



# NORC's Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion Scholars Program 2021 Cohort

In 2021, NORC launched the inaugural Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion Scholars Program. Four researchers external to NORC and four NORC employees were awarded resources and support to carry out their research projects. The 2021 external scholars program wrapped up in December 2021 and the 2021 internal program wrapped up in June 2022.

Reflecting on her experience in the program, Arturia Melson-Silimon said, "as a NORC Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion Scholar, I was able to hone my research and communication skills to share my research in a way that is easily accessible to everyone. I found this experience to solidify my goal to continue research that answers important questions surrounding equity and inclusion."

NORC is proud of the 2021 cohort for pursuing and conducting this meaningful work. We know they will continue to be leaders in their respective fields. Read more about our scholars and their work here.



**Meghana Chandra, MPP**  
Principal Research Analyst at  
NORC at the University of Chicago

**Meghana Chandra** is a mixed-methods researcher who contributes to a broad range of project activities for programmatic and policy research related to health care delivery and program evaluation. Since joining NORC, Chandra has worked on a federally mandated data collection for EEOC, analyzed sexual orientation and gender identity data in federal surveys, explored resources to design and enhance a publicly available research database on area-level social determinants of health, analyzed qualitative data regarding the status of civil legal services in the United States, and participated in data collection and analysis to evaluate federal programs focused on Medicare, Medicaid, and dual-eligible beneficiaries. Previously, Chandra worked as an international trade and project finance lawyer. Chandra received her MPP from the University of Chicago.

**Project Description:** Residential Neighborhood Segregation and Adolescent Relationship Aggression. This study makes the case for incorporating a comprehensive understanding of race and ethnicity in studies of intimate partner violence (IPV) and adolescent relationship aggression (ARA), particularly the impact of residential neighborhood segregation. While evidence indicates that residential segregation could increase the likelihood of prevailing gender norms that are unfavorable to women, it could also contribute to the development of greater social ties among neighbors, which in turn diminishes the levels of intimate partner violence in the community. Drawing on a nationally representative sample in

the Survey of Teen Relationships and Intimate Violence (STRiV), this study examines the association between neighborhood level residential segregation and the likelihood of adolescent relationship aggression perpetration and victimization.

**Dataset:** [Survey on Teen Relationships and Intimate Violence](#)



**Juan Del Toro, PhD**  
Research Associate at the  
University of Pittsburgh

**Juan Del Toro** is an applied psychologist. He uses causal inference methods with social surveys, administrative records, and biological/genetic data to understand how ethnic/racial discrimination shapes human development across the lifespan from childhood to adulthood. Specifically, Del Toro examines the direct and intergenerational effects of involvement in the criminal justice system on ethnic/racial minority youths' development.

**Study Description:** Using a robust design that partials out the effects of family environment and genetic contributions, Del Toro examined the differences in involvement with law enforcement and life course outcomes for siblings from the same family. When controlling for relevant factors, he found that within a given Black family, a Black individual who experienced a police stop completed fewer years in school and had lower income than their Black sibling without a police stop. Del Toro found no similar life course differences for white and Hispanic/Latino siblings based on their experience with police stops.

**Dataset:** [National Longitudinal Survey of Youth](#)



**Isabel Goddard, MA**  
Survey Specialist at NORC at the  
University of Chicago

**Isabel Goddard** is a research associate in the Education and Child Development department at NORC. Goddard has three years of survey and ethnographic research experience. She has a particular interest in international research and combining qualitative and quantitative research methods to gain nuanced and statistically robust insight into human experiences. Goddard holds a master's degree from the University of Chicago.

**Project Description:** Social networks have long been understood to serve as potent sources of social capital and social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1979). This pattern remains true even within institutions of higher education, where the ostensible goal is to undermine the replication of social hierarchies (Lehmann, 2007; Barik, 2018). Prior research has not examined how student perceptions of the usefulness of their network for attaining employment varies by demographic criteria and how these assessments correlate to job outcomes after graduation. The

current study addresses this topic by analyzing data from 2,826 students who attended 14 two-year and four-year colleges in the Chicago area to understand how student perceptions of the usefulness of their networks for finding work correspond to employment outcomes approximately 9 months after

graduation. This analysis also seeks to understand whether student rankings of the usefulness of their networks for finding employment vary by race, class, gender, and school type.

**Dataset:** [NORC College to Career Transition in Chicago](#)

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**Melissa Gutwein, MA**  
Senior Research Analyst at NORC  
at the University of Chicago

**Melissa Gutwein** is a Senior Research Associate at NORC at the University of Chicago. Her research interests include teacher labor markets and the interplay between educational achievement and social policy. She received an MA in education policy from Columbia University and a BA in special education from Michigan State University.

**Project Description:** Early childhood teacher turnover is an important obstacle to educational quality that has been exacerbated by the recent pandemic. To better understand the types of work experiences that are associated with higher rates of turnover, the study used the NSECE (N=4,709) to conduct a latent class analysis of ECE teachers' professional relationships and supports. The study found that approximately 51% of teachers have generally positive experiences, 9% have generally negative experiences, and 40% have positive relationships, but lack support around student behavior. Teachers who have generally negative experiences are approximately 3.6 times more likely to turnover,

and teachers who lack behavior support are approximately 1.6 times more likely to turnover, than teachers who have generally positive experiences. The distribution of these groups does not vary by teacher race, classroom racial composition, or the community poverty level of the center.

**Dataset:** [2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education](#)

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**Christine Head, MA**  
Research Methodologist at NORC  
at the University of Chicago

**Christine Head** is a senior research analyst at NORC at the University of Chicago. In her role, she has assisted in projects related to child care and early childhood education access in the United States. More specifically, Christine has provided support for data collection, data delivery, and policy analysis activities. Prior to her work at NORC, Christine worked as an advocate for juvenile justice reform in Illinois for four years. Christine earned her BA degree in Political Science and her MSW at the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. As a graduate student, Christine worked at a research assistant on a number of policy analysis and evaluation projects at Chapin Hall and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

Christine completed our professional learning series and elected to do some preliminary data work that would inform other research in her portfolio but did not complete a publishable product.

**Dataset:** [2019 National Survey of Early Care and Education](#)



**Arturia Melson-Silimon**  
MS, PhD Candidate at the  
University of Georgia

“As a Black woman, I am at the intersection of several identities who are not always given equal opportunities, whether that be employment, education, housing, or health care. As a diversity, racial equity, and inclusion researcher, I have always found it particularly important to champion for the rights and well-being of others by advocating for and sharing their stories.”

**Study Description:** Arturia Melson-Silimon explored whether survey participants recommended mental health treatment in response to vignettes describing hypothetical patients with symptoms of major depression, and whether participants’ recommendations varied by the patients’ race, ethnicity, and gender. She found that individuals across different sociodemographic backgrounds recommended mental health treatment for a hypothetical patient with symptoms of major depression regardless of the patient’s race, ethnicity, or gender.

**Dataset:** [General Social Survey](#)





Wendy Ochoa, PhD  
Post-Doctoral Fellow at  
Tufts University

“My lived experience of growing up in a low-income home in Mexico and the United States as well as my experiences navigating higher education as a first-generation college student have motivated me to conduct research that not only brings awareness to the challenges minoritized families encounter, but to also highlight the numerous strengths they possess.”

Wendy Ochoa wants her work to contribute to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice.

**Study Description:** Ochoa examined whether there was variation in how parents searched for child care (online versus offline), whether their search behavior was related to parents’ subsequent use of center- or home-based child care, and whether this varied by their child’s race and ethnicity. She found when parents reported looking for child care online, they were 62% more likely to use center-based care than respondents who did not use any online sources. Further, more parents with Black (70%) and

Hispanic/Latino (54%) children who selected center-based care reported looking for child care online than those who did not search online (50% and 31%).

**Dataset:** [National Survey of Early Care and Education](#)



Sruthi Swami, PhD  
Assistant Professor at California  
State University, Fresno

**Sruthi Swami** is a school psychologist by training. Her research focuses on racism in K-12 school systems, which includes racism and implicit bias in school systems as well as racial and ethnic disparities in school exclusion. “I am passionate about disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline system, understanding students of colors’ experiences of racism in high school, and ways to support early literacy screening and intervention for students identified as English language learners to close achievement and opportunity gaps.”

**Study Description:** Swami examined whether a respondent’s race and ethnicity were associated with high school suspension and the relationship between high school suspension and the likelihood of high school and college graduation. She found that Black students had the highest rate of having at least one suspension, followed by Hispanic/Latino students, mixed-race students, and then non-Black/non-Hispanic students. Further,

Black students who were suspended in high school were less likely to graduate from high school or college than those who were not suspended.

**Dataset:** [National Longitudinal Survey of Youth](#)

For more information about NORC’s Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion Scholars Program, check out its webpage on [NORC.org](#).