



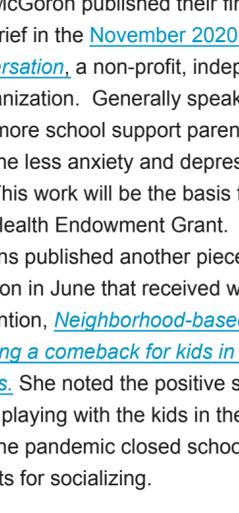
2019/2020

**MPSI REPORT**

RESEARCH

**Faculty & Staff Highlights**

by Cheryl Deep

**[Julie Wargo Aikins, PhD](#)**

A summer 2020 survey of 152 parents in Detroit, found high levels of anxiety and depression during the stressful period of Covid-19 restrictions and remote schooling. Drs. Aikins and Lucy McGoron published their findings in a research brief in the [November 2020 issue of \*The Conversation\*](#), a non-profit, independent news organization. Generally speaking, they found the more school support parents felt they received, the less anxiety and depression they reported. This work will be the basis for a larger Michigan Health Endowment Grant.

Dr. Aikins published another piece in *The Conversation* in June that received widespread media attention, [Neighborhood-based friendships making a comeback for kids in the age of coronavirus](#). She noted the positive side effects of children playing with the kids in their neighborhoods as the pandemic closed schools and other outlets for socializing.

**[Carla Barron, PhD](#)**

Dr. Barron earned her doctorate in 2019. She is the clinical coordinator of [MPSI's Infant Mental Health](#) research and training, working closely with students in its Dual-Title Degree program. She assists with the annual Explorations in Development CE conference and presents on early childhood attachment and developmental needs. Dr. Barron won the 2019 Hiram Fitzgerald Award from the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health as an emerging scholar whose innovative research enhances life for infants, young children and families.

**[Carolyn Dayton, PhD](#)**

Children can reap great benefits when fathers are involved. In addition to being the associate director of MPSI's Infant Mental Health program, Dr. Dayton has dedicated much of her work to [increasing the participation of fathers in their children's lives](#) and identifying barriers to their involvement. She organized a Fatherhood Policy Forum with U-M colleagues, and conducts weekly Zoom discussions with leaders and stakeholders in the field of fatherhood to connect and provide support. Dr. Dayton also created [Parenting Tips for Dads during the Covid-19 Crisis](#) full of easy-to-implement ideas to keep the bond between father and child strong.

**[Jennifer Gómez, PhD](#)**

Dr. Gómez was named a National Academy of Sciences Kavli Fellow, (for junior researcher identified as a future leaders in science), and was elected to the board of directors of the [Center for Institutional Courage](#). She formulated Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory as a way to examine the differential impact of inequality for minority victims of trauma that may contribute to urban disparities.

She has shared her well-reasoned and researched views on the intersections of race, mental health, trauma and violence at several conferences, on numerous panels and with an extensive array of media outlets, including [Forbes](#), CNN, [NBC News](#), *The Conversation*, Huffington Post, The Hill, and Newsweek.

In recognition of Dr. Gómez' many media presentations to educate the public in a scientifically sound manner about the psychology of trauma, she won the 2020 media award from the American Psychological Association Trauma Psychology Division. She also won the 2020 Betty Cleckley Minority Issues Research Award as a co-author of *"Is It All about Racism? The Role of Avoidant Coping on Cardiovascular Health & Blood Pressure in Older Blacks."* To see all Dr. Gómez' awards, media appearances and presentations, visit <http://jmgomez.org/>.

**[John Hannigan, PhD](#)**

Dr. Hannigan examines the life-long impact of prenatal exposures to alcohol, cocaine and other drugs, and the impact of environmental factors after prenatal exposures. He found that 44% of midwives underestimated the dangers of prenatal alcohol use, thinking one drink per occasion is acceptable while pregnant. [More](#)

**[Lucy McGoron, PhD](#)**

Drs. McGoron and Julie Wargo Aikins published the results of a 2020 survey of Detroit parents in a research brief in the [November 2020 issue of \*The Conversation\*](#). They found high levels of depression and anxiety coinciding with Covid-19 restrictions and the need to home school. Dr. McGoron is PI of a \$533,000 grant to develop a parent training app to detect and respond to disruptive child behaviors. She also wrote [Timeouts Improve Kids' Behavior if You Do Them The Right Way](#), for a July issue of *The Conversation*.

**[Noa Ofen, PhD](#)**

Dr. Ofen directs the [Cognitive and Brain Development lab](#), part of the Lifespan Alliance partnership between MPSI and the Institute of Gerontology. She is using cutting edge methodology to investigate the neuronal activity that supports memory in typically and atypically developing populations (including pediatric epilepsy and preterm born children). Dr. Ofen's latest study uncovers rare insights into how memory develops in children and adolescents through intracranial recordings. [More](#)

**[Steve Ondersma, PhD](#)**

Dr. Ondersma's research centers on the use of computer-based interventions to reduce the use of drugs and alcohol during pregnancy. In the past two years, he has been PI on seven grants totaling nearly \$4.3 million. Read about his study of physicians' screening questionnaires aimed at uncovering substance abuse in pregnant women that showed low ability to identify alcohol, illicit drug or opioid use. [More](#)

**[Hilary Ratner, PhD](#)**

A WSU faculty member for nearly four decades, she has served as Associate Provost, Dean of the Graduate School and Vice President for Research. Most recently, she headed the [Early Childhood Consortium](#), created to partner with early childhood centers near WSU to help with guidance, professional development and quality requirements. Dr. Ratner was a key committee member in two-years of archival research to create an engaging historical exhibit as tribute to [MPSI's centennial anniversary](#).

**[Sarah Raz, PhD](#)**

Dr. Raz' research has been focused on the effects of adverse events occurring during pregnancy and delivery (including pre-term delivery) on the cognitive, behavioral, and neuropsychological outcomes of the newborn. She received funding from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan to study how pre- and post-natal growth relates to executive function and language development in preschoolers born pre-term.

**[Stella Resko, PhD](#)**

Dr. Resko and colleagues received three grants totaling \$1.5 million from the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services to assist with the [state's targeted response to the opioid crisis](#) and evaluate its effectiveness.

**[Valerie Simon, PhD](#)**

Dr. Simon was promoted to Full Professor at Wayne State University, the highest rank of professor attainable. This promotion is a testament to her exceptional standing in the field adolescent psychology and her contributions in research, teaching, training and service. Her [research](#) investigates the implications of inter-parental conflict and childhood sexual abuse on adolescents' romantic development.

**[Olivenne Skinner](#)**

Dr. Skinner has authored four articles investigating the impact of being African American on parental, marital or adolescent relationships. She is first author on her most recent paper: [Longitudinal Linkages between Expressivity and Parent-Youth Relationships in African American Families: A Dyadic Approach](#) in the Journal of Child and Family Studies. Dr. Skinner studies academic and gender development in black youth, including impacts of race and gender on school motivation and family relationships.

**[Ann Stacks, PhD](#)**

Dr. Stacks received a recent grant of nearly \$500,000 from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund for her proposal to improve outcomes for maltreated infants and toddlers by training courtroom teams on infant mental health best practices. Dr. Stacks is the director of MPSI's Infant Mental Health Program. [More](#)

**[Beverly Weathington, LMSW](#)**

As director of the [Healthier Urban Families](#) program, Bev has had a busy few years. She's conducted dozens of in-person and virtual presentations to parents and professionals, reaching more than 500 parents and 300 youth. HUF CE and other presentations have reached more than 6,000 attendees. A few of HUF's most popular topics are *Creating and Maintaining Positive Relationships with Parents*, and *Self-Care for Administrators*. She launched and edits the new [Parenting Moments](#) online newsletter for families and educators, and she was invited to join the [Center for Institutional Courage](#) as an affiliated educator. Courage is a nonprofit re-search and educational organization focused on increasing transparency and equity and stopping the harm that occurs when institutions fail the populations they should nurture and protect.

