepted in both the Ron Moelis Social Innovation Fellowship and OSRC (Office of Student Research and Creativity) Program. He is currently enrolled in the CUNY Baccalaureate Interdisciplinary Studies Program with an area of concentration in Human Ecology and Planetary Management. Daven works as the coordinator of gardens and operations for the OSS Project a small non-profit in the Bronx. When he is not in school or work, he runs a non-profit organization Humane LLC which he founded in 2021 where they focus on the research and preservation of humanity. He is a member of the UMI program and a part of the BSU club. In his spare time, he likes to volunteer with various organizations, play Legos and even attempt to learn the guitar. In the future, he plans to obtain a Ph.D. and go on to conduct research and join the world of academia.

Abstract

This research explores Republican climate change denialism and seeks to understand its source, as well as the devastating effects of this denial. Researchers expect that the bipartisan divide exists because of cultural aspects and is not based on fact but on emotions. Furthermore, this research will highlight this political divide's negative impact and adverse effect on the American government's ability to rapidly and effectively address climate change. Finally, this study will explore the effect of community leaders, local politicians, and NGOs on climate action and resiliency within an urban community such as New York City.



Suicide Ideations Among Blacks and African Americans

Shaniece Ellison Young (she/her)

Major: Sociology

Minor: Counseling

Mentor: **Yolanda Ortiz-Rodriguez, PhD**, Sociology Dept.

Biography

Shaniece Ellison Young is from Brooklyn, NY, and has always been driven to challenge herself. She majors in Sociology and has a minor in Counseling. The scholar works part time as a Peer Success Coach and is applying to graduate schools this semester. In addition, she volunteers for the Alliance Against Sexual Harassment in New York City. As a hobby, she has a passion for cooking because it allows her to be creative and clears her mind for the moment. As a McNair Scholar, she wishes to raise awareness about subjects that are rarely spoken about, such as sexual assault and suicide. As a student who rarely receives support from family, Shaniece is grateful to be a part of McNair as she would like to pursue higher education in social work and receive a law degree, where she plans to support and represent others who are going through/have been through trauma. Currently, she is interested in generational attitudes towards suicide and is under the mentorship of Dr. Yolanda Ortiz-Rodriguez. She has recently joined Pursuing the Esquire's Mentorship Program for aspiring advocates for justice. She looks forward to the future of her academic achievement and wants to make a difference in her neighborhood for both her and other people.

Abstract

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “in 2020, suicide was the third leading cause of death, respectively, for blacks or African Americans.” However, research on how various generations perceive suicidal ideation is scarce where previous studies on suicide research have concentrated on one generation. This study aims to explore how Blacks perceive suicide and, more specifically, if there is a difference in that perception between generations. This study will explore how various generations may experience moments of suicidal ideations and how specific groups view the issue of asking for help. Participants will include individuals who identify as non-Hispanic Blacks or African Americans and are between the ages of 18 and 60. This is a qualitative study and participants will complete a screening for eligibility and then a questionnaire. Those who would like to be interviewed will continue with the process. It is expected that this study will help highlight cultural and environmental factors that may contribute to an individual's perception and attitudes on suicide.



Sex and Labor Trafficking in the Foster Care System in the United States: Factors and Assessment of Policies

Jheyleinnies Guerrero (she/her)

Majors: Criminology & Forensic Psychology

Mentor: **Jana Arsovska, PhD**, Sociology Dept.

Biography

Jheyleinnies Guerrero, also known as Jhey Jhey, is a junior at John Jay College studying Criminology and Psychology. Her parents raised her alongside her two younger brothers in Brooklyn, New York. She is the first person in her family to pursue a bachelor's degree and a Ph.D. Jhey Jhey is a McNair, Excelsior, and Honors program scholar. She is also a Lead Peer in the Student Academic Success Program, where she works with first-year and transfer students. Last year, she was a member of the school's United Nations Student Association, which received Outstanding delegation and a number of other accolades. And she continued to volunteer with this year's squad, which likewise carried on the UNSA legacy. She is also interning at NYU on a research project about the CUNY Justice Academy Program. Jhey Jhey's academic and professional aspirations include pursuing a doctorate in criminology with an emphasis on anti-child labor and sex trafficking. She strives to gain additional research and publishing experience, so she can become an author and join the FBI's Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Forces.

Abstract

No child, regardless of color, age, social class, or region, is immune to being a victim of child sex trafficking, and every child engaging in this form of commercial sexual exploitation is a victim. On September 29, 2014, President Barack Obama signed the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113-183). Studies have consistently reported that 50-90% of child sex trafficking victims have been involved in the child welfare system (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018). We will be analyzing child sex and labor trafficking through a systematic literature evaluation analyzing NYC and Florida policies and cases following the 2014 adopted statute. Which will provide answers to the following questions: A) What variables can make young people more vulnerable to sex trafficking? B) What makes the foster care system an appealing option? C) What are the most vulnerable groups, and why are they so? D) What steps have been taken to strengthen the system and identify vulnerable youngsters in foster care? E) What else can we do to make the system better?



The Impact of Parental Education about Plea Bargains on Parent Recommendations Regarding a Child's Plea

Ashli Hamilton (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minor: Sociology

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

Biography

Ashli Hamilton majors in Forensic Psychology with a minor in Sociology. The scholar is a part of the John Jay Honors Program and The International Honor Society in Psychology. In terms of leadership, she has worked with the Black Student Union and held the role of Event Planning Committee Chair. She is now the Secretary of the Black Student Union and a Co-chair of the Criminal Justice Honors Committee. Ashli is also a research assistant for Dr. Booker in a project that revolves around Restorative Justice. As a first generation-student, Ashli is grateful to be a part of McNair as she would like to pursue higher education and receive a doctoral degree. With this degree, she plans to teach, open her own practice, and conduct research. Currently, she is interested in Juvenile Justice and is under the mentorship of Dr. Haney-Caron. She has recently joined Dr. Haney-Caron's Youth Law and Psychology Lab and is excited about researching in her field of interest. Ashli enjoys listening to different genres of music, exploring NYC, and thrifting. She is excited for the future of her education and hopes to create an impact on herself and others within her community.

Abstract

Prior research illustrates that parents have limited legal knowledge, which may impact children as they seek parental input prior to courtroom decision making. No research so far has examined whether providing education prior to a child's plea bargain changes parent recommendations about the plea. Participants will be parents of adolescents; half will view educational resources regarding the plea bargaining process. Both groups will read a vignette in which their child is offered a plea and then answer survey questions about the recommendations they would give their child. We expect advice will differ based on whether parents received the educational resources.



Analyzing Digitization Projects in Nigerian Cultural Institutions

Efeh Ibojie (she/her)

Major: Interdisciplinary Studies

Mentor: **Ellen Sexton**, Library Dept.

Biography

Efeh Ibojie is a senior enrolled in the CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies program at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Her area of concentration is in Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies. She is the recipient of the CUNY BA's Barbara Price Fellowship and Thomas W. Smith Academic Fellowship. As a McNair Scholar, she is interested in pursuing research in digital repatriation and preservation practices. Since 2020, she has completed training at the Greenwood Cemetery as a Masonry Restoration trainee, worked at the NYC Parks Arts and Antiquity Department in the Monuments crew, and has been a paper conservation intern at the Smithsonian Library and Archives and the Hirschhorn Museum. Upon completion of her undergraduate studies, she will be completing a 6-month conservation internship at the Smithsonian Library and Archives.

Abstract

For over 20 years, cultural heritage institutions in Nigeria have been incorporating digitization as a way to preserve their enriching, but decaying historical documents. Though a number of projects have been completed, the question still remains if digitization is the best option for preserving and providing access to a wider audience. The literature describes the challenges faced by information professional in implementing digitization projects, the issues with short-term grants, and the digital divide effect on access. This article analyzes the ways in which institutions have approached preservation and accessibility of historical documents through the web.



Differences Between Early and Late Sequential Bilinguals in Working Memory Capacity After Accounting for Acculturation

Stephanie Medina (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

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

Biography

Stephanie Medina is a junior majoring in Forensic Psychology. She also works as a Senior Bridge coach for College and Career Bridge for All to help high school seniors with their post-secondary plans. She is part of the Honors program, McNair, Psy Chi Leadership Team and two faculty members' labs. Stephanie hopes to go on to graduate school for a Ph.D in the discipline of cognitive psychology with a focus on memory.

Abstract

The "Bilingual Advantage"—whether or not bilinguals have an advantage in cognitive abilities compared to their monolingual peers—is something that has been heavily researched throughout the years. Yet important culture and language factors are not commonly accounted for, which may be impacting results. Sequentialism and working memory have long been researched together, however the relationship between working memory and acculturation has not. This study used a repeated-measure design and looks at whether early and late sequential bilinguals demonstrate differing working memory capacity in their second language while accounting for acculturation. Expected results include a higher working memory capacity for early sequential bilinguals in their second language than late sequential bilinguals.



Distress Among Politically Engaged Latino College Students: A Secondary Analysis

Kimberly Mejia (she/her)

Majors: Forensic Psychology & Spanish

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

Biography

Kimberly is a first-generation student and is proud to be the daughter of Mexican immigrants. She majored in Forensic Psychology and Spanish (Interpretation and Translation) and is currently working as a youth care worker in a facility that houses unaccompanied minors. She started as a member of ¡Adelante! where she developed her networking and people skills and is now part of the McNair Scholars Program where she will build and solidify her research and critical thinking skills. She also worked as a research assistant during her junior year and interned at an asylum-seeking center during her senior year, where she discovered her passion for helping and guiding others. She graduated Magna Cum, was awarded Latin Honors, was Dean's List all throughout her undergraduate career, and was the recipient of the Arthur and Elaine Niederhoffer Undergraduate Prize which is given to a promising senior in the Forensic Psychology or Criminal Justice major, who has a strong research interest and plans to attend graduate school. In the summer, she will be presenting a poster at the APA 2023 convention as the first author. Her plan is to continue her education in the field of neuropsychology. She is inquisitive about assessing cognitive functions and impairments and how they affect an individual's behavior. She hopes to one day be able to have her own private practice. Moreover, Kimberly is also interested in analyzing neuropsychology within the forensic setting.

Abstract

The relationship between political engagement and mental health outcomes has become more relevant due to the current contentious political climate and political polarization in the United States. However, literature has yet to focus on the impacts it has on the Latino community. The current study examined the distress levels among Latino college students who have been politically engaged and those who weren't. COVID-19 was examined as an influencing factor. A secondary analysis was utilized and t-tests were conducted. Results showed no significant differences in distress among the two groups nor among the two years.



Childhood Trauma and Serial Killers: A Comparative Case Study

Anjelika Soriano (she/her)
Major: Forensic Psychology

Biography

Anjelika Soriano is a first-generation Latin and her parents come from the Dominican Republic. She is majoring in Forensic Psychology and intends to become a criminal profiler. Anjelika is striving to complete her Ph.D in Forensic Psychology. Anjelika was in John Jay's Upward Bound program in high school, now she is in the ACE program, and the McNair program. Anjelika hopes to make a positive impact on people's lives.

Abstract

Serial killers are known as the most dangerous criminals and hardest to investigate. There is a need for more information on what leads an individual to become a serial killer. There have been studies that have shown childhood trauma does affect a person's neurodevelopment and cognitive development. Analyzing known serial killers' background and examining the key elements of their life is important to developing an understanding of their triggers, personality, and family dynamic. This research project is a comparative case study which focuses on a male and a female serial killer. It is hoped that this research can shed light on the impact of childhood trauma on their future criminal behavior.



Risk Factors and Biases in the DNA Database

Sherley Tejada (she/her)

Major: Forensic Science

Minor: Biology

Mentor: **Mechthild Prinz, PhD**, Science Dept.

Biography

Sherley Tejada was born and raised in the Bronx. Sherley is majoring in Forensic Science and is on the criminalist track with a minor in Biology. She is a first-year McNair Scholar interested in researching DNA profiling. Sherley is a member of the Forensic Science Society where she is interested in pursuing a career as a forensic lab analyst for the FBI or criminal investigation for local law enforcement.

Abstract

Criminal investigations have become more technologically advanced as new innovations are introduced. In this study, we focus on the DNA database, specifically ‘Can DNA banking reflect racial bias and its profile matches lead to wrongful convictions?’. We are looking to address the problem between racial biases that compose the database and how database matches can be misinterpreted. Under a quantitative analysis, we used observations, surveys targeting CUNY students, and secondary data collection from the Forensic Exonerations database to test two hypotheses. If black and Hispanic people make up the majority of the DNA database then it would introduce racial bias when the profile matches are presented in front of a jury. And if there are risk factors associated with database matches of the source of DNA but not the perpetrator of such crime it would contribute to higher rates of wrongful convictions.



An Examination of the Psychological Outcomes for LGBTQIA+ Individuals who have experienced Childhood Sexual Abuse

Imani Thomas (she/her)

Major: Forensic Psychology

Minor: Africana Studies

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

Biography

Imani Thomas is a first-generation undergraduate student majoring in Forensic Psychology with a minor in Africana Studies. Currently, Imani is in John Jay's Honors Program, a member of the Black Student Union, and involved in the Black Honors Student Committee. In addition to this, she is a part of Dr. Booker's internship focused on Restorative Justice in an Africana Context, and recently joined Dr. Camacho's research lab dealing with Task Perception and Personal Attitudes. As a McNair Scholar, she is immensely enthusiastic about doing her own rigorous research on topics pertaining to racial issues, trauma and depression, and sexual violence. Thus, after receiving her Bachelor's degree, Imani aspires to further her passion for research through a Ph.D. program, and assess underrepresented individuals with psychological disorders and individuals who have experienced sexual violence/abuse.

Abstract

Childhood Sexual abuse (CSA) is a global problem impacting one in four girls and one in 13 boys. Researchers have focused on preventing sexual abuse, but little research has examined CSA and its impact on the LGBTQIA+ community. The LGBTQIA+ are at increased risk for victimization compared to heterosexual individuals. This study is a secondary analysis of a dataset of 680 individuals who have experienced CSA. The study will examine the long-term psychological consequences of CSA and we would compare LGBTQIA+ individuals to heterosexual individuals. These findings will be for clinical interventions for LGBTQIA+ individuals who have experienced CSA.

McNair Mentors



Dr. Aftab Ahmad
Mathematics & Computer
Science Dept.



Dr. Jana Arsovska
Sociology Dept.



Dr. Emily Haney-Caron
Psychology Dept.



Dr. Elizabeth Jeglic
Psychology Dept.



Dr. Margaret Kovera
Psychology Dept.



Dr. Silvia Mazzula
Psychology Dept.



Dr. Jayne Mooney
Sociology Dept.



Dr. Mechthild Prinz
Science Dept.



Dr. Jennifer Rutledge
Political Science Dept.



Dr. Deryn Strange
Psychology Dept.



Professor Ellen Sexton
Library 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 2023** semester. Congrats scholars!

Gabrielle Andrade graduated with her degree in Forensic Psychology. She has been accepted into Columbia University’s School of Social Work for the Masters of Social Work program.

Cynthia Gonzalez graduated her degree in Computer Science. She has been accepted to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute’s Ph.D. program in Computer Science.

Jaleel King graduated with his degree in Forensic Psychology. He has been accepted into the CUNY Graduate Center’s Ph.D. program in Psychology & Law.

McNair Alumni

Melissa “Mel” Ceren ('21) has been accepted into CUNY Graduate Center’s Ph.D. program in Educational Psychology. Mel is also the recipient of the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship! She earned her Bachelor’s degree in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 2021.

Emily Velasquez ('21) has been accepted into John Jay College of Criminal Justice’s Master’s program in Forensic Psychology. She earned her Bachelor’s degree in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 2021.



McNair Alumni who Earned Ph.D.s

2022-2023



Dr. Popy Begum earned her Ph.D. in Criminology from Rutgers University-Newark and joined Saint Louis University as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice this fall.



Dr. Tannuja Rozario earned her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.



Dr. Andrene Wright earned her Ph.D. in Political Science from Northwestern University.



Dr. Celinet Duran-Jimenez earned her Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from John Jay College of Criminal Justice.



Dr. Sam Choi earned his Ph.D. in Psychology and Law from the University of Wyoming.



Dr. Allura Casanova earned her Ph.D. in Psychology and Women's Studies from the University of Michigan.

Thank you to all of our McNair Mentors!

Congratulations Class of 2023!

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.

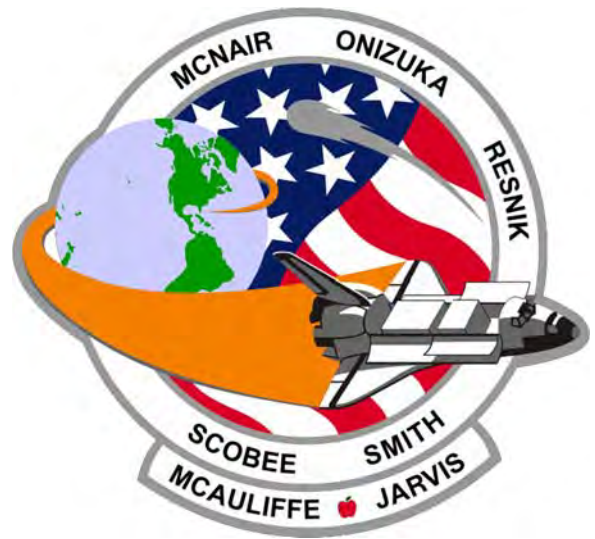


Rachel Rosado, B.A.

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 is interdisciplinary in nature and will examine the themes of environmental consciousness that emerge when examining wellness TikTok subgenres such as #GardenTok and #CleanTok. She also served as the Senior Art Editor and Web Editor for Caustic Frolic, a student-run interdisciplinary journal that is supported and funded by NYU's XE department.

In Remembrance of 37 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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-

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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.

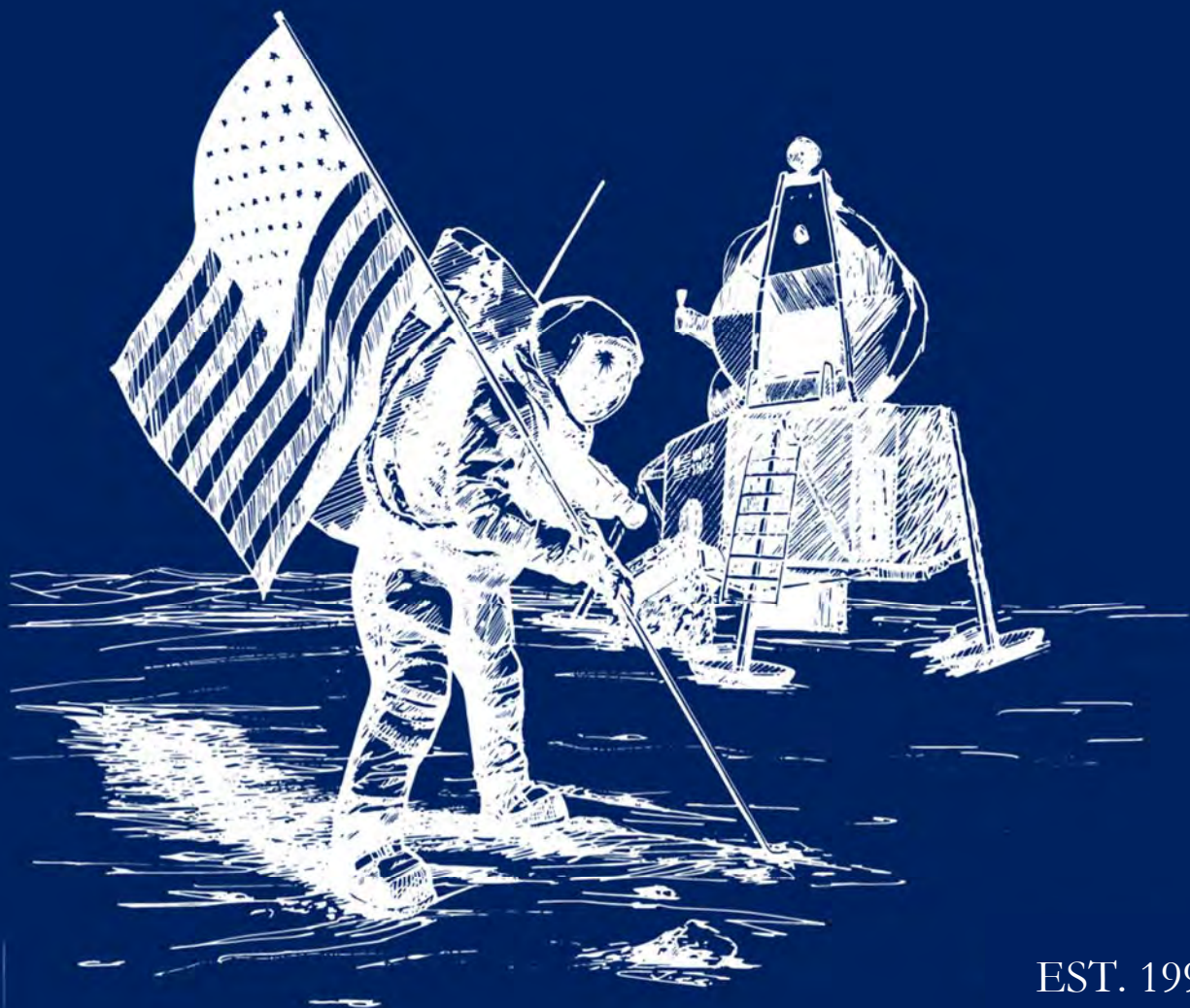
Lastly, thank you to **Briana Moncayo**, McNair scholar for the cover designs.

Image credits: Conferences, Orientation, and additional photos provided by McNair Scholars. All other photographs are the property of the McNair Program, John Jay College of Criminal Justice.



“True courage comes in enduring,
persevering, the preparation and
believing in one’s self.”

- Ronald E. McNair



EST. 1993