

Productive social work research must be rooted in community. This necessitates centering the voices of community members and research participants, working together to create collaborative, participatory research practices. My goal as a social work researcher is to amplify the voices of young people in our communities who too often are not heard from in academic research. Their voices are crucial to the creation of more efficacious and just educational supports and resources. This scholarship prioritizes countering deficit-based educational narratives and is rooted in critical frameworks that emphasize the need to dismantle and reform educational systems with racial and socioeconomic equity and social-emotional learning principles centered.

Currently, my scholarship is concerned with the educational experiences of emerging adults who have experienced foster care, juvenile justice, and homelessness as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. Transitioning to adulthood is difficult for young people who have experienced substantial adversities, as many are out of school and work and disconnected from educational opportunities. It is critical that research focus on including these young people in the development of supportive programming and build partnerships with community stakeholders to create opportunities and learning environments that are designed with these experiences in the center of care-coordination, support services and learning models. I am particularly interested in working with school systems and partner organizations to improve upstream supports and resources that buffer young people facing difficult life circumstances as they strive to complete high school and move forward toward higher education and vocational opportunities.

I am motivated to strengthen community-based social welfare and educational research that engages young people as coproducers in the research process. Directly engaging youth in the research process helps strengthen healthy psychosocial development, leadership qualities, and improves the validity of research findings. I strive to produce dynamic research through mix-method study designs, such as narrative, semi-structured interviewing, focus groups, and surveys. Direct youth voice is vital to informing and enabling innovative analytic methods that deepen understanding of how barriers impact academic trajectories. This creates impactful research and fosters the development of powerful community-centered programming that provides supports and resources for youth to achieve academic success.

My dissertation research includes survey and focus group data I collected with staff and students at a therapeutic residential public charter school for girls and young women who have been adjudicated by the child welfare and or juvenile court. This research focuses on the development of a social-emotional learning curriculum that addresses the specific needs of young people who have experienced substantial adversity and have specialized needs for cognitive, behavioral, and emotional support as they work toward their educational goals.

In addition to my dissertation research, I have collaborated with Dr. Paula Nurius (University of Washington) on two quantitative research projects: one focused on the educational outcomes of public school students in Washington State who have experienced homelessness, and the other focused on school engagement among Washington State probation youth. I have also collaborated with Dr. Charles Lea (University of Houston), along with two community organizations in the Seattle area (Center for Education Results and Northwest Education Access), on a qualitative research project that included interviewing local young people regarding their experiences disengaging and reengaging academically. Additionally, my work with Dr. Lea's research team includes a multi-year survey development project for King County, Washington's Best Start for Kids youth development initiative. Through this project I conducted research with local youth while working to develop a survey aimed at identifying meaningful and incremental indicators of success for community-based youth development programs, with an emphasis on programs that support youth who are racially, ethnically, and gender diverse. My research strives to augment positive youth development and avoid deficit-centered narratives about minoritized and marginalized youth while emphasizing the structural opportunities for creating a positive social environment to promote healthy psychosocial development, educational success, and buffers the corrosive effects of systemic oppression on youth development.

My current potential for taking on leadership roles in community-based educational research and policy development is evidenced by my work throughout my doctoral studies at the University of Washington, School of Social Work, and the many research partnerships I have developed with community-based educational organizations working for equity in education.

Moving forward, I aim to continue producing scholarship guided by theoretical frameworks that critically examine the structural and institutional intersections of emerging adulthood experiences among young people who have experienced foster care, juvenile justice, and homelessness that builds on their educational resilience. This research is grounded on the belief that all youth should have educational opportunities

that include supportive and caring relationships with peers, teachers, and school staff, high expectations, and meaningful participation in their educational experiences. In order to do this we must work to create research designs that help produce change that will advance equity in the school system and provide culturally and developmentally relevant educational supports and resources to young people involved in the foster care and juvenile justice systems as they transition from adolescence to adulthood.