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Announcing the 2023 Scholars and Mentors for the Towards 2044: Horowitz Early Career Scholar Program

SRCD is pleased to announce the 2023 cohort for the Towards 2044: Horowitz Early Career Scholar Program!

Previously known as the Frances Degan Horowitz Millennium Scholars Program, the new iteration of this mentorship opportunity takes its name from the year when the adult population of the United States is estimated to become a diverse majority.

The Towards 2044: Horowitz Early Career Scholar Program will provide educational and professional development for scholars from underrepresented groups, giving them a launching point for a career in the field of child development with the guidance and mentorship from more advanced scholars. The selected scholars and mentors will pair up and participate in a series of monthly seminars and one-on-one meetings through December 2023. These experiences will enable the rising scholars to gain valuable exposure to the field and allow them to network not only with their mentors, but also with other scholars and professionals.

The program is led by the Advisory Committee chaired by Dr. Michael Cunningham (Tulane University) and includes Dr. Mayra Bámaca (University of California, Merced) and Dr. Charissa Cheah (University of Maryland, Baltimore County).

Please join us in welcoming this year's Towards 2044: Horowitz Early Career Scholar Program cohort of scholars and mentors!

Scholars



Enrica Bridgewater

Enrica Bridgewater is a Communication and Media, and Developmental Psychology Ph.D. student at the University of Michigan. She received her B.S. in Psychology from Brooklyn College in 2018. Enrica's current research interests are in three main areas: representations of minoritized communities in entertainment media; media contributions to identity development and psychological well-being across the lifespan; and the role of algorithms in shaping children's digital content. As a child of West Indian immigrants who also identifies as a low-income, first-generation student, diversifying academic spaces is very important to her. She has mentored prospective graduate students through the Científico Latino Graduate Student Mentorship Initiative and Project Students for Higher-Ed Opportunities and Representation in Training programs. She also started a blog in 2020 entitled "A First Gen's Guide to Grad School: How to Get In, Survive, and Thrive" to assist students in their graduate school journeys and shed light on the "hidden curriculum" in academia. Enrica hopes to continue building her interdisciplinary research program, while also using her training and growing expertise in media and child development to help inform practices and content creation in industry spaces (e.g., Disney, Nickelodeon) in the future.



Mathew Gee

Matthew Gee is a Ph.D. student in Child Study and Human Development at Tufts University where he studies ethnic-racial identity, critical consciousness, and civic engagement among adolescents and young adults. He received his bachelor's degree in Neuroscience from Bates College in Lewiston, ME, and it was there that his current academic interests took shape. Through his engagement in the Lewiston-Auburn community, he befriended many community members who shared their life stories and articulated how systems of oppression constrained their life choices and opportunities. He also learned from community activists who demonstrated the potential of civic engagement to mobilize communities and empower individuals to challenge the systems that oppress them. Bates was also a place where Gee distinctly felt the power of identity-based community. He found a home in the Asian American Students in Action group, where Asian American students and allies could find community, be their full cultural selves, and reflect on their racialized experiences. At Tufts, he brings these threads of interest and experience together by investigating the interplay between ethnic-racial identity and critical consciousness development as young people take on the tasks of negotiating their identities and confronting social inequality.



Belinda Hernandez

Belinda Hernandez is a doctoral student in the Clinical and School Psychology program at the University of Virginia (UVA). As a first-generation Hispanic woman from a low-income area in Los Angeles, she experienced educational and professional development inequities, which highlighted the limited educational opportunities that were available to her growing up in a neighborhood with fewer resources. Understanding the disparities she experienced throughout her education fueled her desire and commitment to working with individuals with similar backgrounds and experiences. Thus, she has taken the initiative to work with BIPOC individuals from marginalized backgrounds in clinical and research settings. Belinda's research explores the development of internalizing and externalizing problems in Black youth exposed to violence, racial discrimination, and other forms of victimization. She will begin her fourth-year practicum at the Family Stress Clinic, a psychotherapy clinic within the Department of Family Medicine at UVA's Primary Care Center, to continue providing therapeutic services to youth and families from marginalized backgrounds. She is also spearheading the continued development and expansion of the UVA Conversations About Race and Equity discussion groups for undergraduate and graduate students, which foster conversations about race-related issues (e.g., racial trauma, systemic racism). Belinda's research and clinical experiences are preparing her to work with at-risk BIPOC youth and advance systemic initiatives related to race and culture.



Boyun Kim

Boyun Kim is a third year doctoral student at Oakland University in the Early Childhood Education program. During her master's tenure, she worked at the Korean Child Care Policy Institute as an Assistant Policy Researcher where she compared and analyzed big data on the latest early childhood education policies. Now, as an international doctoral student, she does the same using data from various countries. Since entering her Ph.D. program, Boyun Kim has authored five papers, three of which relied on big data methods such as Social Network Analysis. Currently, she works as a graduate assistant at Oakland University, where she is conducting research projects to examine what kind of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment tool is the most beneficial to children at the state level. To do this, she is sorting and analyzing survey data using SPSS, compiling reports based on the results, and conducting interviews with parents about childcare services that they received or want to receive in the future. For future research, she is interested in conducting digital utilization for k-12, educational applications development, Policy development, big data analysis for k-12 and online support, and education for k-12 teachers and parents.



Ashley Leon

Ashley Leon is a first-year doctoral student in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Texas at Austin (UT). Before coming to UT, Ashley earned her bachelor's degree in psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC). At UCSC, she studied adolescent and young adult decision-making in academic settings and how focusing on biological cues such as a heartbeat influence self-focus. After earning her bachelor's degree, she worked as a research assistant and counselor. Ashley gained a deeper understanding of adolescent experiences in and out of school in both roles. As a research assistant, she focused on educational equity and the academic experiences of socioeconomically and ethnically diverse students. As a counselor, she became aware of the challenges youth endured during the COVID-19 pandemic. These experiences built her interest in investigating how unique stressors impact youth's health and academic outcomes and how they utilize psychological assets (e.g., psychological resiliency) to help them thrive. As a mixed-methods researcher, she prioritizes a strengths-based approach to examine how youth navigate life stressors (e.g., peer conflict, discrimination, COVID-19 pandemic).



Danieli Mercado-Ramos

Danieli M. Mercado Ramos was born and raised in Puerto Rico, where she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus in 2020. Danieli is currently a Developmental Psychology student at Loyola University Chicago. As a bilingual Caribbean woman, moving to the United States and the experiences that came as a part of the move helped her merge her previous eclectic research interest and experiences. Allowing her to narrow current research and future career goals with the hopes of using her experiences at the Ph.D. program level to help make changes in the field to create an equitable environment for children with intersecting identities to further better their development during future developmental periods. Broadly, her research interests include language use (e.g., Spanish) for Latine children to feel connected to their ethnic heritage and influence their ethnic-racial identity. She is also interested in understanding how different exclusionary systemic issues may contribute to outcomes associated with ethnic-racial identity. Lastly, Danieli is interested in using mixed methodology to identify how to promote individual, cultural, and societal factors that can help a child understand their ethnic-racial identity.



Victoria Nguyen

Victoria O. Nguyen is a Ph.D. student and researcher at Columbia University specializing in child and adolescent behavioral and mental health, psychiatric epidemiology, and prevention and implementation science methods in low- and middle-income countries and the United States. Her cross-cutting research focuses on genetics, social, environmental, and biological risk factors to design, test, and sustain cost-effective, scalable solutions that tackle the complex drivers of mental health disparities. Before her doctoral education, Victoria gained 10 years of experience in the global health and humanitarian sector. Most recently, she served at the International Rescue Committee (IRC), working in close partnership with in-country teams to translate research into innovative and sustainable solutions that help migrant families recover and gain control of their future. Previously, she was a Director at a rapidly scaling community-led innovator affiliated with Vanderbilt University Institute for Global Health, targeting the multidimensional drivers of maternal and child health in rural Kenya. Victoria has also held research roles within UNICEF, the UN Millennium Villages Project, and Columbia Population Research Center. She earned a Master of Science from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Tinu Oduloye

Tinu Oduloye is a rising second-year Ph.D. student at The Ohio State University in the Developmental Psychology program. She received her Bachelor's in Developmental Psychology at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities with a minor in Physical Activity and Health Promotion. During her time at the University of Minnesota, she was actively involved in research. She was a research assistant under Dr. Megan Gunnar and worked on several projects investigating the impact of stress on families and children. In addition, she participated in a summer research program and her project examined the association between parenting stress and parental warmth and negativity towards their children in a sample of parents with toddlers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and furthermore, to what extent that association varied by work and childcare arrangements. As a Ph.D. student, Tinu plans to continue her research in developmental psychology and explore new methodologies for understanding parenting, parenting stress, and coparenting, specifically in new fathers. She is particularly interested in using measures that examine parenting behaviors naturalistically. She is excited to join the vibrant and diverse research community at SRCD and contribute to the advancement of parenting research and strong parent-child relationships. Outside of research, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, watching sports, and traveling.



Ja’Toria Palmer

Ja'Toria Palmer is a second-year doctoral student and Holmes Scholar pursuing a degree in school psychology and a minor in learning sciences at Indiana University Bloomington. Before beginning her doctoral studies, Ja'Toria completed a Master of Arts in Educational Psychology with an emphasis on applied behavior analysis at Ball State University in 2020. She also received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Indiana University Purdue University-Indianapolis in 2017. As a doctoral student at Indiana University, Ja'Toria serves as a graduate research assistant for the Black Youth Emotional Development and Identity in Group Contexts research lab and is an associate instructor in the Counseling and Educational Psychology Department. Her research focuses on culturally responsive assessment and intervention and Autism. Specifically, Ja'Toria's research examines the impact of race, ethnicity, and culture among Black and Latinx children and families. Her research interest stems from her observations and work within ABA clinics—noting minoritized children's experiences in educational settings and an absence of adequate services for children of color and their families. As a first-generation student, Ja'Toria's long-term goals are to develop research-based clinical interventions to help Black and Latinx children succeed within and outside the schooling context.



Daniel Yonas

Daniel Yonas is a 3rd year doctoral student in developmental and social psychology at Columbia University. He began his research career as a research assistant in an early childhood development lab. As a first-generation college student, he had had little experience with research. There, he explored children's preferences for pretend and real activities in moral contexts. After completing his honor's thesis on children's perceptions of altruistic characters, Daniel continued to broaden his experience in research and equity-related work by serving as a project manager for a study examining social and cognitive outcomes of Montessori education for children of color. This work sparked his interest in integrating moral psychology and intergroup bias research, as the students of color in this study faced harsher moral judgments than White students who experienced similar circumstances. His work integrates morality and intergroup bias, two areas that have remained largely separate to date, to create a science that better speaks to the experiences of minoritized people who have been on the receiving end of immoral acts based on the groups to which they belong.

Mentors



Margarita Azmitia

Margarita Azmitia emigrated from Guatemala to go to college; her family is still there. Dr. Azmitia has two wonderful emerging adult daughters and is a professor of psychology at UCSC. Her research uses a strength-based approach to the development of identity intersectionalities during the transitions into adolescence, emerging adulthood, college, and work. She researches primarily low-income, immigrant, first-generation of college youth, investigating how gender, ethnicity/race, social class, and sexual orientation identities and their intersectionalties, support from family and peers, and coping with discrimination predict their persistence in school and mental health. During the past four years, Dr. Azmitia was a member-at-large of the Latinx Caucus' steering committee. She founded the mentoring committee in the Caucus and we has coordinated mentoring events at SRCD and SRA. She was also awarded one of the inaugural mentoring awards by the Spencer Foundation. Dr. Azmitia is committed to mentoring the next generation of scholars.



Christina Cipriano

Christina Cipriano, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor at the Yale Child Study Center and the Director of the Education Collaboratory at Yale. An applied developmental and educational psychologist, Dr. Cipriano's research focus is the systematic examination of social and emotional learning (SEL) assessment and intervention with marginalized populations. A national expert in SEL, Dr. Cipriano is the PI and Director of numerous major federal and foundation grants supporting the development and validation of novel SEL assessments, foundational SEL review studies, and SEL evaluation and efficacy trials. She has published more than 70 papers, commentaries, and reports, spanning top tier peer-reviewed journals, and media outlets including The Washington Post, Education Week, The Greater Good Science Center, and EdSurge. Dr. Cipriano received her Ph.D. from Boston College, her Ed.M. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and undergraduate degree from Hofstra University, and currently serves on the Professional Advisory Board of the National Center for Learning Disabilities and Teachstone. Chris is a Yale Public Voices Fellow, Jack Kent Cooke Scholar, and the mother of four beautiful children who inspire her every day to take the moon and make it shine for everyone. Learn more at drchriscip.com.

Visit her website



Aileen Garcia

Aileen S. Garcia obtained her Ph.D. in Child, Youth and Family Studies from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) in 2018. Her research interests include cultural influences on parenting and caregiving, early childhood education and care, and quality of life among ethnic minorities and immigrants in the United States. Dr. Garcia's overarching research agenda is to further extend current knowledge on supporting parents and early childhood professionals, especially those from underrepresented groups. Thus far, she has published qualitative and quantitative studies on alleviating parenting stress and parental involvement in education among low-income families, best practices in childcare centers and family childcare homes in urban and rural areas, and childrearing practices of immigrants in the United States from different ethnic groups (e.g., Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Korean, and Mexican). Dr. Garcia also engages in multidisciplinary research projects, working with scholars and practitioners from the fields of human development, early childhood education, leisure science, nursing, and nutrition. This Fall, she will be joining the Department of Human Development and Family Science at the University of Missouri as an Assistant Professor and State Specialist in Early Childhood Education, Care, and Development with MU Extension.



Erika Hernandez

Erika Hernandez received her B.A. in Psychology from Baylor University and her M.S. and Ph.D. in Developmental Science at Virginia Tech. She is currently a postdoctoral scholar at Penn State and will be an Assistant Professor at the Binghamton University School of Management starting in the Fall of 2023. Her graduate research focused on familial socialization of children's socio-emotional development through conversation, including emotion regulation, emotion understanding, and social competence. She is especially interested in the socio-cultural context of socialization and conducted work with African American, Latinx, and Appalachian families for her dissertation. Dr. Hernandez received a Ford Dissertation Fellowship to conduct this work. During graduate school, she also conducted research on children's development of leadership perceptions about men and women. Her postdoc focused on how families can foster children's healthy habits, including sleep, nutrition, and physical activity. In her faculty position, she will examine how to prepare children to be future leaders and to enter the workforce by promoting children's social skills, language skills, and healthy habits.



Alan Meca

Alan Meca (él/he/him) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology in the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). He received his Ph.D. in Developmental Science from Florida International University in 2014 and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Miami. Broadly, his expertise is in identity development, acculturation, cultural stress, and positive youth development. Although his research has focused generally on identity development, most of his work has been on cultural identity development and acculturation among ethnic/racial minoritized youth, particularly among Hispanic/Latinx populations. Towards this end, his research agenda has focused on identity development and cultural stressors and their effects on health risk behaviors, mental health, and educational achievement. In pursuit of this research agenda, he has published over 80 peer-reviewed manuscripts focused on personal, ethnic/racial, and national identity and on the cultural dynamics among Hispanic/Latinx families. Currently, his research agenda is focused on refining measures of cultural identity, understanding the processes that govern how ethnic/racial minoritized youth navigate their cultural environment (e.g., code-switching, cultural frame switching), and identifying ways we can support youth experiencing cultural stressors such as discrimination, bicultural stress, and negative context of reception.



Stephanie Miller

Stephanie Miller is an Associate Professor, Director of Experimental Training in the psychology department, and the Provost Research Scholar for Institutional Transformation at the University of Mississippi. She earned her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Dr. Miller's research program focuses on early cognitive development, with an emphasis on executive function (EF). Her work aims to explore the emergence and development of this foundational cognitive skill within a broader sociocultural context. She has work examining how early communicative and linguistic skills support the emergence of cognitive control across different cultural contexts; how executive function relates to social functioning in friendships, social problem solving, and social cognition; and how EF relates to creative cognition. Her current work is focused on examining foundations of early EF and examining the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions on social-emotional development within a preschool curriculum across multiple and diverse contexts. Her work has been funded by the NICHD and Kellogg foundation. Dr. Miller has served on or reviewed for committees related to diversity, equity, and inclusion for the North Carolina Psychological Association, Association for Psychological Science, Department of Psychology (University of Mississippi), SRCD Indigenous Caucus, and the Society for Indian Psychologists.



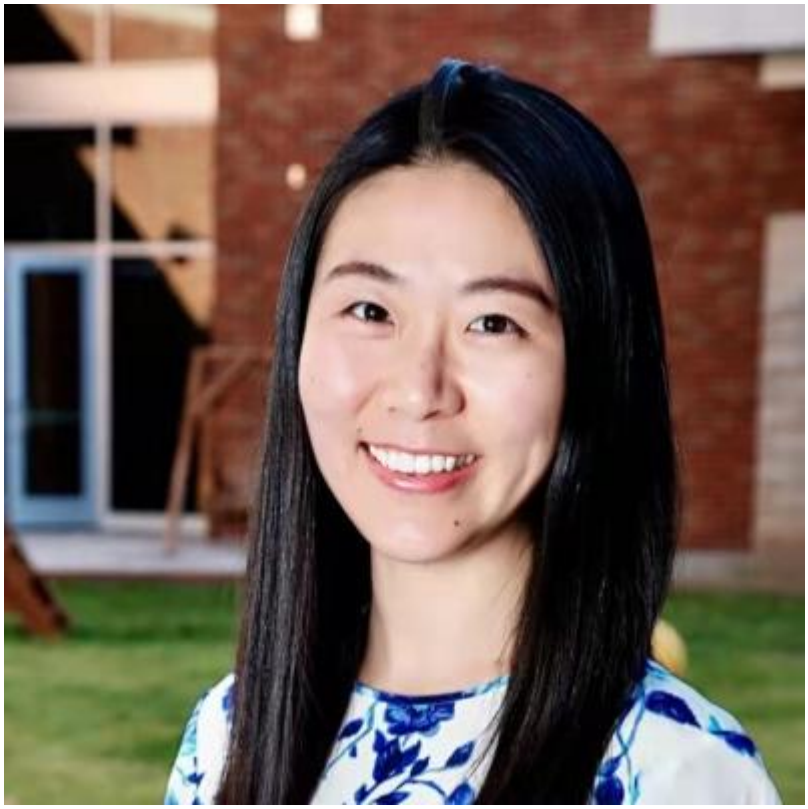
Misaki N. Natsuaki

Misaki N. Natsuaki, Ph.D. is Professor of Psychology at University of California, Riverside. Originally from Japan and raised in Belgium and the US, she received her BA and MA from International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan, and her Ph.D. in Human Development from University of California, Davis. She held a postdoctoral appointment at the Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota. Guided by the developmental psychopathology framework, Dr. Natsuaki's research emphasizes the importance of biology-context interplay in understanding the development of (mal)adjustment during the transition from childhood to adolescence. In particular, she examines how puberty and family play an active role in shaping, modifying, and moderating child and adolescent development. Dr. Natsuaki is part of the investigative team of the Early Growth and Development Study, a longitudinal adoption project that follows adoptees and their birth and adoptive families from birth to now adolescence. The project aims to unpack the intricate web of biological and environmental mechanisms underlying the growth and changes in child development.



Tennisha Riley

Tennisha Riley is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling & Educational Psychology at Indiana University, with an appointment in Human Development. She received her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2018 and subsequently completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Indiana University's Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity in Society. As the principal investigator of the Black Youth Emotional Development and Identity in Group Contexts research team (BEinG), Dr. Riley's research focuses on two primary areas: (1) how emotions and emotion regulation are influenced by Black youth racialized experiences in contexts, such as family, peers, and schools, and (2) how processes of regulating emotion might underly social and behavioral health behaviors during adolescence. She uses multiple methods to answer research questions, including self-reported behaviors, qualitative interviews, and physiological and biological responses to stress within social contexts. Before completing her doctoral training, Dr. Riley worked as a multisystemic family therapist. Much of her research interests relative to adolescence, families, and intervention result from her experiences as a therapist.



Jingjing Sun

Jingjing Sun's research has centered on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development with an emphasis on reducing inequity among racially and ethnically minoritized children. In particular, she is interested in examining how learning and development unfold during collaborative dialogue. The privilege to work with Indigenous communities in the Flathead Nation in Montana, as well as urban and rural schools in both the U.S. and China, has profoundly shaped her research agenda. Collaborating with community members and interdisciplinary colleagues, Dr. Sun's work examines the impact of broader ecological systems, such as culture, land, community and tribal sovereignty, on learning and students' social and emotional development. Further, her work examines how professional development can be co-designed with educators and community members to promote educators' sustained learning and wellbeing. Dr. Sun specializes in designing mixed-methods research to understand child development from different strands of data. She is grateful for having participated in many early-career scholar training programs, including an AERA-SRCD Early Career Research Fellowship and a SRCD Early Career Transdisciplinary Fellowship. These opportunities have significantly advanced her career development and she is committed to giving back and supporting future early-career scholars.



Elisa Trucco

Elisa Trucco is an Associate Professor in Psychology and the Associate Director of Clinical Training at Florida International University. She received her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University at Buffalo in 2012. She currently directs the Research on Adolescent and Child Health (ReACH) Lab. Her interdisciplinary program of research focuses on understanding how adolescent substance use develops through a biopsychosocial perspective. This involves identifying early risk and protective factors that contribute to adolescent substance use across multiple levels of analysis (i.e., biological, social, and individual). Her multifaceted training in clinical psychology, addiction, developmental psychopathology, quantitative methods, and neurobiology has enabled her to identify key factors involved in substance use among adolescents over time through advanced research methods. Her work has been funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. Her current work examines antecedents and consequences of electronic nicotine delivery systems within a primarily Hispanic/Latina(o) sample.