

# Get to Know Your SECC Representatives

2023 - 2025 Student and Early Career Council (SECC) Representatives to SRCD Committees



## **Michelle Brown, Co-chair and Incoming SECC Representative to the Governing Council**

I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at University of South Carolina in the Clinical-Community Ph.D. Program. I earned my Ph.D. in Child Psychology from University of Minnesota with an emphasis in Developmental Psychopathology and Clinical Science and completed a Postdoctoral Fellow in Child Abuse Pediatrics at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. My research uses a developmental

psychopathology framework to: (1) understand how interpersonal relationships influence victimized children's risk for developing adverse socioemotional outcomes with a particular focus on friendships and (2) elucidate biopsychosocial factors that influence treatment outcomes for victimized children. Within SRCD, I am an active member of Black Caucus, was a 2017 Millennium Scholar, and was a mentor in the inaugural Towards 2044: Horowitz Early Career Scholars Program. I am excited to continue to serve and represent our students and early career members.

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**Sarah E. DeMartini, Outgoing SECC Representative to the Governing Council**

I am an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department at California State University, Chico. I earned my Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Texas at Austin in 2018. My research has focused on the influence of coparenting on child outcomes across the transition to parenthood. More recently, I have begun to explore differences between mothers' and fathers' behaviors within coparenting for first-time parents, as well as parents of two children. My interdisciplinary research background has led me to teach undergraduate courses in psychology and family relationships. I have enjoyed furthering my involvement with SRCD by serving on the Student and Early Career Council, contributing to the development of SRCD's highly acclaimed publications, and most recently, serving on the Governing Council. You can learn

more about my research on [ResearchGate](#).



**Josefina Bañales, Equity and Justice Committee, Outgoing Representative**

I am an Assistant Professor in Community Psychology at the University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC). I infuse my personal experiences as a Mexican American woman who is a first-generation high school, college, and doctoral student from the Southwest side of Chicago with my community-engaged research with youth of color in Chicago Public Schools and community organizations. My research examines how youth develop beliefs, feelings, and actions that challenge racism (i.e., youth critical racial consciousness development). In collaboration with youth, schools, parents, and community organizations, I create opportunities that facilitate youths' critical racial consciousness development. I am the recipient of the Ford Pre-Doctoral and Dissertation Fellowships.

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**M. Bishop, Equity and Justice Committee, Incoming Representative**

M. D. Bishop, Ph.D., is a postdoctoral researcher in the department of Family Science at the University of Maryland, College Park. Their research leverages approaches at the nexus of developmental science, public health, and demography to understand the health and wellbeing of sexual and gender minority people across the life course. Dr. Bishop is interested in the developmental and intersectional contexts that shape relations between identity development, minority stress, and health among sexual and gender minority youth. Dr. Bishop's current NIH-funded research examines developmental differences in alcohol use and misuse among youth at the intersection of gender, sexuality, and race/ethnicity. The goal of Dr. Bishop's research is to inform programs and policies aimed at eliminating inequities experienced by sexual and gender minority people. Dr. Bishop holds a Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Science from the University of Texas at Austin.

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**Alexandrea R. Golden, Ethnic & Racial Issues Committee, Outgoing Representative**

Alexandrea R. Golden, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Memphis. Her work focuses on identifying culturally relevant protective factors for racially minoritized youth experiencing racism. Currently, her areas of focus include school racial climate, racial socialization, particularly among peers, and critical consciousness and YPAR. Dr. Golden is committed to translating her research to practice to promote positive development among racially minoritized youth. Accordingly, she partners with community members, schools, and community organizations to identify issues that impact the local community and implement culturally-relevant interventions. Dr. Golden is an NIMH CHIPS Fellow, a MIWI Fellow, and was awarded the 2022 SRCDC Early Career Small Grant to continue her work.

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**Melissa Lucas, Ethnic & Racial Issues Committee, Incoming Representative**

Melissa Lucas is an Applied Developmental and Educational Psychologist and now serves as a postdoctoral associate at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. Her work focuses on supporting educators and Latinx and multilingual children's socioemotional development in order to nurture healthier and more equitable educational environments. By gaining a deeper understanding of how culturally and linguistically minoritized learners develop and navigate academic settings, Dr. Lucas aims to develop interventions, services, and policies that better understand and address the challenges faced by Latinx/multilingual populations in oppressive educational systems, structures, and practices. Melissa is a former IES predoctoral-fellow, former Chair of the Hunter Student Research Conference, and the first recipient of Yale Alumni Service Corps' Yale Child Study Center Scholarship. She earned her Ph.D. from University of Virginia (2022), her B.S. in Psychology and Sociology from Virginia Commonwealth University (2016), and her A.S. in Social Sciences from Northern Virginia Community College (2015).

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**Meltem Yucel, Interdisciplinary Committee, Outgoing Representative**

I'm a postdoc at Duke University's Department of Psychology and Neuroscience. I received my Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology with a concentration in Quantitative Psychology at the University of Virginia in 2021. I'm primarily interested in the development of social cognition and morality, specifically focusing on how and when children become moral beings. Using behavioral, eye-tracking, pupillometry, and network analysis methods, my research investigates how children and adults understand and enforce norms, and the role of affect in moral decision-making.

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**Ekjyot Saini, Interdisciplinary Committee, Incoming Representative**

I am a postdoctoral scholar in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Pennsylvania State University. I earned my Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Science from Auburn University, as well as a Masters in Social Work from the University of Michigan. My program of research utilizes interdisciplinary approaches including family systems perspectives and biopsychosocial processes to understand how family and sociocultural contexts contribute to the well-being of children and families across developmental periods. I am particularly interested in how relational (e.g., parenting, attachment) and regulatory processes (e.g., sleep, autonomic nervous system) operate within stressful contexts such as socio-economic adversity, adverse neighborhood and community conditions, and discrimination, and their contributions to socio-emotional and relational outcomes and health disparities in children and their families. I'm excited to serve as the SECC representative on the Interdisciplinary committee and look forward to fostering greater use of interdisciplinary approaches.

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**Shanting Chen, International Affairs Committee, Outgoing Representative**

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Texas at Austin, TX. My program of research seeks to understand the ways in which stress (e.g., discrimination) impacts ethnic minority adolescents' mental and physical health and identify individual and contextual factors that can promote positive youth development.

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**Nazlı Akay, International Affairs Committee, Incoming Representative**

I am a postdoctoral researcher at Middle East Technical University and an honorary research assistant at Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families. I obtained my Ph.D. with the dissertation titled “The family dynamics in nanny-employed families and their impact on the cared child” in 2022. I am interested in parenting, parent-child interactions, attachment, and family dynamics like coparenting, as well as the impact of these factors on child well-being, like the intergenerational transmission of psychopathology. Within that area, I have also specifically studied alternative parents like nannies and their direct impact on child well-being, as well as coparenting dynamics within nanny-employed families.

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**Dalhia Lloyd, Membership Committee, Incoming SECC Representative**

I am the director of professional learning at Buffett Early Childhood Institute. I earned my doctoral degree in early childhood education/child development from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. My program of research focuses on using anti-bias, anti-racist, and culturally grounded approaches to identify factors that support the optimal development of Black children. I am interested in culturally specific parenting practices, specifically the racial socialization of young Black children. I also engage in projects and initiatives that focus on dismantling racial inequities and reducing opportunity gaps in early childhood (birth-Grade 3). This includes examining teachers' social and cultural interactions with racially marginalized learners.

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**Amber B. Sansbury, Program Committee, Outgoing Representative**

Greetings! I am a 4th year Ph.D. Student in Education, focused on Early Care & Education (ECE) Policy with Dr. Colleen Vesely at George Mason University. The work with Dr. Vesely has centered on collaboration with local school systems and community-based organizations to identify best practices that alleviate early school readiness gaps particularly with African American, mixed-status Latinx, Afghani, and African immigrant families situated in poverty. I am originally from Columbus, Georgia and came to research later in life. After completing my undergraduate degree in 2009, I thrived in a policy career throughout the east coast and D.C. area. My previous time in policy strengthened my commitment to public education and social justice, especially for Black families with young children (birth to age eight). I worked with Head Start teachers, public sector human service professionals, clinicians, and licensed and informal family childcare providers. I also analyzed state implementation plans for the Every Student Succeeds Act, traveling to Southeastern districts to advise on policy levers for school readiness and family engagement.

I am deeply committed to shared policymaking and action that structurally challenges anti-Blackness in schools. Through my scholarship, I explore the dimensions of racial socialization across ecological agents

(e.g., families, programs, and neighborhoods). My doctoral coursework also has been enriched by ongoing research with Dr. Iheoma Iruka critically examining the developmental role of race and racism in Black-majority Educare sites in the most segregated cities in America. I am also part of the Researchers Investigating Sociocultural Equity and Race (RISER) fellowship, a strong collective which advocates for Black children and families in a meaningful way. I observe a range of ECE experiences for Black families- from families with significant social and navigational capital to the most marginalized. All of these families, in spite of institutional barriers, are agentic in their decision-making about what is best for their children. I deeply believe that family engagement can be a powerful means to build bridges with Black families toward positive early racial identity development. This historic time of heightened racial tension spurs us on.

I have been incredibly supported throughout graduate school. Peers, faculty mentors, and the Society for Research in Child Development have helped me to forge my path. As a SRCD Black Caucus Student & Early Career Committee member for two years, I co-planned our writing groups, 14-day writing challenge, 2021 Biennial Student Poster Session, and Generational Gems conversations. SRCD has truly been a lifeline and community of practice. I have become well versed in SRCD initiatives for student and early career researchers (e.g., the Dissertation Funding Award, Early Career Scholar Small Grant, Policy Fellowships, review opportunities, etc.). I intend to apply my knowledge, communication, and organizational skills as incoming SECC representative on the Program Committee. I aim to create and reify supports for students and early career members with these opportunities in mind. When I am not writing and reading, I enjoy music, time with loved ones, Southern cooking, and a competitive NBA game!

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**Vanessa Bermudez, Program Committee, Incoming Representative**

I am a third-year doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of California Irvine. I earned a B.S. in Psychology from Duke University and an M.A. in Experimental Psychology from San Jose State University. My research interests center on identifying and building from the funds of knowledge of Latine, immigrant, and low-income communities to support early STEM learning. I adopt community-based design research methodologies in partnership with families and teachers to co-create meaningful playful environments across contexts informed by learning sciences and aligned with Latine families' cultural ways of learning. I also investigate relations between the quality of early childcare experiences and later cognitive outcomes. I am passionate about mentoring students from diverse backgrounds and creating supportive and informative spaces for emerging scholars. I am honored to join the SECC on the Program Committee to represent students and early career members.

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**Miao Qian, Publications Committee, Outgoing Representative**

I am an Assistant Professor at the Psychology Department at the University of Detroit Mercy. I completed my Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology at the University of Toronto, Canada, and a 2-year Postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University. My research focuses on the early emergence of racial biases and interventions to reduce biases. I'm incredibly honored to serve as the Student and Early Career Representative on the Publications Committee!

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**Claudia Kruzik, Publications Committee, Incoming Representative**

I am a doctoral candidate in the department of Applied Developmental and Educational Psychology at Boston College. My dissertation work focuses on the relationship between early trauma exposure and kindergarten behavioral development, exploring the mediating role of neighborhood contextual factors. More broadly, I am interested in the ways in which policy and community contexts shape early behavioral, social, and emotional development. In addition to these topical interests, I have a passion for knowledge translation and exchange across academic and policy spheres, which has been fostered through my experiences as an SRCD Pre-Doctoral State Policy Fellow, editorial assistant for SRCD's Child Evidence Briefs, and program manager of the Boston College Institute of Early Childhood Policy. As an SECC representative, I look forward to bringing this zest for academic communication and translation to the Publications Committee.

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**Lorena Aceves, Science and Social Policy Committee, Outgoing Representative**

I am a first-generation Latina scholar and recently completed my Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies at the Pennsylvania State University. I am currently serving as an AAAS/SRCD Executive Branch Federal Policy Fellow in the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Head Start. I am committed to pursuing a career directed towards policy formulation and evaluation. Professionally, I aim to further leverage developmental science to promote equitable opportunities and resources for students, children, and families from underrepresented backgrounds. Outside of research and policy, I enjoy connecting with and mentoring first generation students of color. I also consistently work to shed light on how developmental science can be applied in non-academic settings.

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**Qingyang Liu, Science and Social Policy Committee, Incoming Representative**

I am a Doctoral Student in Human Development and Family Science at Syracuse University. My research focuses on longitudinal associations between early life contexts (e.g., poverty, material hardship, parenting) and the developmental trajectories of self-regulation within cognitive, social, and emotional domains from early childhood to adolescence. My research intend to translate research into policy initiatives that support children’s regulatory skills within underserved communities. i am incredibly honored to serve as the Student and Early Scholar Representative on the Science and Social Policy Committee!

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**Sabrina Mendez-Escobar, Teaching Committee, Outgoing Representative**

I (she/ella) am a tenured instructor at Truman College in the Education and Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) department. As a community college professor, and product of community college education, I value offering accessible and affordable education that is rigorous and creates academic and professional opportunities for students. I am also a doctoral candidate in the Child Development program at Erikson Institute and Loyola University Chicago. For my dissertation, I am examining the ethnic-racial socialization practices of Dominican mothers using a sociohistorical context. Growing up in a diverse Latinx community, and later occupying professional and academic spaces where I am often the only person of color, has contributed to my interest in the value of ethnicity and race on development. My interests have also been influenced by my background as an infant mental health counselor where I focused on supporting early relationships and how they serve as a protective factor for child development.

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**Ashleigh Aviles, Teaching Committee, Incoming Representative**

I am a postdoctoral associate at New York University. I research how early family interventions can promote school readiness in at-risk families, as well as the implementation of universal pre-k in New York City. I completed my Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Sciences at The University of Texas at Austin in 2022, where I researched the long-term socioemotional effects of trauma, with a particular focus on childhood psychological maltreatment. In addition to my research, I also focused on creating accessible, empathic, and trauma-informed classrooms in my *Child Development* and *Research Methods* courses. As students continue to grapple with the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on their mental and physical health, it is even more crucial for the teaching community to create inclusive classrooms for all students.

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