

# Michael Walsh McGarrah

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## Education

Ph.D. in Education, Concentration in Human Development, Learning & Teaching (expected May 2022)  
Harvard University, 2017–Present

Dissertation: “Investigating the Influence of Internalizing and Externalizing Symptoms on Early-Onset Substance Use in Elementary School and Across the Transition to Middle and High School: Integrating Variable- and Person-Centered Analyses of Child and Adolescent Development”

Primary Advisors: Dr. Stephanie M. Jones, Dr. Leah H. Somerville, Dr. Dana C. McCoy

A.M. in Education, Harvard University, 2021

Ed.M. in Human Development and Psychology, Harvard University, 2019

B.A. in Child Psychology, University of Minnesota, 2012

*Summa Cum Laude, with Distinction, Phi Beta Kappa*

Honors Thesis: “The Development of Emotion Regulation and Children’s Age-Related Performance on the Emotional Interference Task”

Thesis Advisors: Dr. Philip D. Zelazo and Dr. Stephanie M. Carlson

## Professional and Research Experience

### **Independent Research Consultant**

**02/2019–Present**  
**15 hours per week**

- Secure contracts with clients, including the MIT Applied Educational Neuroscience Initiative, The Carroll School, Global Citizen Year, and IDinsight/the State of Jharkhand, India
- Lead the quantitative research team, as Chief Psychometrician, to validate a novel, tablet-based diagnostic test battery of dyslexia symptoms (AppRISE) with the MIT Applied Educational Neuroscience Initiative, in partnership with UC San Francisco and University of Connecticut, leading and supervising the data collection team and ensuring data quality
- Apply psychometric methods using Stata, R, and Mplus, including reliability analysis, item response theory models, score linking, and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, as well as power analysis and multivariate mixed effects regression, to validate the AppRISE diagnostic battery
- Serve as content expert on social and emotional skills for IDinsight, an international development consulting firm located in San Francisco, CA, in collaboration with the State of Jharkhand, India, to develop a program evaluation study design and set of survey tools aimed at assessing the effectiveness of a state-wide program to foster social and emotional development among 1,616,068 students across 4,946 secondary schools in Jharkhand, India, using a sample of 100,000 students and 30,000 teachers for the initial pilot program
- Authored a complete psychometric report on the initial validation study for the AppRISE diagnostic battery of literacy and dyslexia assessments, describing scoring and linking a set of 5 novel and 5 “gold standard” tests of cognitive and literacy abilities and presenting the results to a multi-university team of principal investigators, advising them on next steps

*Last updated: January 11, 2022*

- Advised the Research Director of the Carroll School, in Lincoln, MA, on the use of quantitative causal methods—such as regression discontinuity and difference-in-difference models—for the program evaluation of a curriculum designed to improve literacy outcomes for middle school students with dyslexia
- Co-designed outcome surveys for Global Citizen Year, a prominent “gap year” program for pre-college, high school graduates, located in Oakland, CA, with special emphasis on capturing the development of social and emotional, or “soft,” skills
- Directed quantitative program evaluation for Global Citizen Year, with a special focus on differential effects on social and emotional skills for minority and low-SES students

**Doctoral Student Researcher, Harvard University**

**08/2017–Present**

**20 hours per week**

- Lead quantitative analysis of a survey-based study, funded by the Hewlett Foundation, evaluating implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) programs and related education statistics in a nationally representative sample of U.S. public elementary schools, with tasks including data cleaning, reshaping, and tabulating summaries of data, as well as inspecting psychometric properties of the survey instruments, employing multivariate mixed effects regression, checking the statistical accuracy of team members’ work, and writing up and presenting findings to the lab team and funder
- Repurposed an Institute of Education Sciences (IES) dataset on SEL program evaluation (the 4Rs dataset, from the larger Social and Character Development (SACD) study), pulling out rare data on very early substance use and related symptoms of emergent psychopathology among elementary school students, in order to evaluate proximal causes of early-onset substance use disorder and to develop intervention strategies aimed at reducing the incidence of substance abuse in elementary school and across the middle school transition
- Use statistical computing packages, including Stata, R, SPSS, and Mplus to analyze data generated from cluster randomized trials and other quasi-experimental and applied research designs, including both equal- and unequal-interval time series data, using the following methods: linear and generalized linear regression models; multilevel or mixed regression models, including random intercept and random coefficient models, alongside multiple imputation methods and estimators; growth modeling; value added modeling; regression discontinuity modeling; difference-in-difference modeling; and structural equation modeling methods including measurement models, path models, latent growth models, cross-lagged panel models, random intercept cross-lagged panel models, and auto-regressive latent trajectory models with structured residuals
- Co-authored a journal article, published in Educational Psychology, focused on scaling up social and emotional learning initiatives in U.S. K-12 schools, which won Best Paper of the Year from the American Psychological Association’s educational psychology division

**Research and Policy Associate, The Aspen Institute**

**08/2016–08/2017**

**50 hours per week**

- Led the research team for the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development
- Analyzed and synthesized the literature on social and emotional learning (SEL) across multiple academic disciplines, including developmental, clinical, and educational psychology, as well as prevention science, neuroscience, medicine, and economics

- Prepared briefs for Executive Directors and the Vice President, and conferred with leading academics in the field
- Authored a background document on social and emotional learning that received high praise from members of the Council of Distinguished Scientists, including Angela Duckworth, Marc Brackett, and Mark Greenberg, and which served as the core messaging for the Commission when advocating for SEL policies
- Authored a set of guided readings about social and emotional learning that were reviewed positively by Commissioners, including Linda Darling-Hammond, Hugh Price, and General Craig McKinley, and which led discussions with representatives of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District

**Research Associate, American Institutes for Research**

**07/2013–08/2016  
40 hours per week**

- Developed survey items related to self-regulation, self-efficacy, and achievement motivation for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, in collaboration with the Educational Testing Service and the National Center for Education Statistics
- Published two empirical evaluations of higher education spending patterns and the employment of contingent faculty in U.S. schools of higher education, utilizing the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, and conducting analyses in Stata
- Developed survey items for principal and teacher surveys for an Institute of Education Sciences randomized controlled trial intervention on teacher and principal professional development and academic standards implementation (i.e., Common Core); led survey rollout across multiple states; coded over 100 hours of teacher classroom practice recordings using the Framework for Teaching (FFT) evaluation rubric
- Published a brief that examined practice and policy issues related to the assessment of the social and emotional development of children and adolescents in education settings; a guide to building and maintaining assessment systems; and an inventory of evidence-based assessments of inter- and intra-personal competencies
- Managed funding and staff, and successfully recompeted for a \$6,000,000 U.S. Department of Education research and technical assistance center (the College and Career Readiness and Success Center)
- Authored various reports and led presentations for a variety of clients, including the U.S. Department of Education; Institute of Education Sciences; National Center for Education Statistics; Office of Elementary and Secondary Education; Office of Special Education Programs; Office of Educational Technology; Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education; Kansas State Department of Education; California Department of Education; The TIAA Institute; The Joyce Foundation; and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

**Fulbright Scholar, U.S. Department of State, Government of Madrid, Spain**

**09/2012–07/2013  
40 hours per week**

- Led professional development on language acquisition and teaching English as a second language for teachers in the Madrid bilingual public school system
- Instructed classes for middle and high school students across all subject areas in English and Spanish

**Early Childhood Education Policy Intern, Children’s Defense Fund**

**06/2011–09/2011  
40 hours per week**

- Authored a white paper on the effectiveness of full day kindergarten programs, which was used as a guiding policy and advocacy document for the firm
- Prepared materials for, and attended briefings and meetings with, members of the U.S. Congress related to critical early childhood education policy initiatives, including full-day kindergarten scale-up and pre-k access

**Research Assistant, Institute of Child Development, Univ. of Minnesota**

**01/2011–09/2012  
15 hours per week**

- Developed a measure of emotion regulation (the Emotional Interference Task) for use with young children; a measure consisting of sequentially presented, differently-valenced affective pictures, paired with a cognitive task, measuring the differential reaction times associated with the cognitive task, by affective valence, as a proxy for emotion regulation ability
- Designed and programmed the computer-delivered assessment for the Emotional Interference Task using e-Prime software
- Recruited over 100 participants for the Emotional Interference Task; administered the task and collected, coded, and analyzed all experimental data using SPSS
- Conducted state-by-state policy and program analysis of pre-k–3<sup>rd</sup>-grade systems in U.S. Public Schools for the Chicago Longitudinal Study, led by Dr. Arthur J. Reynolds
- Consulted with Dr. Phil Zelazo to scale up the Emotional Interference Task and pursue publication in a peer-reviewed journal
- Coded video recordings of a mindfulness training intervention for young children
- Directed a task exploring adult personality self-perception utilizing skin conductance measures

**Working Papers**

**McGarrah, M.W.**, Jones, S. M., McCoy, D., & Somerville, L. “Integrating the internalizing and externalizing pathways to early-onset substance use: A dynamic developmental cascades model.” Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

**McGarrah, M.W.**, Jones, S. M., McCoy, D., & Somerville, L. “Bi-directional influences of internalizing and externalizing symptoms and subsequent early-onset substance use: A latent trajectory model with structured residuals.” Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

**McGarrah, M.W.**, Jones, S. M., McCoy, D., & Somerville, L. “A person-centered analysis of the internalizing and externalizing pathways to early-onset substance use: A parallel process growth mixture model.” Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

Whillans, A., Yemiscigil, A., **McGarrah, M.W.**, & Johnston, E. “Response shift bias and the measurement of change in socio-emotional outcomes in a gap year program.” Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

**Peer-Reviewed Publications**

Jones, S. M., **McGarrah, M.W.**, & Kahn, J. (2019). “Social and emotional learning: A principled science of human development in context.” *Educational Psychologist*, 54(3), 129-143.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1625776>

## **Reports**

Hurlburt, S., & **McGarrah, M.W.** (2016). "Cost savings or cost shifting? The relationship between part-time contingent faculty and institutional spending." New York, NY: TIAA Institute. <https://www.tiaainstitute.org/publication/cost-savings-or-cost-shifting>

Hurlburt, S., & **McGarrah, M.W.** (2016). "The shifting academic workforce: Where are the contingent faculty?" New York, NY: TIAA Institute. <https://www.tiaainstitute.org/publication/shifting-academic-workforce>

**McGarrah, M.W.**, & Moroney, D. A. (2015). "Are you ready to assess social and emotional development? Stop. Think. Act." Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. <https://www.air.org/resource/are-you-ready-assess-social-and-emotional-learning-and-development-second-edition>

**McGarrah, M.W.** (2015). "Lifelong learning skills for college and career readiness: Considerations for education policy." Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. <https://ccrcenter.org/products-resources/lifelong-learning-skills-college-and-career-readiness-considerations-education>

Cushing, E. C., **McGarrah, M.W.**, Foster, L. R., & Jacques, C. (2015). "Integrating employability skills: A framework for all educators." Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. <https://ccrcenter.org/products-resources/lifelong-learning-skills-college-and-career-readiness-considerations-education>

**McGarrah, M.W.** (2014). "Lifelong learning skills for college and career readiness: An annotated bibliography." Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. <https://ccrcenter.org/technical-assistance-networks/professional-learning-modules/integrating-employability-skills>

**McGarrah, M.W.** (2012). "The development of emotion regulation & children's age-related performance on the emotional interference task." (Undergraduate Honors Thesis). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy. <https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/183083>

**McGarrah, M.W.** (2012). "The case for full-day kindergarten: A review of research." [White paper]. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund.

## **Professional Presentations**

Johnston, E. F., **McGarrah, M.W.**, Yemiscigil, A., & Whillans, A. (2020, November). "When quant and qual collide: Response shift bias and the measurement of change in gap year participants." Gap Year Association Conference (online). Portland, OR.

**McGarrah, M.W.** (2019, May). "Examining early predictors of substance use in elementary school: Psychosocial characteristics and quality of student-teacher relationships." Association for Psychological Science Annual Conference. Washington, DC.

**McGarrah, M.W.** (2016, April). "Creating the conditions for social and emotional learning: Why it matters and how to bring it to afterschool and expanded learning environments." Horizons National Annual Conference. Atlanta, GA.

Cushing, E. C., **McGarrah, M.W.**, Foster, L. R., & Jacques, C. (2015, May). “Integrating the employability skills framework: A professional learning module for all educators.” Presented at the Kansas Department of Education. Topeka, KA.

Cushing, E. C., **McGarrah, M.W.**, Foster, L. R., & Jacques, C. (2015, April). “Integrating the employability skills framework: A professional learning module for all educators.” U.S. Department of Education LINCS Conference. Minneapolis, MN.

### **Teaching Experience**

Teaching Fellow, Harvard Graduate School of Education (2019–Present). Courses taught:

Spring 2020, Fall 2020	Developmental Insights, Professor Stephanie Jones
Spring 2020	Beyond Grit: Non-Cognitive Factors in School Success, Professor Stephanie Jones
Fall 2020, Fall 2019	Typical and Atypical Neurodevelopment, Professors Charles Nelson and Nadine Gaab
Fall 2020, Fall 2019	Developmental Psychology, Professor Paul L. Harris

### **Academic Service**

2021–Present Graduate Student Affiliate, Harvard Institute for Quantitative Social Science  
2021–Present Invited Committee Member, Harvard GSAS Task Force on Scholarship Restart  
2021–Present Advisor to the Council, Harvard Graduate Student Council  
2021–Present Graduate Student Advisor, Harvard Graduate School of Education  
2020–Present Invited Committee Member, Harvard FAS Task Force on Visual Culture and Signage  
2020–2021 Vice President, Harvard Graduate Student Council  
2020 Invited Reviewer: Educational Psychologist; Psychometrika  
2019–2020 At-Large Representative for Interdisciplinary Studies, Harvard Graduate Student Council

### **Certifications And Languages**

2020 Harvard Business School Online “CORE” Business Readiness Credential, High Honors  
2014 Certified Rater, Framework for Teaching (FFT), The Danielson Group  
2012 Proficient in Spanish, University of Minnesota Diploma Credential

### **Honors and Awards**

2020 APA Division 15 Best Paper of the Year Award: Jones, McGarrah, and Kahn (2019)  
2019 Elected Member, Sigma Xi National Scientific Honor Society  
2019 Honorable Mention, National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program  
2016 Exceptional Service in Staff Development, American Institutes for Research  
2015 Exceptional Service in Research and Evaluation, American Institutes for Research  
2014 Exceptional Service in Technical Assistance, American Institutes for Research  
2012 Fulbright Scholarship, U. S. Department of State, Government of Madrid, Spain  
2012 Elected Member, Phi Beta Kappa, Alpha of Minnesota  
2010 Outstanding Leader of a Student Health Group, University of Minnesota