THE CALIFORNIA PRE-DOCTORAL PROGRAM

2019-20 SALLY CASANOVA SCHOLARS

Sacramento

Long Beach

calstate.edu/predoc
I AM A CSU
SALLY
CASANOVA
PRE-DOCTORAL
SCHOLAR
For the past 30 years, the California State University’s (CSU) Pre-Doctoral Program has granted the Sally Casanova scholarship to over 2254 low-income and educationally disadvantaged students throughout the CSU, the majority of whom are first-generation college students. For the 2019-20 academic year, 74 new scholars will join this group representing 16 of the 23 CSU campuses.

The California Pre-Doctoral Program is designed to increase diversity within the pool of university faculty by supporting the doctoral aspirations of students in the CSU—with particular support for low-income and educationally disadvantaged students. Awardees of this scholarship represent juniors, seniors, and master’s level students who come from a variety of academic disciplines. Each of these scholars are mentored by a faculty member from their respective campus.

The scholarship provides the Sally Casanova Scholars with:

- An opportunity to travel with their mentor to various University of California (UC) and other doctoral granting institutions for site visits;
- Attendance at national symposia, or professional meetings, exposing them to their field of interest; and
- Memberships in professional organizations, subscriptions to academic journals, or
- Purchasing of supplies necessary to carry out their current research agenda.

In addition, these scholars are offered an opportunity to participate in a summer research experience at any doctoral granting institution in the United States, with particular emphasis on the UCs. This eight-week program gives the scholars direct exposure to doctoral-granting faculty and research, preparing them for entry into doctoral programs.

This booklet provides an overview of the 74, 2019-20 Sally Casanova Scholars and their research interests.
Kiera Abdur-Rahman

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<th>Faculty Mentor</th>
<th>Dr. Celine Parreñas Shimizu</th>
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Kiera’s research interrogates the use and sociohistorical impact of the cinematic/visual construction of the “punitive gaze” in the representation of black and brown people. Through understanding the perspective of the camera as non-objective in narrative film, Kiera addresses how the punitive gaze links punishment to black and brown bodies, connecting the punitive gaze to historical and contemporary stereotypes of black and brown criminality, and emergent technologies of surveillance and incarceration impacting multiple intersecting and proximate communities. She also addresses Black diasporic and Third World Cinema filmmakers’ disruption of this gaze through new forms and cinematic techniques. She aims to explore how the camera’s gaze creates perspectives that embody and/or subvert authoritative and punitive power by engaging with Film and Media studies, Black studies, and visual culture.

Brian Adam

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Brian’s original research focused on literature in Medieval and Early Modern England, culminating in a digital project featuring several 17th century pamphlets decrying cross-dressing in England and an exploration of their intersections with theater and rogue literature. This particular project explored how cross-dressing was rhetorically deployed and how marginalized people and behaviors were sensationalized in Early Modern English media. Brian is now interested in exploring the rhetoric of Classical Japanese waka poetry and how the genre engaged with Buddhist ideas of impermanence while emblematizing imperial and courtly aesthetic authority in the Heian period. Moreover, his earlier work in medieval studies has interested him in the history of Western studies in Japan during the early modern and modern pre-World War II periods in Japan to complicate the bibliographical history of texts that are sometimes studied separately from their textual history.
Wilmer Amaya-Mejia

Faculty Mentor | Dr. Ravinder Sehgal  
Campus | San Francisco State University  
E-mail | amayamejiaws@gmail.com  
Grade Level | Master’s 2nd Year  
Expected Date of Graduation | Spring 2020  
Major | Ecology, Evolution and Conservation Biology  
Doctoral Study Field of Interest | Sciences  

Wilmer’s research focuses on the ecology and evolution of infectious diseases. He is currently studying the immune responses of wild birds that are infected with blood-borne parasites. Avian malaria is a parasite that affects birds worldwide and is especially threatening to birds experiencing environmental change. However, a systematic approach to understanding the molecular immunology of the hosts is lacking in this area of study. By implementing molecular techniques in a natural, highly variable system, he seeks to elucidate the dynamics between a host and its parasites. His research falls into the category of eco-immunology, a novel field that he aims to contribute to as he furthers his education and research.

Cristian Apolinar

Faculty Mentor | Dr. Nayan G. Ramirez  
Campus | California State University, Northridge  
E-mail | cristian.apolinar.740@my.csun.edu  
Grade Level | Senior  
Expected Date of Graduation | Fall 2019  
Major | Criminology and Justice Studies  
Doctoral Study Field of Interest | Social Sciences  

Cristian’s areas of interest include police-community relations, social inequality, and evidence-based policy. He is currently involved in research that explores how social inequality and race/ethnicity affect adolescents’ likelihood of contact with the criminal justice system. Cristian’s main objective is to develop policy-relevant research, specifically he hopes to improve relationships between law enforcement agencies and marginalized communities to reduce racial and ethnic disparities within the criminal justice system. In the future, he would like to teach students how to best prevent and address crime when they move on to their professional careers. He hopes to achieve these goals through comparative criminology and criminal justice and evidence-based research that improve public policy.
Madeline Awad

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Stefanie Drew
Campus  California State University, Northridge
E-mail  madeline.awad.710@my.csun.edu
Grade Level  Senior
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020
Major  Psychology
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Sciences

Madeline’s research currently looks at the impact of virtual reality usage on the visual system, specifically the oculomotor vergence and accommodation systems. She also examines how skills learned within virtual reality transfer to the real world. Her previous research includes examining disinhibition in grapheme color synesthetes, ocular behaviors during reading tasks, and the relationship between academic self-efficacy and asthenopia with a mediator of ethnicity. She is interested in vision science, neural and cognitive aspects of attention, and multi-sensory processing. Madeline hopes to pursue her doctorate in cognitive psychology and vision science, building upon her current experiences in this field. Madeline will continue her academic pursuits with the ultimate goal of becoming a professor at an institution where she can follow her passions for research and mentoring students.

Valeria Ayala

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Rosa I. Toro
Campus  California State University, Fresno
E-mail  valeriaayala@mail.fresnostate.edu
Grade Level  Senior
Expected Date of Graduation  Fall 2019
Major  Psychology
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Sciences

Marianismo is a term used to explain the expectations imposed on Latina women by their culture. These expectations often include being pure and submissive, which can lead to conflicting ideas about sexual attitudes and behaviors based on the opposing views from their collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Limited research has been done on Latinas in the United States and their view of sexual attitudes and behaviors, with Marianismo as a focus. It is important to view how these cultural expectations influence and affect Latina’s image of themselves, their decision making in sexual situations, and ultimately their well-being. Valeria’s research focuses on Marianismo and its effect on Latina college students’ sexual behaviors and attitudes.
Luis Ayala

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lily Chen
Campus: San Francisco State University
E-mail: ayala.angel91@gmail.com
Grade Level: Master’s 2nd Year
Expected Date of Graduation: Spring 2020
Major: Cell and Molecular Biology
Doctoral Study Field of Interest: Sciences

Luis aims to develop an optimized microglia cell replacement protocol. First a receptor which microglia are critically dependent on for survival is inhibited. After the endogenous microglia are depleted, the host mouse receives a bone marrow (BM) transplant. Preliminary data suggests that this leads to a high level of chimerism of donor BM-derived microglia within the host. Cell replacement research has motivated Luis to pursue a PhD in Biomedical Sciences. During graduate school, Luis plans to utilize human stem cell-derived microglia in a cell replacement protocol within a mouse host. Demonstrating the viability of human cells to engraft into the brain is vital to creating therapies that will further human health. After Luis completes his PhD and postdoctoral fellowship, he will pursue a career at a public university. Teaching at a public university is important to Luis, since he desires to contribute to the community that fostered his academic journey.

Maria Cecilia Azar

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Maria Karafilis
Campus: California State University, Los Angeles
E-mail: mmerrit3@calstatela.edu
Grade Level: Master’s 3rd Year
Expected Date of Graduation: Fall 2019
Major: English
Doctoral Study Field of Interest: Humanities

Maria Cecilia’s research examines how vulnerability is read and inscribed onto various racialized and gendered bodies in American literature and culture. Her master’s thesis, “Literary Tourism,” focuses on nineteenth-century periodicals and theorizes the movement of narratives as discursive tours that borrow spatial strategies from tourism in order to gain ostensibly direct and unmediated information about oppressed bodies. She has developed her interdisciplinary approach by presenting at numerous conferences and her work is forthcoming in Palgrave McMillan’s collection of essays titled Dark Tourism of the American West. In a doctoral program, she plans to extend her studies in performance studies, affect, queer, and race theory to explore tropes of vulnerability in contemporary queer and diasporic voices in America. She is particularly interested in the relationships between diasporic bodies, vulnerability and passing, and the moments when their interplay challenges the status quo, revealing often masked cultural tensions.
Sterling Sh’Ron Briggs

Sterling’s research focuses on critical criminology, political economy, and urbanization. His ethnographic research focuses on gentrification in North San Diego County and the social impacts of the Black Community. Most importantly, Sterling explores the structural barriers Black folk encounter in the face of mass evictions, and urban renewal in the region. Originally from the East Coast, Sterling also examines the ways the informal economy thrives within these gentrified spaces. Sterling’s research investigates how entrepreneurial Black men and women navigate the current political and social climate in their everyday lives. In doing so, Sterling introduces a critical perspective on not only the hyper-criminalization of black bodies but also illustrates the ways advanced capitalism promotes inequality for other communities of color.

Justin Brown

Justin is a visionary in the field of water and land resources. His objective is to create a water collection system that utilizes precipitation suspended in the atmosphere (fog). This research uses concepts related to TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge), Biomimicry (systems molded on biological processes), Ethnobotany (customs of a people concerning plants for medical, religious, and other uses), and noninvasive monitoring using drone technology. Generational knowledge of land and water resources is key in developing and creating sustainable ecosystems. Amid climate change new policy and techniques must be explored to achieve global sustainability. In addition to the collection system, Justin desires to incorporate research on infiltration rates of novel vs. native plants for optimal ground water recharge purposes. It is his hope that accumulating a larger surplus of ground water will not only provide increased resiliency against drought, but also assist in the reduction of land subsidence.
Stephanie Calderon

Faculty Mentor | Dr. Nina M. Flores
--- | ---
Campus | California State University, Long Beach
E-mail | sscalderon23@gmail.com
Grade Level | Master’s 2nd Year
Expected Date of Graduation | Spring 2020
Major | Social and Cultural Analysis of Education
Doctoral Study Field of Interest | Education

Stephanie’s research focuses on critical college access for culturally and linguistically diverse students and families. As a college access practitioner, Stephanie finds that many college access programs disregard the intersecting identities of the students they serve, ultimately resulting in low persistence rates upon the transition to college. Her master’s thesis centers on the experiences of young men of color who participated in college access programs as they transition to four-year institutions. Stephanie has presented at the National College Access Conference (NCAN) regarding student enrichment that leads to post-secondary success. She aims to continue examining practices that enhance the college experiences and resources of culturally and linguistically diverse students to and through college in her doctoral studies.

Estely Carranza

Faculty Mentor | Dr. Andrew Ichimura
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Campus | San Francisco State University
E-mail | carranza.estely@gmail.com
Grade Level | Master’s 2nd Year
Expected Date of Graduation | Spring 2020
Major | Chemistry
Doctoral Study Field of Interest | Sciences

Estely’s research focuses on better understanding the fundamental photochemical properties of anatase titanium dioxide (TiO2) thin films. TiO2 is a semiconductor metal oxide that is extensively studied due to its unique photocatalytic properties. Consequently, anatase TiO2 thin films have applications in water remediation and energy production. For example, anatase thin films have been employed as photocatalysts to degrade pollutants in water, as electrodes for water splitting to generate hydrogen gas, and as electron transport layers in solar cells. In addition, TiO2 thin films are promising materials for the development of biomedical applications. Estely’s research involves the synthesis of c-axis oriented anatase thin films, which have not been thoroughly studied. She characterizes these films using x-ray diffraction (XRD), scanning electron microscopy (SEM), and photoconductive atomic force microscopy (PC-AFM). The findings of her work may lead to an optimized synthesis of anatase TiO2 thin films for water remediation and renewable energy applications.
Angeline Chemel

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Mark Chan
Campus  San Francisco State University
E-mail  angelinechemel@gmail.com
Grade Level  Master’s 2nd Year
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020
Major  Cell and Molecular Biology
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Sciences

Angeline’s research project focuses on organelle size scaling in S. cerevisiae, commonly known as budding yeast or baker’s yeast. Similar to organs, organelles are specialized structures found inside cells and they each have their own unique function; her specific project focuses on the vacuole. Analogous to a stomach, the vacuole is used both for storage and to degrade and recycle proteins. Previous research has shown that vacuoles are a dynamic organelle. For instance, its size directly correlates to the overall cell size in budding yeast; additionally, the vacuole can be passed from mother cell to its daughter cell in a process called inheritance. Thus far, she has found that vacuole inheritance occurs in a steady, progressive pattern over time. In the future, she will investigate if vacuole size affects the pattern of vacuole inheritance and, if so, determine how the cell corrects vacuole size during this process.

Karli Cheng

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Alejandro Morales
Campus  California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
E-mail  karlicheng@cpp.edu
Grade Level  Senior
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020
Major  Psychology
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Social Sciences

Karli has a passion for understanding how parenting styles and cultural mechanisms impact the mental health of children and adolescents from diverse backgrounds. Childhood plays a big role in an individual’s life and the choices that they make later in life. The literature on family dynamics highlights that there is no one way to raise children and mental health outcomes varies differently based on individual and external factors. Each family functions differently based on their cultural heritage, values, and upbringing. Families of color experience an array of challenges in raising their children and through research, culturally sensitive and evidence-based interventions to assist parents in better understanding their children and cultivate more positive, nurturing, and loving relationships within their cultural context, can be developed. The gap in literature of Asian Americans parenting behaviors and how it attributes to the child’s mental health drives Karli research.
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Igdalia’s research focuses on the experiences of first-generation students as they navigate the graduate school process. For her master’s project, Igdalia is choosing to focus on better understanding the experiences of first-generation Latino graduate students at one California public university, and to better understand the factors influencing this population’s academic access, completion, and success in graduate school education. Through her continued research, she hopes to increase equity and access to graduate school education for minority and underserved student populations. She also aims to fill a gap in the literature through analyzing and documenting the narratives of this specific population.

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Maribel is interested in studying how cultural experiences and values shape identity, motivation, and behavior in an academic context. Her approach to education research moves away from a deficiency model where underrepresented minority students are perceived to lack certain skills and assets to be successful and instead focuses on understanding how different lived experiences affect students and how they interpret their academic environment. Her current project examines how student backgrounds and expectations shape their early undergraduate experiences once in school. Her work highlights links between underrepresented student experiences of belonging and persistence, particularly in STEM fields. Her work draws from theories in empirical research across disciplines including social psychology and education.
Samantha DeLaCruz

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Debra Jackson  
Campus  California State University, Bakersfield  
E-mail  sdelacruz2@csub.edu  
Grade Level  Senior  
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020  
Major  Psychology and Interdisciplinary Studies  
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Social Sciences

Samantha utilizes personal and community experiences in her application of gender and sexuality studies. From a queer person of color standpoint, she investigates topics such as queer identity, experiences, and liberation practices. Her current research project examines how queer representation within film and television has furthered the commodification and exploitation of queer bodies, narratives, and pain. Focusing on portrayals of transgender and queer people of color, she engages in sociohistorical analysis of the documentary film Paris is Burning (1990) and the fictional television series Pose (2018) to discuss how queer representation has historically been limited in ways that uphold white supremacy and cisgender-heterosexual patriarchy. Samantha has been selected to present this original research at several national conferences, including the 2019 National Women Studies Association Conference.

Ingred Garcia

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Andrew Gill  
Campus  California State University, Fullerton  
E-mail  ingred.garcia@csu.fullerton.edu  
Grade Level  Senior  
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020  
Major  Economics  
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Social Sciences

The sudden increase of women entering the labor market after World War II in the United States revolutionized the economy. This in turn influenced women to pursue higher levels of education, and motivated women to seek additional opportunities outside the home. The increased workforce provided a substantial boost to an already booming postwar economy. These effects are described by the theory of human capital; however, labor force participation of women in the last seventeen years does not support the traditional prediction. Though more women are accomplishing more education than ever before, many are deciding to leave the labor force. Moreover, as women seek to complete more education, traditional milestones are delayed, hence transforming expectations. Ingred’s study aims to analyze key factors influencing women’s decision to enter and leave labor and educational markets.
Virginia Gomez

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Breny Mendoza
Campus  California State University, Northridge
E-mail  virginia.gomez.174@my.csun.edu
Grade Level  Senior
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020
Major  Gender and Women’s Studies and Political Science
Field of Interest  Humanities

Drawing on a phenomenological approach, Virginia is currently conducting a research study that explores the meanings women make of their role within the emerging male-dominated cannabis industry in California. Utilizing an intersectional lens that focuses on gender, class, race, and age, Virginia examines the power dynamics concerning women’s involvement in the cannabis space and how their intersectional identities inform their participation. Through a multi-method approach utilizing an archival collection of Brownie Mary— a woman who openly distributed cannabis infused brownies during the AIDS crises in San Francisco— and in-depth qualitative interviews with women who are currently involved, she intends to explore women’s work experiences within the formal (legal) and informal (illegal) sectors.

Carolina Gonzalez

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Jonathan Kelber
Campus  California State University, Northridge
E-mail  caroscience08@gmail.com
Grade Level  Senior
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020
Major  Microbiology
Field of Interest  Sciences

The nature of Carolina’s research lies in studying the molecular and cellular function of RAI14 (retinoic acid induced fourteen, also known as Ankycorbin or NORPEG) which is an actin cytoskeleton interacting protein in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC) cells. RAI14 expression is upregulated in PDAC cells and it may be required for the tumorigenic behavior of PDAC. Future findings have the potential to contribute to a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms PDAC cells use to maintain a malignant microenvironment that supports tumor and disease progression. There are many important questions in cancer research and clinical oncology that are still left unanswered. Carolina is particularly driven to finding alternative ways to treat cancer that minimize or negate harm to patients while still improving their prognosis.
### Alejandro Guardado

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Alejandro’s studies focus on the impact of liberation theology in Mexico by illuminating the roles and contributions of progressive theologians who organized grassroot movements during Mexico’s New Left era. His studies aim to complicate the current historiography on Mexico’s student and guerrilla uprisings during the 1960s and 1970 by interconnecting progressive religious action and ideology. In doing so, he will specifically look to research the life of Mexico’s most prominent liberation theologian, Sergio Méndez Arceo. Méndez Arceo is a key figure in highlighting how progressive Catholics battled traditionally conservative interpretations of Catholicism. However, the work of Méndez Arceo and many grassroot lay organizations went beyond Catholic churches and were in solidarity with student and labor movements while also actively criticizing political violence directed towards poor people. This research aims to determine if the progressive wing of the Church was a significant element of Mexico’s New Left.

### Kimberly Hardaway

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Social and Behavioral Health Science is the interdisciplinary study of understanding the psychosocial, behavioral, community, and social influences on the health of a specific population, especially those that are disadvantaged. It also involves understanding how biological factors influence health, illness, and recovery; identifying risk factors, and strategies for promoting health and preventing disease, as well as creating interventions that eliminate specific barriers to health. Kimberly’s thesis is studying Black women diagnosed with breast cancer who suffer from Post-Chemotherapy Cognitive Impairment (PCCI) after being administered high doses of chemotherapy. PCCI affects memory, concentration, and completing tasks while creating confusion, mental fog, being unusually disorganized, etc. Kimberly is interested in the correlation between PCCI, stress, how social behaviors and society influence the outcome of controlling PCCI among this population, the impact it has on families and the community, promoting healthy lifestyles, as well as the lack of educational resources for Black women.
Romel Harmon

Romel is developing research that investigates the relationship between students of color and remedial and developmental course-work in higher education. Specifically, why are these classes predominantly populated by African American and Latino students? He is interested in pursuing a PhD in education where he can continue to develop his research into the possible causal factors, as well as the potential interventions in developmental education. Romel is also interested in teaching at the college level and intends to work with the remedial and developmental student population, where he hopes to identify and develop strategies and andrological methodologies that prove effective in interrupting cycles of remediation. His personal experience with developmental course-work at the community college level informs his desire to develop research that contributes to the established body of knowledge and the classroom environment.

Leticia Herrera

Leticia is investigating the interaction between low and high-fat diets and drugs that are important pharmacological strategies in the treatment of schizophrenia through antipsychotics. Antipsychotics serve to block the dopamine system and are a class of drugs called dopamine antagonists. These antagonists are very effective in the treatment of this serious mental illness, but little is known about the possible effects that diet may play in the efficacy of the drugs. Leticia is investigating the impact that diet may play in working against these dopamine antagonists. The practical significance includes providing the basic research via the animal model for the understanding of drug efficacy in the context food interactions. This is especially important given individual's diagnosed with schizophrenia are at increased risk for obesity as compared to the rest of the population.
Jenan Husain

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Adam Roberts
Campus: California State University, Fullerton
E-mail: husainj@csu.fullerton.edu
Grade Level: Master’s 2nd Year
Expected Date of Graduation: Spring 2020
Major: Marine Biology
Field of Interest: Sciences

Jenan is investigating the neurophysiological mechanisms that underlie memory formation. To understand these processes, she is using zebrafish as a model organism. At larval stages of development, zebrafish are translucent, small, and amenable to pharmacologic manipulation. These attributes, combined with a relatively simple vertebrate nervous system, make zebrafish an ideal animal to investigate memory at cellular, subcellular, and systems levels. Most importantly, an impressive array of molecular tools allow for an optogenetic interrogation of neural circuits that mediate behavior. Specifically, she is investigating long-term memory of a zebrafish escape response with the goal of tracking synapse formation/retraction within a defined neural circuit. If successful, her experiments should provide an unparalleled peek into the physical structures that underlie memory and provide novel insights into the synaptic basis of memory.

Ashtyn Isaak

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Robert Carpenter
Campus: California State University, Northridge
E-mail: ashtyn.isaak.189@my.csun.edu
Grade Level: Master’s 3rd Year
Expected Date of Graduation: Spring 2020
Major: Psychology
Field of Interest: Sciences

Ashtyn’s graduate research aims to determine how coral reefs of different depths may respond to the changing conditions in the ocean, specifically under projected future levels of ocean acidification. To do this she studies a species of crustose coralline algae called Porolithon onkodes, which is an important photosynthesizing framework builder on coral reefs found across a range of depths. Through the use of flow through aquaria tanks called mesocosms, she manipulates the amount of CO2 in each tank as well as the light chemistry to simulate different depths in order to determine the effects on this calcifying species. Ashtyn currently conducts this work in Mo’orea, French Polynesia through the Mo’orea Coral Reef (MCR) National Science Foundation Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) Program.
Kendra Jackson

The purpose of Kendra’s research is to determine how one can measure/evaluate equitable frameworks in the public education system in respect to structural forces such as disparities in discipline, zero tolerance and structural barriers of institutions. She would like to research how learning about the inequities within public education systems provide equitable frameworks for creating new policy that will dismantle the link between the educational and criminal justice systems. Her goal is to successfully demonstrate a link between theoretical principles of sociology and resolving social problems by critically examining the relationship between restorative justice and zero tolerance policies against poor minority children in public education and how disproportional disciplinary actions against minority children have resulted in a more aggravated flow of these children through the school to prison pipeline.

Julius Ervin Javier

Julius is interested in the mental health of Asian and Pacific Islander (API) immigrants. With 12 years of social work-related experiences, he plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Social Welfare/Social Work and to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), researcher, and educator. Broadly, he would like to explore the various legal, socio-cultural, and economic systems that serve as facilitators or barriers to Asian immigrants’ access to mental health services. Using the “Intersectionality Theory”, which posits that race, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, gender, and other demographic variables as intertwined concepts that simultaneously impact individual’s lives, he aims to study the complex interplay of these socio-cultural factors as mediators of mental health outcomes among Asian immigrants and their children. Based on this research, he hopes to develop culturally-grounded and person-centered interventions to improve the mental health outcomes of the target population.
D’Andra Johnson

Faculty Mentor       Dr. David V. Chavez
Campus              California State University, San Bernardino
E-mail              dandrajohnson17@gmail.com
Grade Level          Master’s 2nd Year
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020
Major                Clinical/Counseling Psychology
Field of Interest    Social Sciences

For her master’s thesis, D’Andra is examining the role of self-stigma on willingness to seek help in first-generation, college students of color. She will explore the role of coping self-efficacy within this relationship. D’Andra is interested in pursuing a Counseling Psychology PhD where she intends to examine the determinants of professional help-seeking among underrepresented groups, such as racial/ethnic minorities, and points of intervention that reduce help-seeking avoidance among these groups. Additionally, she is interested in the role of stigma on help-seeking intentions, attitudes, and behaviors. D’Andra’s experience with her community based participatory research group and identifying predictors of distress among an underrepresented college student population have influenced her decision to pursue these research topics.

Talia Kieu

Faculty Mentor       Dr. Jerel Calzo
Campus              San Diego State University
E-mail              tkieu-w@sdsu.edu
Grade Level          Senior
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020
Major                Public Health
Field of Interest    Health and Medicine

Talia examines health disparities in populations such as LGBTQ+ youth, transgender individuals with eating disorders, and LGBTQ+ homeless young adults through the Action Research on Community Health Equity and Stigma (ARCHES) Lab. The goal of these projects is to examine the health disparities that these populations face and understand structural barriers that lead to these health disparities. Talia has received awards for her presentations on Hepatitis A and homelessness at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students, as well as the San Diego State University Student Research Symposium. Talia plans to pursue a Ph.D in public health, specifically social and behavioral sciences, and study the different health outcomes of LGBTQ+ individuals using community-based participatory approaches.
Can (John) Ali Kilic

General cognitive abilities at a young age have been consistently found to predict later academic success. Can’s main research and interests revolve around cognitive processes and learning. More specifically, Can aims to understand the various factors influencing the development of early math concepts in children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Executive Function (EF), the cognitive ability involving mental flexibility, inhibitory control, and working memory, has been found to promote early number sense and acquisition. Further, cultural factors such as language, parental input, and instructional practices have also been found to impact children’s math learning. Through a cross-cultural comparison among U.S., Chinese, and Singaporean preschoolers, Can is examining the complex and dynamic nature of the links between general cognitive function, culture, and math learning. He hopes his research findings will be applied in designing learning programs aimed at molding to the individual background and learning needs of a student.

Cammie Lam

Cammie Lam is a NIH-BUILD research scholar pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Health Science and a double minor in Sociology and Japanese. Cammie has been a member of the BEACH-PLUS Research Lab since 2017, where she has primarily examined prescription drug abuse. She has lead-authored and co-authored manuscripts examining prescription stimulant misuse and diversion, disseminated research at symposiums and conferences, and participated, most recently, in the 2019 Summer Research Program in Epidemiology at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; there she was involved in a study examining metabolite HMDB05396 and advanced prostate cancer. As a doctoral student, Cammie hopes to advance her skill set in epidemiology.
Xrystyan’s research investigates underserved university students’ understanding of depression, the difference in this knowledge between female and male students, and its relationship to bachelor’s degree completion, retention, and length of degree completion. The undergraduate student population often suffer from depression, which can negatively impact their academic performance and influence their decision to drop out of the university. Degree completion and current research on depression demonstrate a disparity between female and males, and a correlation between this and belonging to an underserved group. Underserved undergraduate students face unique challenges in addition to academic pressures that relate to their intersecting identities and can make them especially vulnerable to suffering from depression. Underserved students may identify as being first generation students, from lower social economic backgrounds, having substantial financial responsibilities, and as persons of color. Xrystyan’s findings may result in a better understanding of the relationship between depression in undeserved groups, degree completion, and gender.

Jill’s research interests lie in the voting, activism and political behavior of young people and those of mixed-race ancestry in the US. She has examined recent changes in turnout, partisanship and political participation of those populations and seeks to understand the underlying mechanisms that may be at work. In particular, her work focuses on the activation of identity and the use of digital outreach in mobilizing young voters to overcome the real and perceived costs of participating politically. She has done this by conducting survey research and experiments on whether issues that are salient to youth, like gun violence and climate change, activate feelings of efficacy. Jill’s research, including her MA thesis, show these issues may have a generational appeal and activate larger identity frameworks that align youth to parties and boost turnout when framed in those terms. After graduation, she plans on getting her PhD in Political Science.
**Wendy Layco**

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Wendy specializes in the archaeology of religion. She utilizes a sacred landscape approach in the examination of artificial subterranean spaces in the Maya area. Informed by the sub-discipline of cave archaeology, Wendy shows that subterranean features, previously thought to be utilitarian, had a purely religious function. She has carried out research in Belize and at Chichen Itza in Yucatan, Mexico. Wendy has presented the results of her field research at the last two Annual Meetings of the Society for American Archaeology. She also has a co-authored publication, *Maya Cultural Landscapes and the Subterranean: Assessing a Century of Chultun Research*, in the International Journal of Archaeology.

**Stephanie Leal**

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Stephanie is interested in studying how cancer cells withstand Endoplasmic reticulum (ER) stress. Like our body functions are carried out by different organs, a cell relies on different organelles to perform its functions. The ER is a major organelle responsible for proper folding of proteins. A perturbation in this function can cause ER stress, which if not corrected in a timely manner leads to cell death. Cancer cells can withstand and survive ER stress better than regular cells. Stephanie’s research focuses on how cancer cells evade ER stress-induced cell death. Currently, she is trying to identify pathways that may play a decisive role in a cell’s decision to either survive or succumb to ER stress. Ultimately, she hopes her research will contribute to a better understanding of cancer biology and lead to identification of a druggable target to curb cancer cell viability.
Roxana Lesso

Faculty Mentor    Dr. Elise Fenn
Campus           California State University, Northridge
E-mail           roxana.lesso.512@my.csun.edu
Grade Level      Master’s 2nd Year
Expected Date of Graduation Spring 2020
Major            Psychology
Doctoral Study Field of Interest Social Sciences

Roxana is examining how improving observer’s sensitivity to the presence of diagnostic cues to deception could improve observer’s accuracy at discriminating between lying and truthful people, or “senders.” She’s interested in whether the construct of empathy, defined as trait empathy, relates to observer’s sensitivity at identifying diagnostic cues to credibility. Research has found that trait empathy improves detection of certain emotional and social cues. Therefore, she predicts that accuracy at detecting deception may increase (1) when senders messages contain strong diagnostic credible cues, or (2) observer’s skills at detecting diagnostic credible cues are strong (e.g., observer individual differences such as trait-empathy). Identifying observer individual difference factors enhances scientific understanding of deception detection processes, improves understanding of cues that are diagnostic of deception, and informs investigative interviewing protocols of improving the identification of deception.

Barbara Linan Martinez

Faculty Mentor    Dr. Carrie Lane
Campus           California State University, Fullerton
E-mail           barbara.linan@gmail.com
Grade Level      Senior
Expected Date of Graduation Spring 2020
Major            American Studies
Doctoral Study Field of Interest Humanities

Barbara’s research interests focus on documenting Mexican and Chicano experiences in the contemporary United States, with a particular interest in popular culture and political discourse. Her current project examines the Latinx music festival “Tropicalia.” She analyzes the festival’s culture, the artists performing, attendants’ and performers’ attitudes toward political discourse at the festival, and the festival’s complex relationship to the Latinx community. Through this project, Barbara aims to demonstrate how mainstream media platforms directly affect both communal and individual experiences for people of color, especially during major political shifts.
While the Netflix series Narcos has ignited an interest in Narcoculture in US popular media, Jessica’s project develops the complexity of this culture through the analysis of “Signs Preceding the End of the World” by Yuri Herrera. She is focusing on how gender and class are seen through the narco narrative in the novel. Contrary to how popular media portrays the narco, there are those who are on the fringes of narco culture who are ignored. Jessica argues that in order to truly understand narco culture, one must focus on those minorities, instead of the mythical narco bosses one sees in mainstream media. Her research has led her to ask: how does this theme affect not only American literature, and not only Mexican literature, but also and especially border literature between the US and Mexico?

As a sociologist, Mariana is interested in political sociology, social movements and collective behavior. Her primary research interest is political polarization, specifically as it pertains to collective behavior. She is concerned with the power of ideology to create division as well as connection between people. Mariana’s current research focuses on understanding how conservative and non-conservative college organizations make meaning of their participation in political campus events. For her doctorate, she aims to expand on her research and explore how the principle of free speech in the US is interpreted across party lines. She aims to understand the relationship between the ideological commitment of party and the idea of free speech.
Matthew Madruga

Faculty Mentor | Dr. Carlos Montemayor
---|---
Campus | San Francisco State University
E-mail | mmadruga@mail.sfsu.edu
Grade Level | Master’s 2nd Year
Expected Date of Graduation | Spring 2020
Major | Philosophy
Doctoral Study Field of Interest | Humanities

The locus of Matthew’s research interest centers on the relationship between moral psychology and legal decision making; specifically, whether a virtue jurisprudential account of the law can adequately problematize why and how agents make the decisions that they do. He wants to explore questions such as what is justice? What are the duties, obligations, and responsibilities that various legal actors have to one another and what are the ethical implications of said duties? Finally, along epistemological grounds, what is the law and what makes legal reasoning distinct from reasoning writ large? Matthew is also pursuing a graduate certificate in the ethics of artificial intelligence; to that end, he wants to evaluate the moral implications of machine learning, what constitutes consciousness, in both its phenomenal and access iterations, and where the concept of wisdom fits into the broader discourse of artificial intelligence.

Alejandra Marquez

Faculty Mentor | Dr. Jessica Luck
---|---
Campus | California State University, San Bernardino
E-mail | alejandra.marquez2013@gmail.com
Grade Level | Master’s 3rd Year
Expected Date of Graduation | Spring 2020
Major | Literature
Doctoral Study Field of Interest | Humanities

Alejandra’s research is focused on the intersectional perspectives of postcolonial studies and feminist theory, which aim to provide voice and agency to writers that have been marginalized by social practices. She intends to explore the ways that even inclusive categories such as postcolonial studies and feminist theory still have marginalized identities within them, specifically in the periods of Medieval literature and early English and American Literature. Questions guiding Alejandra research are: What influences of colonialism do we see in early English and Medieval literature? How can feminist theory and criticism be used to gain insight into the portrayal of women in early English and Medieval literature? How can feminist theory and criticism approach marginalized writers such as women of color and queer women in these periods?
### Jenny Martinez

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Piezoelectric materials have attracted the attention of scientists around the world due to their ability to produce electrical energy from mechanical deformations. In the past decade, one of the most studied piezoelectric materials has been Polyacrylonitrile Nanofibers (PAN). PAN is used as the precursor to generate a continuous carbon nanofiber. Jenny’s project aims to use carbonized piezoelectric nanofibers to design and manufacture a piezoelectric device, which harvests electricity from common mechanical activities such as walking.

### Gustavo Martir

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Gustavo is researching the cognitive processes of persuasion and attitude change, relative to political ideology, using morality as a framework. He is using concepts from cognitive psychology to study the cognitive processes a person uses to process a persuasive message, based on the credibility of the source of the message. Gustavo is combining this approach with Moral Foundations Theory—a theory that suggests people base their attitudes on idiosyncratic moral systems comprised of five moral foundations that suppress and regulate selfishness. His master’s thesis involves studying the influence morally-framed messaging and the credibility of the source of the message may have on a person’s attitudes toward the environment, as a function of the person’s political ideology. Gustavo seeks to understand how manipulating the credibility of the source of a persuasive message and the moral foundations of which the message is based influences the formation and evolution of people’s attitudes toward important issues.
Deep in space, there are pairs of the universe’s densest objects. These include black holes (objects so dense even light can’t escape from inside) and neutron stars (city-sized stars as dense as an atom’s nucleus). As these dense objects orbit each other, they send out ripples of warped spacetime called gravitational waves. Denyz is using supercomputers to model and visualize gravitational waves from merging black holes and neutron stars. Accurate calculations of these waves are crucial for helping experiments detect as many waves as possible while learning all we can about their sources’ natures and behaviors. Using the Spectral Einstein Code (SpEC), Denyz has modeled black hole-neutron star mergers, including the emitted gravitational waves and the behavior of the neutron star as the black hole tears it apart. She is also contributing code to Spectre, SpEC’s successor, which will achieve orders of magnitude gains in performance.

Phong’s research interests include college student mental health and how that impacts educational outcomes among racial and ethnic minority student populations. Specifically, his focus is on the mental health of Hmong Americans and their educational outcomes in higher education. He is completing a master’s thesis utilizing qualitative research methods to explore factors that contribute to positive educational outcomes for Hmong American graduate students. His research is expected to provide greater insights into Hmong American college students and better understand the role of mental health on their educational experiences and outcomes. Through this research, he hopes to provide recommendations for higher education institutions that can advance success outcomes for Hmong American college students. Phong seeks to expand these research interests in his future doctoral studies to deepen our understanding of factors that lead to success among Hmong Americans in higher education.
Yovani Muñoz

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Rosa I. Toro  
Campus  California State University, Fresno  
E-mail  ymunoz8@mail.fresnostate.edu  
Grade Level  Senior  
Expected Date of Graduation  Fall 2020  
Major  Psychology and Chicano and Latin American Studies  
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Sciences  

The Central Valley is an agricultural region with a workforce that consists of a majority of agricultural workers known as campesinos. Although there are a great number of campesinos, there is limited empirical work focused on the well-being of this population. Related research indicates that among similar populations, acculturation related issues may have an impact on mental health well-being. Furthermore, the mental health field’s knowledge to understand experiences of compromised mental health are limited by a disconnect in the ability to effectively communicate with Latino clients in understanding and identifying what compromises well-being. Yovani’s research project will focus on understanding how campesinos understand mental health from a cultural perspective via culturally sensitive ethno-specific terms used in the Latinx culture.

Izamar Narvaez

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Matthew Mendez  
Campus  California State University Channel Islands  
E-mail  izamar.narvaez976@myci.csuci.edu  
Grade Level  Senior  
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020  
Major  Political Science  
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Social Sciences  

Political science is a field of study that allows one to get to know the people around them. By studying this field one is able to understand why people think and act the way they do. In addition to this, an aspect of political science that really intrigues Izamar is political behavior, especially within the Latino community. Her primary research interests consist of examining how race, ethnicity and political behavior play an important role when it comes to the U.S political system, especially for the fast-growing group Latinos. For this reason, Izamar would like to examine how this particular community works within the United States political system. More specifically, she is interested in examining how Latinos can advocate for policy changes that benefit their entire community and its members.
Amirr Neal

Faculty Mentor | Dr. Krishna Foster  
Campus | California State University, Los Angeles  
E-mail | aneal10@calstatela.edu  
Grade Level | Master’s 3rd Year  
Expected Date of Graduation | Spring 2020  
Major | Mechanical Engineering  
Doctoral Study Field of Interest | Engineering  

In combustion chemistry, it is generally understood that species formation involves numerous collisions that come to thermal equilibrium before decomposition. Recent theoretical studies have shown that radicals with weak bounds can quickly dissociate at high temperatures and therefore impede the collisional internal energy relaxation process. Currently, there are few experimental measurements of the methoxy (CH3O) radical decomposition reaction at temperatures above 1000 K. Thus, Amirr’s research is focused on investigating the effects of prompt dissociation on methoxy radical decomposition at temperatures greater than 1000 K. Amirr is eager to utilize modern kinetic models to reanalyze the most current methoxy radical decomposition experiments in literature from over 30 years ago.

Rojina Nekoonam

Faculty Mentor | Dr. Jason Bush  
Campus | California State University, Fresno  
E-mail | rojinan@mail.fresnostate.edu  
Grade Level | Senior  
Expected Date of Graduation | Spring 2020  
Major | Biology  
Doctoral Study Field of Interest | Health and Medicine  

Rojina’s research focuses on comparing the expression profile of Testin in unique adipose tissue depots from patients undergoing coronary artery bypass grafting surgery. Testin plays an integral role in promoting cell junctional complexes that limit the transmigration of monocytes across the endothelial layer of blood vessels, a main driver of atherogenesis. While much research has focused on the secretory profile of adipose tissue in coronary artery disease, little is known about the role of Testin in this pathology. Quantifying the genetic expression profile of Testin will enable a better understanding of vascular permeability to immune cells and how differences in expression profiles may lead to vasculature susceptibility or resistance to plaque development. Being from an area of California known for its elevated rates of cardiovascular-related morbidities, Rojina is passionate about biomedical research and community health programs aimed at addressing health disparities in Central California.
Justin is investigating if highly radioactive material was potentially emitted into the atmosphere in 1959 following a secret nuclear incident at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) in Simi Valley, California. Justin’s thesis involves collecting tree-cores of Oak species from sites 5 – 10 km around SSFL and measuring, using a gamma-ray spectrometer, for the radioactive isotope Cesium-137, both a common byproduct of nuclear fission and indicator for a nuclear meltdown. This work may provide an estimate of if, when, and which surrounding communities were unknowingly exposed to radiation and the nuclear incident’s magnitude. Justin hopes to expand his isotope geochemistry knowledge in an interdisciplinary doctoral program. His future research interests are to investigate questions in biogeochemistry related to human-accelerated environmental changes, by utilizing stable isotopes to understand the shifts in the chemical cycles and their ecological impacts to terrestrial ecosystems.

Alondra’s research examines potential biomarkers that may distinguish different groups of Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD), such as brain activity using electroencephalography. To date, few attempts have been made to validate current diagnostic measures, which have comprised of subjective information using self-report measures of personality functioning, with more objective neuroscience methodologies. Alondra is also conducting research to understand eating behaviors in rats that can be translated to humans, such as sucralose-preference generalization to ethanol. Her interest in neuroscience has also driven her to conduct research at the University of California, San Diego, where she studied hippocampal neurons to understand underlying biological mechanisms of Alzheimer’s disease (AD). As a future doctoral student, Alondra plans to continue investigating neurological diseases such as AD.
**Jacqueline Piña**

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The Getty PST: LA/LA series of exhibitions during 2017 to 2018 was a landmark event that finally brought to center stage an inclusive view of Latin American art. In contrast, early survey exhibitions done in the 1980’s produced vastly different spaces that were limited in context and favored the opinions of Euro-American curators. Jacqueline is exploring past museum methodology and analyzing how they inform current practices. By discussing current curatorial methods, her research highlights how twenty-first century curators have created different spaces that honor the diversity within the field of Latin American art. Using the twenty-first century exhibition, Home: So Different, So Appealing, against the twentieth-century exhibition, Art of the Fantastic: Latin America 1920-1978, her research ascertains the progress made, as well as, giving visibility to the ongoing need of complex representation of Latin American art.

**Juan Rosas**

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Integrating approaches from linguistics and anthropology, Juan’s research for his master’s degree focuses on the racial and linguistic identities of second- and third-generation Mexican-Americans. Particular attention is paid to how, in talk and interaction, these individuals position themselves and others racially and linguistically, and the racial and linguistic assumptions underpinning these positionings. As an advocate for language justice, Juan helped compile a report in collaboration with Long Beach’s Office of Equity on the application of the city’s Language Access Policy. As a Fulbright scholar, Juan will spend the next year conducting research in Brazil on the institutionalization of racial categories at the university level and the way these categories are negotiated and authorized as part of a race-based affirmative action process. For his PhD, Juan aspires to continue research that critically examines the link between language and race across different social contexts.
Lizette’s research interests encompass social justice issues, working with marginalized groups, cross-cultural psychology, developmental psychology, and social psychology. She has a passion for addressing and researching social inequalities and exploring ways to create an inclusive curriculum and research methodologies. Lizette’s research questions include: How teaching students about topics such as racism, oppression, and privilege, will challenge their preconceived notions of these issues, and how adopting an ethnic identity may be a response to micro-aggressions and be a predictor of activism. Lizette will capture the essence of the human experience by employing a mixed-methods approach to amplify and empower the stories of minority populations, specifically marginalized groups.

Vanessa is examining physical, cognitive, and emotional health outcomes among older PLWH. She has co-authored papers involving cognition, methamphetamine use, and plasma biomarkers on the health and longevity of PLWH. She is preparing a first-authored manuscript in which she examined the effects of perceived stress on health-related quality of life. For Vanessa’s senior honors thesis, she is examining the relationship between the vascular endothelial growth factor family of plasma biomarkers and amnestic mild cognitive impairment among aging PLWH. This research is important because PLWH are living longer, yet little work has been done with this population. In the future, Vanessa wants to continue examining health disparities and the intersection between behavioral medicine and neuropsychology among chronically ill populations.
Obesity is strikingly prevalent among U.S. adults, and is predicted to only increase over time. One reason for this is a persistent consumption of high-fat diets, which greatly increase the risk for many conditions, such as type-2 diabetes. This in turn causes changes to the central nervous system (CNS), one being that the CNS undergoes a neuroinflammatory state and pro-inflammatory cytokines are upregulated. As a result, normal processes including cell signaling and cognition are impaired. Additionally, neuroinflammation has been linked to dementia, such as Alzheimer’s disease. Sara and her research team propose using a supplementation of kale, arugula (f. Brassicaceae), and dandelion (f. Asteraceae) plants in an obese mouse model diet may ameliorate the inflammatory response and have an overall positive impact on learning and memory. Specifically, Sara will perform the Morris Water Maze to examine the effects of diet on cognition. This research may mitigate the negative effects of neuroinflammation experienced by millions worldwide.

Skye Shodahl

Skye is examining the risk factors associated with maternal obesity. Additionally, she will explore adverse outcomes of maternal obesity on maternal and child health as well as the role of socioeconomic status and pregnancy behaviors, such as eating habits and physical activity, within this relationship. Skye’s involvement in community-based health research, specifically on factors related to childhood obesity, has motivated her interest to pursue a Ph.D. in Community Health Sciences or a related field. During her doctoral studies, she hopes to implement community-based participatory research approaches to identify and address socio-economic, cultural, and environmental determinants of maternal, child, and adolescent health. Specifically, she wants to explore the associations of maternal weight and nutrition on maternal and perinatal health outcomes. Through her research, Skye hopes to help underserved communities and the individuals in them become as healthy as possible.
Marika Sigal

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<td>Doctoral Study</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
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Marika is studying barriers to mental health service utilization in underserved groups (e.g., immigrants) and evaluating how evidence-based practice can help minimize disparities in the mental health field for immigrant and ethnic minority groups. Her graduate thesis focuses on public and private mental health stigma and external barriers (e.g., language, cost, transportation, discrimination) that contribute to treatment seeking in Asian, Black, Latinx, Middle-Eastern, and Caucasian university students. Marika is also examining the psychometric properties of mental health scales in different ethnic groups. Moreover, she is a supervisor of the Adolescent & Adult Adjustment Lab where the foci are on (1) investigating contextual qualities (e.g., neighborhood characteristics, family dynamics, school climate, discrimination, victimization) related to mental health of adolescents and emerging adults from immigrant and ethnic/sexual minority groups, and (2) evaluating effectiveness of campus and community programs designed to enhance well-being of children, parents and university students.

Carla Sotomayor

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<tr>
<th>Faculty Mentor</th>
<th>Dr. Matt Englar-Carlson</th>
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<tr>
<td>Campus</td>
<td>California State University, Fullerton</td>
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<td>E-mail</td>
<td><a href="mailto:csotomayor2@csu.fullerton.edu">csotomayor2@csu.fullerton.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
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<td>Expected Date of Graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major</td>
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As a first-generation graduate student, Carla is motivated to (a) conduct research on first-generation, Latinx graduate students in the field of counseling and (b) to increase the diversity in tenured faculty in higher education. Although there is an abundant amount of literature on first-generation undergraduate students, the literature on first-generation graduate students is quite limited. For example, there is extensive literature on challenges first-generation students have faced (e.g., social, economic, and academic) while pursuing their undergraduate degree. Through these research findings, faculty members may identify specific challenges that these students have faced to incorporate effective resources and support systems to undergraduate students in this population. Because there is a much lower rate of graduate students (e.g., student population and resources) compared to undergraduate students, especially among first-generation students, it is important to understand how faculty can support their unique obstacles that this population faces when pursuing a graduate education.
Natalie Souaid

Faculty Mentor  | Dr. Bruce Shapiro
---|---
Campus  | California State University, Northridge
E-mail  | nataliesouaid@gmail.com
Grade Level  | Senior
Expected Date of Graduation  | Spring 2020
Major  | Computer Science
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  | Engineering

Natalie’s research is to investigate the methods for diagnosing certain infections and diseases in set populations. Considering the severity of pneumonia in under-served and impoverished populations (especially in children) it is paramount to have early and accurate detection. Those who live in impoverished areas do not have the necessary centers for the treatment of this preventable infection. Natalie aims to understand the techniques that are involved in the processing of medical images to create an effective tool that can be accessible to all populations. This is done by training machine learning algorithms on images of X-ray lungs and classifying the images that have pneumonia in them. By researching a more efficient and accessible method for locating pneumonia, she hopes more people will have access to better early detection. Natalie’s experience working in a research lab as an undergraduate has inspired her to develop a master’s thesis involving machine learning techniques.

Steven Sun

Faculty Mentor  | Dr. Scott W. Roy
---|---
Campus  | San Francisco State University
E-mail  | stevensunbio@gmail.com
Grade Level  | Master’s 2nd Year
Expected Date of Graduation  | Spring 2020
Major  | Cell and Molecular Biology
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  | Sciences

Steven’s work involves using computers to research biological phenomena. This was made possible thanks to the Human Genome Project. One major topic Steven is interested in are gene fusions (when two or more genes combine into one). By scanning the genomes of eukaryotes (species with cells containing a nucleus), interesting gene fusions encoding for hybrid proteins can be found. For many cases, it’s believed that these hybrid proteins function better than their unfused counterparts and benefit the organisms containing them. In other words, these gene fusions are acting as evolutionary adaptions. On the flip side, there also exists cases of gene fusions that cause cancer in humans. By researching biological phenomena like gene fusions, one can learn how genomes evolve and how certain diseases originate. In the future, Steven hopes to continue using computers to uncover more genetic curiosities that play significant roles in evolutionary adaption and disease.
Shana Tables

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Shaun Pichler
Campus  California State University, Fullerton
E-mail  shana.t@csu.fullerton.edu
Grade Level  Senior
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020
Major  Psychology
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Business

Shana’s research interests are in inter-role conflict, performance appraisal, and employee well-being. She has presented on topics such as hierarchal microaggression as a sole-author at the American Psychological Association (APA) conference and on performance appraisal at the Western Academy of Management (WAM). One of her key projects is a meta-analysis of employee reactions to performance appraisal, which focuses on the role of employee participation, otherwise known as voice, in employee reactions to their appraisal sessions. Another key project focuses on inter-role conflict, specifically work-school conflict, among employed students and how they manage the competing demands of work and school roles. This research program is important because it may aid in improving employee retention, as well as in building better relationships between employees and managers. In addition, this research may assist in fostering an employee’s self-development and sense of belonging within the company.

Meme Than

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Laura Mamo
Campus  San Francisco State University
E-mail  mthan@mail.sfsu.edu
Grade Level  Master’s 2nd Year
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020
Major  Public Health
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Social Sciences

Meme’s research is to examine the health impacts of racism on elderly Burmese immigrants who have limited English language skills. Currently, public health research on Burmese immigrants has been limited. The primary aim of this research will focus on current institutional policies and highlight the role of racism in achieving quality healthcare. Meme hopes to better understand the challenges in having good quality healthcare services for Burmese immigrants, including providing equitable, effective and timely prevention and treatment services, and developing evidence-based strategies for improving patient-centered and culturally sensitive health care services. Through addressing the barriers to accessing quality health care services for Burmese immigrants, she hopes to focus on how racism, history, and cultural competency enable social justice. Meme eventually wants to expand her research to the efforts of other Southeast Asian immigrants who want to obtain equitable health services while living in the United States.
Isaiah’s research aims at exploring Bonhoeffer’s response to racism during his time as director of the Finkenwalde Seminary. The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) has been praised as a hero of social activism against Nazi ideology, but American scholarship has neglected areas of Bonhoeffer’s life when his activism was on full display. Isaiah will be surveying the primary lecture materials between 1935 and 1937 to understand Bonhoeffer’s theological framework that allowed for his social activism. An analysis of his written lectures, his lecture notes, and lecture notes from his students will bring understanding to Bonhoeffer’s theological rejection of racism. Bonhoeffer’s understanding of sin, nationalism, and community are only a few reemerging themes that contribute to his confrontation of racism. It is Isaiah’s hope that Bonhoeffer’s response to racism at the Finkenwalde Seminary can be synthesized and made accessible for anyone confronting issues of racism today.

Abigail’s research objective is to demystify the preconceived stereotypes that mainstream society has bestowed upon marginalized communities by deciphering the experiences and consequences of racism and ‘othering’ depicted in U.S. Ethnic Literatures. In her doctoral studies, she hopes to expand her knowledge of postcolonial and critical race theories, which she believes will be important to her study of U.S. Ethnic Literature. Abigail is also interested in critical theories related to Trauma Studies, which she believes offers a way into examining the lasting effects of spiritual and physical confinement brought about by the histories of colonialism and racism.
Layla Vasquez

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Isabel Sumaya  
Campus: California State University, Bakersfield  
E-mail: lsv559@gmail.com  
Grade Level: Senior  
Expected Date of Graduation: Spring 2020  
Major: Psychology  
Field of Interest: Sciences

Layla’s research focuses on the mesolimbic dopaminergic circuitry that is known as the brain’s reward system originating in the ventral tegmental area projecting to the nucleus accumbens and prefrontal cortex. Although it is well known that increased dopamine levels in the nucleus accumbens occurs after exposure to natural rewards such as food and sucrose, it is not known how one affects the other. Layla’s work addresses this question by studying the effects of preexposure to high and low-fat diets in early adolescent rats and how this exposure effects subsequent sucrose intake and reinforcement. This work is important in the understanding of the role that early intake of fat may contribute to sugar intake later in life.

Selena Velasquez

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kevin Grobman  
Campus: California State University, Monterey Bay  
E-mail: sevelasquez@csumb.edu  
Grade Level: Senior  
Expected Date of Graduation: Spring 2020  
Major: Psychology  
Field of Interest: Education

Underprivileged students often experience equity gaps in higher education achievement for reasons including but not limited to lack of college preparation, inadequate mentorship, or lack of quality university support. Selena’s research interests examine access and equity in higher education, professional development, personal growth, and ultimately student success for underrepresented students (e.g. students of color, first-generation, and gender minorities). She currently works on 3 mixed-methods research projects focusing on 1) intentional mentorship for underrepresented engineering students, 2) the outcomes (e.g. perseverance) of undergraduate research for STEM students and 3) non-traditional indicators of success for first-generation college students, such as grit and growth mindset. As a future doctoral student dedicated to diversity, Selena aims to explore ways in which universities can continue to or better understand the needs of underrepresented students and holistically support their academic and personal journey through college.
**Crystal Venegas Silva**

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<th>Faculty Mentor</th>
<th>Dr. Meeta Banerjee</th>
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The social conditions of the Latinx community continue to reflect a compilation of risk factors that threaten psychological well-being. To date, research about Latinx communities has not fully interrogated the social conditions specific to this population. For example, there is still much to learn about how historical poverty, racialization, and anti-immigrant discourse influence Latinx psychological well-being. Crystal’s research examines how factors such as mental health attitudes, acculturative stress, discrimination, and educational attainment influence mental health outcomes and service utilization among Latinx families. Crystal aspires to use the findings of her research to help inform and develop culturally responsive treatments and outreach strategies in the effort to increase formal mental health service use and in turn, improve the mental health outcomes of the Latinx community. Examining factors that influence the pathway to service utilization and mental health outcomes is essential to understand why this community is systematically vulnerable to health disparities.

**Caitlin Waddle**

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<th>Faculty Mentor</th>
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Katie is working in the area of algebraic geometry, which extends the idea of solving a system of linear equations to multivariate polynomials. Algebraic geometry’s fundamental questions ask how we can relate algebraic objects like ideals to geometric objects called varieties. Katie is interested in how graph theory can answer complexity questions in algebraic geometry. A given variety (the solution set of a system of polynomials) has an associated incidence graph, which assigns each irreducible component a node, and has an edge between two nodes if their corresponding components intersect. Katie’s thesis project will explore how families of graphs can be realized by algebraic curves in this way, and attempt to discover upper bounds on the degrees of the curves needed.
Jennifer White

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Elizabeth J. Sussman  
Campus  California State University, Northridge  
E-mail  jen-white@outlook.com  
Grade Level  Senior  
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020  
Major  Nutrition and Dietetics  
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Health and Medicine

Jennifer studies the role of nutrition, specifically protein, in patients on dialysis with end-stage renal disease. Her research examines the efficacy of an oral nutrition supplement program (ONSP) implemented by the National Kidney Foundation of Arizona. Participants of the ONSP are provided protein supplementation and their lab values are analyzed, including 3-months before supplementation, during the supplementation period (approximately 3-months), and 3-months post-supplementation. The specific markers being tracked are serum albumin and normalized protein catabolic rate (nPCR), as well as any change in weight. Findings from her research will examine ways to resolve the nutritional deficiencies that individuals on dialysis often face.

Essence Wilson

Faculty Mentor  Dr. Andrew Ainsworth  
Campus  California State University, Northridge  
E-mail  essence.wilson.417@my.csun.edu  
Grade Level  Master’s 2nd Year  
Expected Date of Graduation  Spring 2020  
Major  General Experimental Psychology  
Doctoral Study Field of Interest  Social Sciences

Media psychology examines how current media usage (i.e. social media, movies, online education platform) affect the thoughts, behaviors and emotions of people using them. Essence will examine how media and modern technology affects the academic performance of students. It has been suggested that face-to-face video interactions from the instructor towards the student encourage higher learning. She seeks to understand whether utilizing this method would increase comprehension on historically low performing subjects like statistics, physics, and calculus. She is currently exploring a device that could encompass these aspects called a Lightboard, and its effectiveness in an academic setting. Her research will address a broader understanding on the potential advantages current technology could promote within the realm of education.
### Maria Yera

- **Faculty Mentor**: Dr. Mariano Loza-Coll
- **Campus**: California State University, Northridge
- **E-mail**: maria.yera.30@my.csun.edu
- **Grade Level**: Senior
- **Expected Date of Graduation**: Spring 2020
- **Major**: Biology
- **Field of Interest**: Sciences

Maria is interested in how chronic stress may affect the function and proliferative capacity of stem cells. Stress is known to be a very potent co-morbidity factor in many diseases, meaning that stress may not be the actual cause of a disease, but may make the progression of the disease much worse, or treatment less efficient. To this end, Maria uses fruit flies (Drosophila melanogaster) as a model organism, exposing them daily to ethanol, a mild chronic stressor. Then utilizes cell-type specific markers to identify the intestinal progenitor cells by fluorescence microscopy, followed by automated image analysis to determine how this chronic stressor affects the relative proportion, size, shape and proliferative capacity of intestinal progenitor cells.

### Viviane Zurdo Costa

- **Faculty Mentor**: Dr. AKM Newaz
- **Campus**: San Francisco State University
- **E-mail**: vzcosta@sfsu.edu
- **Grade Level**: Master’s 2nd Year
- **Expected Date of Graduation**: Spring 2021
- **Major**: Physics
- **Field of Interest**: Sciences

Van der Waals heterostructures (vdWHs) belong to a group of two-dimensional (2D) materials in which layered van der Waals crystals (e.g., graphene) are stacked in a predefined sequence to prepare designed heterostructures. These atomically thin vdWHs are currently at the frontier of condensed matter physics and materials science research due to their intriguing physical electrical and optoelectrical properties. Currently, 2D vdWHs are fabricated synthetically in a laboratory by stacking 2D crystals vertically. This methodology relies on cumbersome placement methods of different layers, which is prone to irreparable damages. Viviane’s research aims to study the optical, electronic, and optoelectronic properties of a naturally grown vdWHs, Franckeite, which is composed of two different alternately stacked crystal layers. Since it is naturally grown, Franckeite enables the study of the physical properties of a fabrication defect-free vdWH. This research may pave the avenue towards novel vdWHs with designed functionalities and vdWH-based optoelectronic applications.
THE CALIFORNIA PRE-DOCTORAL PROGRAM

For more information about the California Pre-Doctoral Program contact:

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The California Pre-Doctoral Program staff. From left to right: Dr. Maridith A. Janssen, Director; Lauren Dalupan, Program Coordinator; Christopher P. Murphy, Diversity Programs Administrator.