

FALL 2022

GRADUATE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

Recent and Forthcoming Graduates



Graduate College of Social Work

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

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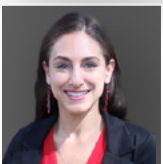
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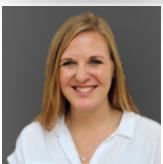
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Gabrielle Aquino-Adriatico

PhD Candidate



PERSONAL STATEMENT

Gabbie Aquino-Adriatico, MSW (she/hers/siya) is a first-generation Filipina student and a doctoral candidate at the University of Houston's Graduate College of Social Work. Gabbie was selected twice as a master's fellow and doctoral fellow for CSWE's Minority Fellowship Program. Her research interests focus on multi-level factors that shape the mental health and well-being of Filipina/o/x communities. Past research projects include: domestic and international issues on human trafficking, minoritized populations, and multi-level factors that impact communities living with HIV/AIDS.

Gabbie's dissertation, "The Impact of COVID-19 on the Mental Health of Filipina Mothers" is a sequential mixed methods study that explores what multi-level factors are associated with depression and anxiety among Filipina mothers. The qualitative phase utilizes the transcendental phenomenological approach to gain a deeper understanding of the mental health experiences of Filipina mothers. Gabbie's goals include: (1) contribute to understanding the mental health experiences of Filipina/o/x communities, (2) inform culturally grounded interventions to promote the well-being of all communities, and (3) empower emerging social workers through education.

Gabbie's work would not be possible if it weren't for her community's love and support. She seeks to give back to her community through supporting students in their undergraduate and graduate studies and endeavors.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Mental health among minoritized communities
- Multi-level factors shaping mental health
- Well-being and healing among Filipina/o/x communities
- Gender based violence
- Inclusive social work education

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Priscilla Kennedy

PhD Candidate



PERSONAL STATEMENT

Priscilla Kennedy, LMSW (she/her/hers) is a doctoral candidate in the Graduate College of Social Work at the University of Houston. She received an MSW from the University of Houston, with a specialization in political social work; an MS from the University of Houston in occupational technology, with a specialization in training and organization development; and a BA in journalism from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. She is a licensed master of social work in the state of Texas.

Priscilla has seven years of experience in community social work that includes expertise in coalition building, grant writing, community engagement, program development and implementation, and project management. She is also a practicum instructor for University of Houston MSW students who are assigned to the Third Ward Community Cloth Intern Project. Prior to her social work career, Priscilla was a chronic disease prevention program coordinator for the YMCA of Greater Houston.

Priscilla's research agenda is informed by her years in community social work, specifically in community health improvement and the development of interventions that address structural determinants of health. She is particularly interested in examining conceptual frameworks for social work education that integrate critical, engaged, and abolitionist pedagogies to cultivate students' knowledge of structural racism and their agency to act on dismantling oppressive structural forces. Her dissertation explores the lived experiences of social work students who participated in a course that focused on structural racism as it is manifested in the system of mass incarceration. Priscilla is also interested in understanding how social work students with dominant social identities learn to address their positionality, power, and privilege in relation to their roles in discriminatory systems.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Structural competence, critical consciousness, and transformative potential as social work competencies
- Positionality, power, and privilege in the context of social work practice
- Qualitative research interview as intervention
- Experiential learning in social work education
- Mentoring in PhD education

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Dr. Bec Sokha Keo

PhD '22



PERSONAL STATEMENT

Dr. Bec Sokha Keo (they/them) is a second-generation Cambodian-American and first-generation college graduate. Their approach to scholarship and activism are shaped by principles of Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality and Meaningful Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS. Their community practice and research focuses on experiences of individuals whose gender differs from assigned at birth. Their dissertation applied an intersectional framework, utilized Conditional Process and Multi-Group Path Analyses, and examined interpersonal and structural factors that influence transgender, genderqueer, and non-binary (TNB) individuals' mental health. Group differences were found in relation to experiences of racism, family support, and affirmed identification documents.

Bec Sokha is a Senior Researcher at the SUSTAIN Center, a funding, training and coaching center that partners with Community Based and HIV/AIDS Service Organizations in the US South to enhance trauma informed, harm reduction, mental health, and community wellness services in the context of HIV. They lead research on gender affirming organizational strategies and co-facilitate a community solidarity-language justice program. Their research goal is to achieve BIPOC TNB health equity and wellness through community lead research and public impact. Bec Sokha's teaching also includes a critical analysis of power, social location, and positionality across socio-political contexts.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Community Health and Wellness
- Gender Affirming Organizational Strategies
- TNB Health and Wellness
- Intersectionality
- Community Based Participatory Research
- Multi-Level Interventions
- Mixed-methods
- Structural Equation Modeling

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Caitlyn Mytelka

PhD Candidate



PERSONAL STATEMENT

Caitlyn Mytelka, LMSW (she/her/hers) is a PhD Candidate at the Graduate College of Social Work at the University of Houston and a licensed master's level social worker in Texas. She received her BA in Psychology and Sociology from New York University and her MSSW from The University of Texas at Austin. Caitlyn's scholarship focuses on positive youth development in diverse school settings. Specifically, her research centers on promoting positive mental health among adolescents by examining mechanisms that may be targeted through school-based preventive interventions to enhance wellbeing. Caitlyn's dissertation examines the reciprocal relationship between coping style and symptoms of depression and anxiety among early adolescents over time and across diverse youth using multilevel modeling. Her long-term research goals are to inform and develop equitable preventive interventions in schools to improve youth wellbeing and development.

Caitlyn's research agenda is guided by her clinical practice as a mental health therapist and telepsychiatry case manager in a school-based mental health clinic. The high rates of subthreshold internalizing symptoms in her work with adolescents propelled Caitlyn to pursue research on school-based preventive strategies and models that equip young people with skills to better cope with stressors. Caitlyn has also worked for a school district to integrate social and emotional learning and enhance mental health supports in secondary schools.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Positive youth development
- Adolescent coping
- Adolescent mental health and wellbeing
- School-based prevention programming
- Social and emotional learning

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Lindamarie Olson

PhD Candidate



PERSONAL STATEMENT

Lindamarie Olson, LMSW, is an advanced standing MSW/PhD Candidate at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work (UH GCSW). Lindamarie received her BSW at the University of South Carolina (2017) with Leadership Distinction in Diversity and Social Advocacy and received her Masters degree from the University of Houston (2018) with a clinical specialization. Lindamarie has clinical experience working with at-risk children and adolescents in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Lindamarie is a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Graduate Research Fellow and recipient of the Phi Kappa Phi Dissertation Fellowship. Lindamarie has presented her research at national and international conferences and has helped write multiple state, federal, and international grants regarding mental health, child welfare, and juvenile diversion programs.

Lindamarie's research focuses on intervening with at-risk youth to reduce their initial contact with the justice system and to limit their ongoing involvement in the system. Her dissertation examines the effectiveness of Neurofeedback in treating trauma symptomatology among justice-involved adolescents in residential care. Her intervention research will explore and examine the effects of trauma and neuroscience on cognitive, mental health, and behavioral change within this population. Research objectives include 1) building and expanding the state of knowledge in this field to address the interconnection of neuroscience, adolescent development, trauma, and juvenile offending, and 2) bridging the gap between research and practice to facilitate a more effective and responsive justice system for youth.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Adverse childhood experiences and developmental trauma
- Juvenile delinquency
- Adolescent development
- Intervention research

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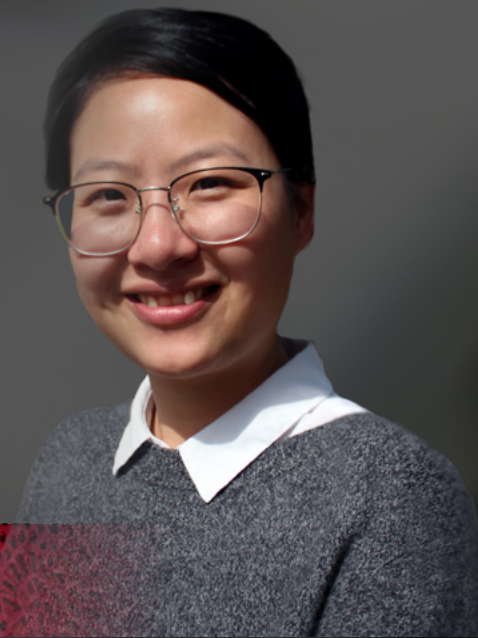
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Wen Xu

PhD Candidate



PERSONAL STATEMENT

Wen Xu's (she/her/hers) research focuses on exploring and informing services for mothers and children. Specifically, she is interested in using both qualitative and quantitative methods to identify unmet needs and reveal important social determinants of health. During her research assistantship working at the University of Houston Healthy Start, she worked on examining the service data to inform better implementation. Besides her interest in maternal and child services, Wen is also interested in the development of social work education and profession in China.

Methodologically, Wen is interested in cutting-edge quantitative methods, such as Structural Equation Modeling and Longitudinal Analysis, as well as innovative qualitative methods that create spaces for women's voices, such as the narrative approach.

Wen got her MSW from Washington University in St. Louis and her BSW from Sun Yat-sen University. Prior to her Ph.D. study, she has experience in both social work education and practice in different areas of mainland China. She is interested in teaching research methods, program evaluation, and social work foundations.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Maternal and child health
- Parenting
- Implementation research
- Social work development in China

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