



SPRING 2025

**Youth Health and Development Lab
NEWSLETTER**

We study how life experiences and social factors shape young people's health, development, and wellness

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MEET THE TEAM!



Elsie Awuah
Research Assistant



Elani Khoe
Research Assistant



Kayla Daniel
Research Assistant



Amber Summers
Research Assistant



Chelsea McElwee
Graduate Student



Jason Castillo
Research Assistant



Sagey Moorjani
Research Assistant



Josh Murillo
Graduate Student



Nia Williams
Graduate Student



LeNisha Williams
Graduate Student



Michelle Medina
Research Assistant



Isabella Griffin
Research Assistant



Tate LeBlanc
Graduate Student



Adrick Barragan
Research Assistant



Sierra Sutton
Research Assistant



Stela Noelle Abasta
Research Assistant

MEET THE TEAM!



Jessica Boyd
Research Assistant



Cassidy Rich
Research Assistant



Maxine Garcia
Research Assistant



Halie Allen
Research Assistant



Lesley Ortega
Research Assistant



Pablo Ramirez
Research Assistant



Analeah Mafnas
Research Assistant



Linsey Donovan
Graduate Student



Xitlaly Neri
Research Assistant



Dr. Aerika Loyd
Director



class of 2025 yearbook



Jessica Boyd

My favorite memory in the lab is when we went to the arcade and went bowling. It was great meeting my team members for the first time and getting to see everyone's personalities come out during the games. After graduation, my goal is to work in a clinic and apply to medical school. Like the work we do in this lab, I hope to support African American families through healthcare by helping meet their specific needs.



Kayla Daniel

My favorite memory from the lab was playing frisbee, double dutch, and Uno at our end of the year lab celebration. My goals post-grad are to transition to full-time work and reapply to graduate programs.

enjoy every moment.

You did it!



Jason Castilla

My favorite part of the lab was proving that I can be a responsible colleague with the opportunities I was given! I cannot thank everyone enough!



Isabella Griffin

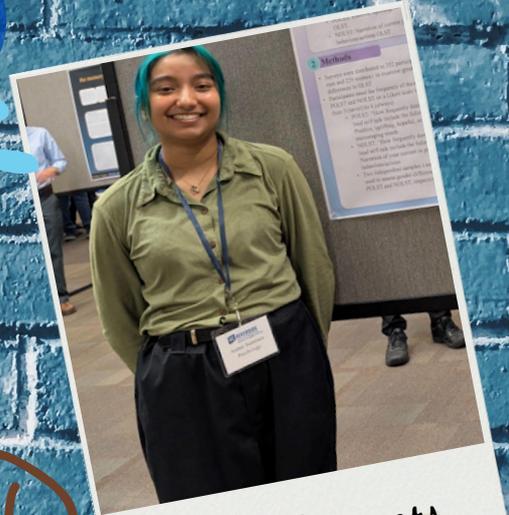


Isabella

class of 2025 yearbook



Elari Khoe



Amber Summers

WOW!

One of my favorite parts of being in the Lab has been building genuine friendships and being part of such a supportive, collaborative environment. A standout memory for me was attending the WPA conference in Las Vegas. After graduation, I am attending California Baptist University to pursue my Master's in Clinical Counseling. My long-term goal is to apply to a PhD program in Developmental Psychology and conduct research in diverse neurodivergent populations.

Amber



You did it!

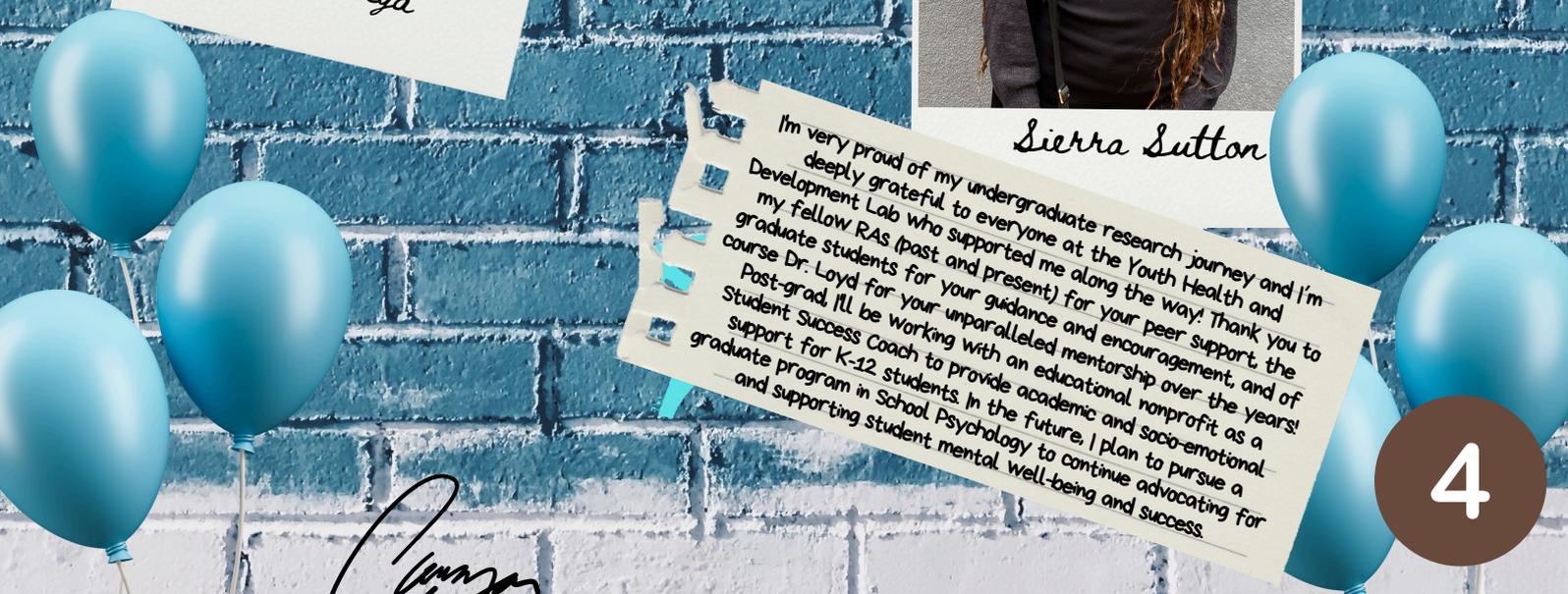


Lesley Ortega



Sierra Sutton

I'm very proud of my undergraduate research journey and I'm deeply grateful to everyone at the Youth Health and Development Lab who supported me along the way! Thank you to my fellow RAs (past and present) for your peer support, the graduate students for your guidance and encouragement, and of course Dr. Loyd for your unparalleled mentorship over the years! Post-grad, I'll be working with an educational nonprofit as a Student Success Coach to provide academic and socio-emotional support for K-12 students. In the future, I plan to pursue a graduate program in School Psychology to continue advocating for and supporting student mental well-being and success.



Sierra

Ongoing!

RESEARCH PROJECTS



CULTIVATING DREAMS & REIMAGINING FUTURES

Prosperity Among Caregivers and Teens (PACT)

The UCR Youth Health and Development Lab is seeking African American parent(s) (e.g., a biological parent, foster parent, or other kin) of adolescents to participate in an interview or focus group. The purpose is to learn more about how parents support their child(ren), cultural socialization, and their hopes and dreams for their child.

Parent(s) will receive a \$75 e-gift card for their time!

To be eligible the parents must:

1. Have an adolescent, ages 12-17
2. Be over 21 years of age
3. Live with the youth for at least one (1) year
4. Identify as Black and/or African American

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

If you are interested, please get in touch with our team!
Phone: (951) 827-2535
Email: youthdevlab.ucr@gmail.com



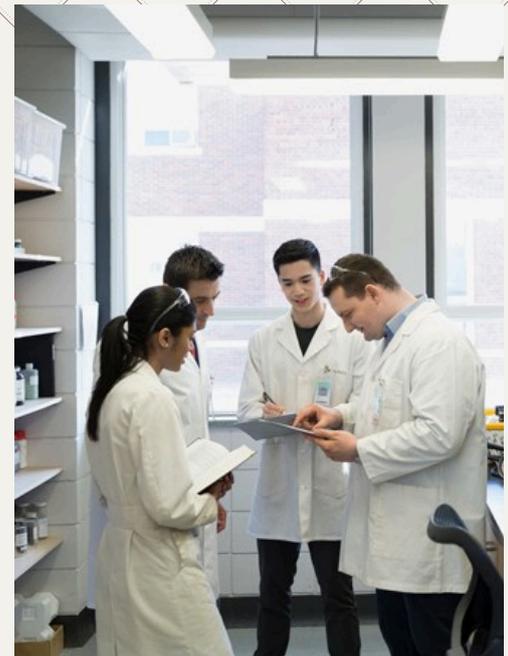
UCR Youth Health and Development Lab @ucr_youthdev

Prosperity Among Caregivers and Teens: Cultivating Dreams & Reimagining Futures

We continued active recruitment and data collection during the 2024-2025 academic year for our project titled: Prosperity Among Caregivers and Teens, otherwise known as PACT. We connected with community members through social media and in-person events throughout the Inland Empire. We love learning about how parents support their children and their hopes and dreams for their children (ages 12-17). Since we are still recruiting, feel free to share our flyer with eligible participants!

The MedLab Experience

Based in Chicago, this project explores the effects of a high-tech, interactive, educational museum exhibit on diverse urban youth. We are especially interested in the exhibit's ability to shape young people's STEM and healthcare career interests and perceptions of belonging in the fields of STEM. Our research team spent much of this year analyzing data to share with the academic and more general community. We will be concluding this project by Fall 2025 and can't wait to share our findings!



To learn more and stay updated with our current projects visit <https://youthdevlab.ucr.edu/> or scan the QR code with any mobile device.

New!

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Dance the Stress Away (DTSA)

Led by graduate student Joshua Murillo, this study aims to examine if engaging in rhythm games is associated with a greater reduction of stress and indicators of mental health (e.g., anxiety and depression) compared to that of traditional exercise and journaling during a 6-week mind-body intervention. Look for more updates in the future!



PACT: MENTAL HEALTH

Led by undergraduate senior Sierra Sutton, this study aims to understand the mental health experiences of Black Americans in the Inland Empire. She primarily explored the barriers preventing access to care and the facilitators that encourage utilization of mental health services. Her preliminary findings emphasize the dual role of social networks and highlight the Black community's complex power in shaping mental health behaviors.

Black Mental Health

PROSPERITY AMONG CAREGIVERS & TEENS:
MENTAL HEALTH

THE UCR YOUTH HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT LAB IS SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND THE BLACK COMMUNITY'S MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCES.

Participants will receive a
\$30 Gift Card!

TO BE ELIGIBLE:

1. IDENTIFY AS BLACK AND/OR AFRICAN AMERICAN
2. BE OVER 21 YEARS OF AGE
3. HAVE AN ADOLESCENT AGES 12-17
4. LIVE WITH THE YOUTH FOR AT LEAST ONE (1) YEAR



SCAN THE QR CODE OR CONTACT OUR TEAM!

PHONE: (951) 827-2535

EMAIL: YOUTHDEVLAB.UCR@GMAIL.COM



ThriveHER Project



Led by graduate student Chelsea McElwee, this initiative focused on the mental wellness and emotion well-being of young women between the ages of 12-21. The goal of this project is to explore how programs that offer emotional support resources for young women can assist them in navigating life complexities and empower them to thrive.

Community Engagement

Did you catch us at these events?



— **Psi Chi's Annual Lab Fair!** —

In Fall, we attended Psi Chi's Annual Lab Fair! It was nice to see so many new faces. Lots of undergraduates showed interest in our lab this year!

— **Vendors Vault in Riverside** —

It was amazing to be in community at one of the Vendors Vault events. Its goal is to bring vendors and community together for good vibes!



— **Black History Month Expo 25'** —

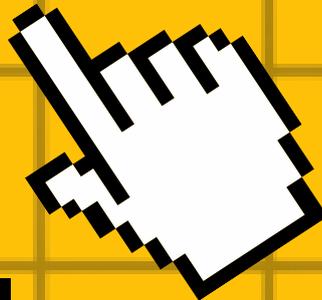
We had a blast in Downtown Riverside when we attended the 45th annual Black History Month Expo!



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



CHECK OUT WHAT YHD ALUMNI HAVE BEEN UP TO!



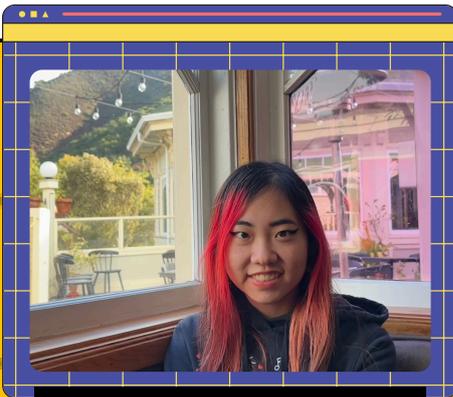
HALIE ALLEN

"I currently serve with Americorps. With this program, I am a 7th grade math tutor at a public school in Stockton, CA. My goal is to become a school counselor, and I plan to apply to graduate school this upcoming fall."



MUSASHI AVALOS

Currently pursuing an M.S. in clinical psychology at Cal State Fullerton.



ANGIE LOUIE

"I am pursuing an MA in psychology at CSULA, where I am currently working on my IRB application for my thesis project. My project will be exploring the well-being and social connection of alternative subculture members (e.g., emo, goth, punk), using an in-person survey methodology. I am also a Graduate Assistant for two psychology classes. In my free time, I make clay figures and jewelry, both of which I sell at local markets catered to the alternative community."



ELSIE AWUAH

"I have been working with Northwestern University as an ERICA coder for the Healthy Brain and Development Study. I have also been working as a substitute teacher and plan on reapplying to graduate programs in the fall!"



LAURA PEREZ

"I've been doing great! I've been working as a clinical research coordinator and have been learning lots."



MARILYN SERRANO

"I'm currently working as a programs assistant at an independent school here in the Bay Area, where I've gotten a chance to work with middle school and high school students. I have also been volunteering as a mentor with the Latino Education Advancement Foundation (LEAF)."

HEALTH AND WELLNESS RESOURCES



7 CUPS

7 Cups provides free support to people experiencing emotional distress by connecting them with trained listeners via anonymous and confidential chat.

WELLNESS

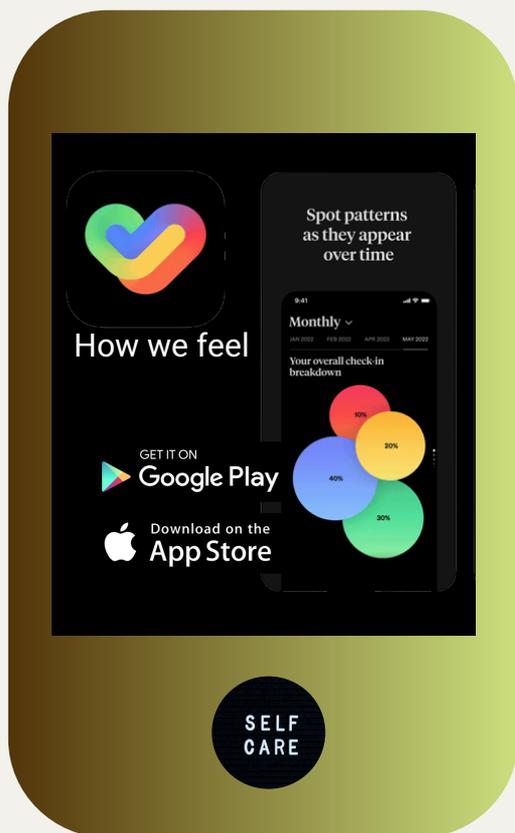



soluna

Journal on Soluna

Vent honestly and openly, jot down ideas, or draft big dreams, all in your own digital journal. This is your space, away from the noise, right in the app.

YOU CAN BEAT THIS

How we feel

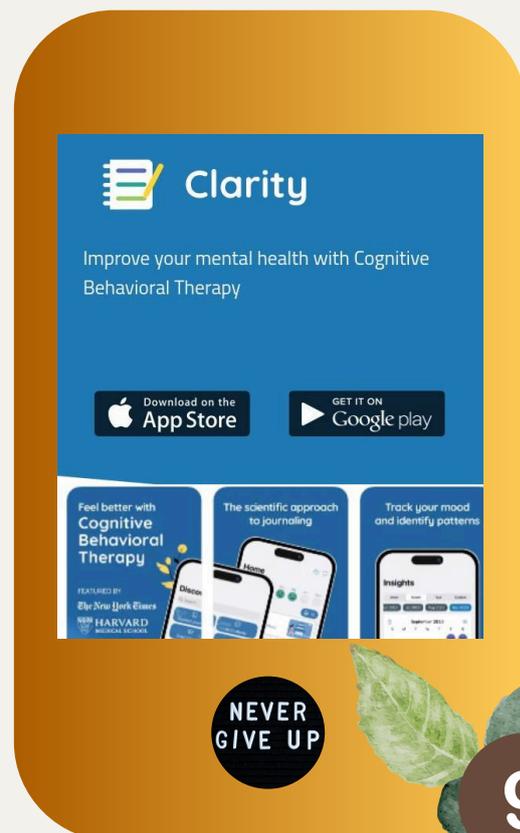
Spot patterns as they appear over time

Monthly

Your overall check-in breakdown

40% 30% 20%

SELF CARE

Clarity

Improve your mental health with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Download on the App Store | GET IT ON Google play

Feel better with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

The scientific approach to journaling

Track your mood and identify patterns

NEVER GIVE UP

Brag Board



RA's first RPSYC!



RAs Michelle and Sagey presented for their first time at RPSYC this year! Their research project focused on the potential relationship between racial ethnic identity and civic agency. As second years, this project will hopefully be the first to many more in their journey. Congratulations to both!



"It was an honor to present research with Michelle. It was a learning experience and I would definitely do it again" - Sagey

First to win from CHASS



"Reflecting on my experience after receiving one out of the two \$5k Mini-Grants from the Center for Healthy Communities (CHC) has been great! To say the least, being able to develop a project and have the opportunity to bring it to life involving youth has been rewarding. The project was created based on community data, personal experiences, and scholarly literature. At various phases of the project, hearing the girls' testimonies about their experiences has been uplifting. Their testimonies affirm that safe spaces like the ones I have been able to create over the last few months are needed and should be ongoing."
- Chelsea

Bringing home gold!

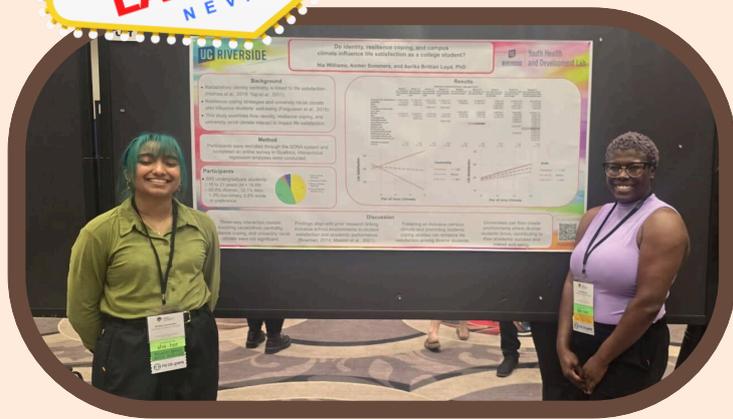
RA Amber won the Developmental Research category at RPSYC this year which was such an exciting moment! Working with Dr. Richert, her project explored how perceptual sensitivity and social cue responsiveness relates to sociability and discomfort in social situations during middle childhood. We are very proud to have Amber be a part of our lab!!



"This award means a lot to me, I worked really hard on this project, so it feels great to have that effort recognized!" - Amber

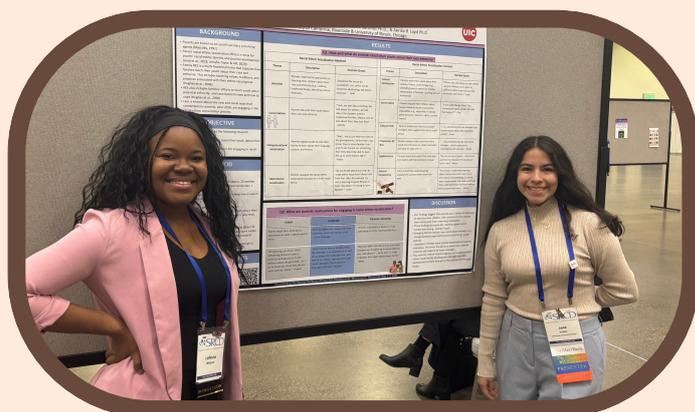
Conferences

We attended two professional conferences - Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) and Western Psychological Association (WPA)



Do identity, resilience coping, and campus climate influence life satisfaction as a college student? examined how identity, resilience coping, and campus climate interact to influence college students' life satisfaction. Our findings align with prior research that affirms how inclusive school environments play a role in academic performance.

Empowering Futures: Reimagining Learning Spaces for Girls discussed using community engaged and participatory practices in a paper symposium. Each paper showcased a unique example of how to engage girls in research opportunities that provide different types of learning opportunities.

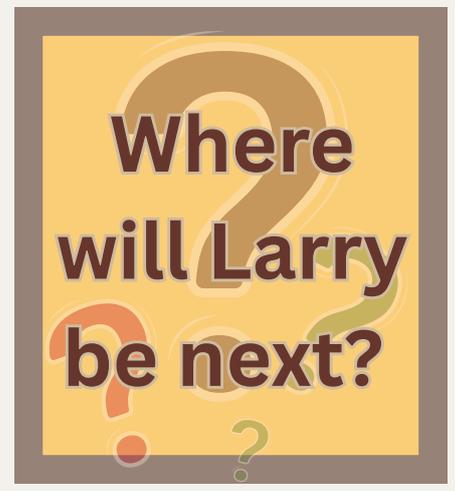
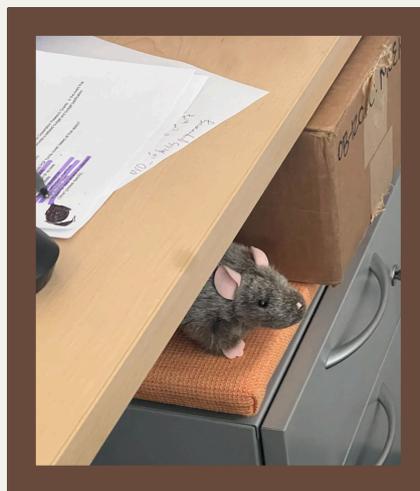
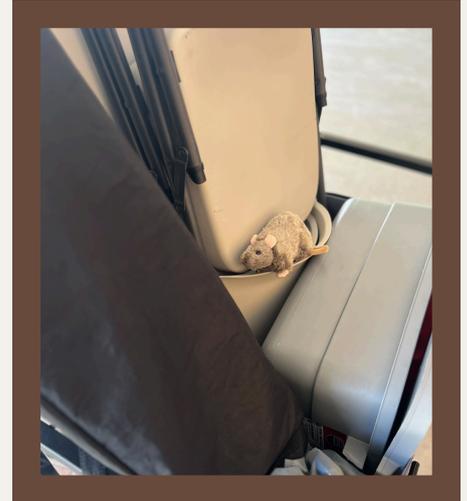


“You have a lot to be proud of”: Exploring Parents' Racial-Ethnic Socialization Processes and Practices revealed novel ways contemporary parents, post-2020, teach their youth about their race, ethnicity and heritage. We also discovered parents' motivation for engaging in this process.

WARNING

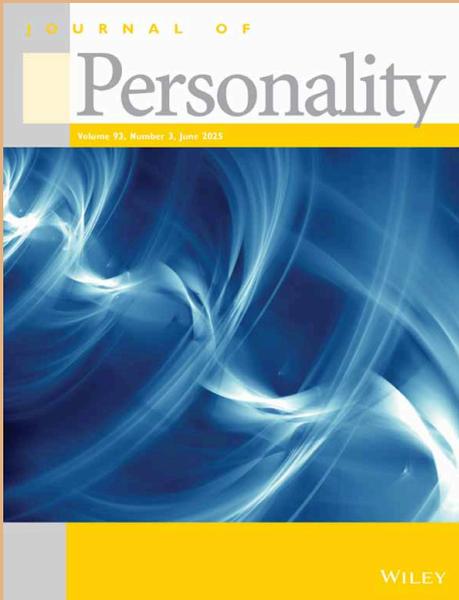
Lab Chronicles

Meet
Larry!



It is okay to have fun in your lab! The smallest things can bring the most joy.

Recent Publications



Policy stakeholders' perspectives and use of data, research evidence, and misinformation in three counties in California, USA during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020–2022

Authors: Joshua Murillo | Tessa R. Pulido | Aerika Brittian Loyd | Andrew M. Subica | Irene H. Yen | Denise D. Payán

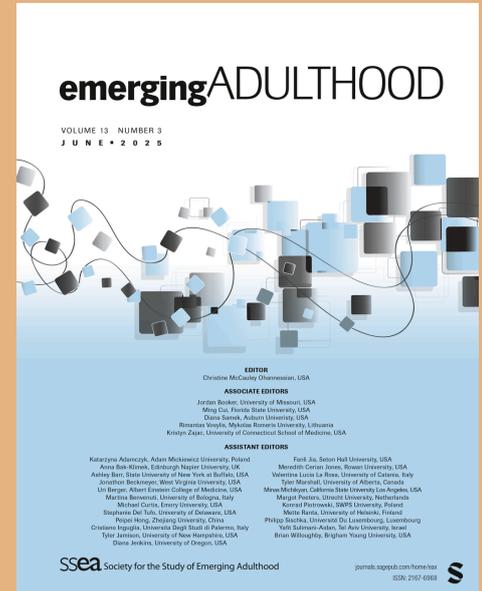
Reveals the level of distrust that three jurisdictions from California, USA had among public health and government officials and data/information shared in local policymaking debates during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Link to [paper!](#)



Highlights the ways diverse young adults discuss how complex topics such as race/ethnicity, gender, and social class influence their lives.

Link to [paper!](#)



Black Undergraduate Flourishing: Contributions of Racial Centrality and Religiosity

Authors: Meredith O. Hope | Janelle R. Goodwill | Nia Williams | Aerika Brittian Loyd

Shows the important role of racial identity and religiosity in promoting flourishing among Black college students.

Link to [paper!](#)

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