

Michael McGarrah

Arlington, Virginia | (240) 535-1189

michaelwmcgarrah@gmail.com

www.scholar.harvard.edu/mcgarrah

Education

Ph.D. in Human Development, Learning & Teaching, Harvard University, 2023

Dissertation: ‘The Development of Internalizing and Externalizing Symptoms in Middle Childhood and Substance Use Prior to Middle School Entry’

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Stephanie M. Jones, Dr. Leah H. Somerville, Dr. Dana C. McCoy

Credential of Business Readiness, Harvard Business School, High Honors, 2020

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

Summary of Professional and Research Positions

2022–Present Study Director & Statistician, U.S. Department of Education

2022–Present Visiting Scholar, Harvard University

2017–2023 Doctoral Student Researcher, Harvard University

2019–2022 Independent Research Consultant

2016–2017 Research & Policy Associate, The Aspen Institute

2013–2016 Research Associate, American Institutes for Research

2012–2013 Fulbright Scholar, U.S. Department of State & Government of Madrid, Spain

2011–2011 Education Policy Intern, Children’s Defense Fund

2011–2012 Research Assistant, University of Minnesota Institute of Child Development

Professional and Research Experience

Study Director & Statistician, U.S. Department of Education

04/2022–Present

- Direct the Crime and Safety Surveys Program at the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), overseeing a budget of \$1.1 million, 24 contractor employees, and 1 NCES employee
- Manage the administrative and budgetary components of 12 multi-year contracts and inter-agency agreements covering national research projects with annual budgets totaling \$30 million
- Awarded over \$3 million in competitive educational technology grants, assessing impact and innovation in AI- and VR-based learning tools
- Launched new research initiatives leveraging AI and web-scraping to modernize data collection on school shootings and emergency school closures
- Collaborate with the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Census Bureau to set the strategic plan and manage data collection for the School Crime Supplement of the National Crime Victimization Survey
- Oversee survey design and publication of official statistics from the School Crime Supplement, including the development of a new item for the 2025 survey assessing the prevalence of tobacco and vaping devices at school, covering over 5,000 youth, and 6 reports featuring official statistics

Last updated: April 2025

from the 2022 survey on various topics related to crime and safety in U.S. schools

- Lead conceptual development, direct analysis activities, and write or co-write research papers, including short, broadly accessible two-pagers on the disproportionate bullying of female students, access to illicit substances at school over the past 20 years, the prevalence of hate speech at school, and the effect of bullying at school on student well-being and academic performance, as well as a digest of nationally representative statistics related to bullying and school crime and safety
- Develop, compete out, and oversee the award of government research contracts, including the successful award of three multi-year contracts totaling \$3.9 million in value over the past three years, ensuring those acquisitions conform with the Federal Acquisition Regulations, verifying that appropriate research designs and statistical specifications are included in proposals, and that contractor qualifications and performance history meet strict standards
- Set the vision for the Crime and Safety Surveys Program at NCES, developing new lines of research, including multi-million dollar collaborations with the U.S. Census Bureau to use web-scraping and artificial intelligence as complementary methods to collect data on school crime and safety alongside NCES's traditional complex sample survey methods utilizing nationally representative populations in household- or school-based studies
- Manage the generation, presentation, and evaluation of statistical analyses based on large-scale sample-based surveys, such as the School Crime Supplement, and large-scale administrative data collections, such as the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
- Prepare and review research protocols for Office of Management and Budget/Paperwork Reduction Act clearance of NCES studies
- Work with NCES datasets, including the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, the School Survey on Crime and Safety, and the School Crime Supplement, covering the following education policy subject areas: K-12 education, school climate, school crime and safety, principal and teacher workforce issues, postsecondary education, and policy and practice concerns at the school, district, and state levels
- Advise senior leadership on a committee tasked with redesigning NCES's web-based publication review management system

Visiting Scholar, Harvard University

05/2022–Present

- Apply advanced, causal quantitative methods to uncover early warning signs for early youth substance abuse, translating findings into applied prevention frameworks and solutions.
- Analyze data on youth delinquency and crime using statistical software (Stata, R, Mplus), econometric and psychometrics methods, structural equation models, and data viz techniques

Independent Research Consultant

02/2019–04/2022

- Led psychometric validation study of a tablet-based test to detect early reading and other cognitive deficits (AppRISE) with over 300 students in grades K-3, as part of the MIT Applied Educational Neuroscience Initiative, writing up full methodological report
- Directed evaluation of student well-being and “soft skills” development program in Jharkhand, India, for IDinsight, impacting 1.6 million students in nearly 5,000 schools
- Designed the quantitative program evaluation of a curriculum designed to improve literacy outcomes for middle school students with dyslexia at the Carrol School in Lincoln, MA.
- Developed surveys focused on “soft skills” for Global Citizen Year and led program evaluation of nearly 500 pre-college gap year program participants, measuring growth in “soft skills” over the

course of the one year program

Doctoral Student Researcher, Harvard University

08/2017–04/2022

- Led quantitative analysis of a nationally representative survey of over 1,000 K-12 schools focused on social and emotional learning (SEL) program implementation, cleaning, reshaping, and tabulating summaries of data, as well as inspecting psychometric properties of the survey instruments, employing 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, the Social and Character Development (SACD) study, to evaluate the longitudinal, quasi-causal relationship between emergent internalizing and externalizing psychopathology and substance use prior to middle school entry
- Co-authored a journal article published in the Educational Psychologist focused on scaling up social and emotional learning initiatives in K-12 schools, which won the Best Paper of the Year award from the American Psychological Association's educational psychology division

Research and Policy Associate, The Aspen Institute

08/2016–08/2017

- Managed research and policy communication strategy for the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, securing \$6.7 million in funding over three years
- Produced briefs and background papers that shaped national discourse on criminal justice diversion-related programs in K-12 schools that formed the basis for national policy
- Analyzed and synthesized the literature on social and emotional learning (SEL), spanning multiple academic disciplines, including developmental, clinical, and educational psychology, and also prevention science, neuroscience, medicine, and economics

Research Associate, American Institutes for Research

07/2013–08/2016

- 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 at institutions of higher education in the U.S., utilizing the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), conducting all analyses in Stata
- Developed 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 on practice and policy issues related to the assessment of social and emotional skills in children and adolescents, a guide to building and maintaining such assessment systems, and an inventory of evidence-based assessments
- Managed funding and staff and successfully recomputed a \$6 million U.S. Department of Education technical assistance center (the College and Career Readiness and Success Center)
- Authored 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

- 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

- 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

- 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–3rd-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

Thomsen, E., Henderson, M., Moore, A., Price, N., and **McGarrah, M.W.** (2024). Student Reports of Bullying: Results From the 2022 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCES 2024-109rev). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved [date] from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2024109rev>.

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://ccrscenter.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://ccrscenter.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://ccrscenter.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 (2019–2022). Courses taught include:

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 & Professional Service

2024–2025	Reviewer, Institute of Education Sciences Small Business Research Innovation Grants
2023–2024	Reviewer, National Center for Education Statistics STATS-DC Data Conference
2021–2023	Graduate Student Affiliate, Harvard Institute for Quantitative Social Science
2021–2023	Invited Committee Member, Harvard GSAS Task Force on Scholarship Restart
2021–2023	Advisor to the Council, Harvard Graduate Student Council
2021–2023	Graduate Student Advisor, Harvard Graduate School of Education
2020–2023	Invited Committee Member, Harvard FAS Task Force on Visual Culture and Signage
2020–2021	Vice President, Harvard Graduate Student Council
2020–2020	Invited Reviewer: Educational Psychologist; Psychometrika
2019–2020	At-Large Representative for Interdisciplinary Studies, Harvard Graduate Student Council

Certifications And Languages

2023	Teaching Certificate, Derek Bok Center for Teaching & Learning, Harvard University
2022	Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR) Level II, Federal Acquisition Institute
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, NSF 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