

University of Illinois Immigrant and Refugee Scholars Directory

The University of Illinois system is home to a community of scholars, faculty members, and practitioners who are passionate about conducting research and collaborating in initiatives that center on the perspectives, needs, and experiences of immigrants and refugee groups. As part of a campus-wide effort, the Immigrant and Refugee Scholars Directory provides the names and a few key insights about researchers, faculty members, and practitioners' research activities and community work in an effort to centralize information about this interdisciplinary work and connect scholars across the UI campuses.

If you are engaged in scholarly work at any of the University of Illinois institutions focusing on immigrant and refugee populations and would like to be included in this directory, please contact Sandra Morales at smoral2@uic.edu.

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Scholars Directory

Sara Abboud, PhD



Assistant Professor

Human Development Nursing Science

University of Illinois Chicago

Pronouns: she/hers

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- **Focus Areas:** Dr. Abboud's research is informed by social justice, intersectionality, and health equity frameworks and centers on the intersections of ethnicity, sexuality, gender, health, and immigration among immigrants, ethnic minorities, sexual and gender minorities in the US, in particular Arabs and Arab Americans, and in Lebanon.

- **Communities of Interest:** Arabs, Arab Americans, sexual and gender minorities

- **Selected Publications:**

Abboud, S., & Flores, D.D. (2023) [Invited commentary]. A developmental model of the sexual minority closet: Implications for Arab immigrant sexual minorities and parent-LGBTQ child sex communication. *Archives of Sexual Behaviors*.

Abboud, S., Veldhuis, C., Ballout, S., Nadeem, F., Nyhan K., & Hughes, T. (2022). Sexual and gender minority health in the Middle East and North Africa region: A scoping review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies Advances*.

Abboud, S., Zubi, M., Shalabi, I., Taha, N., Velonis, A., & Patil, C. Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Among Arab American young adults in Chicago: Implications for intervention development. *Journal of Advancing Nursing*.

Abboud, S., Flores, D., Bond, K., Chebli, P., Brawner, B.M., & Sommers, M.S. (2022). Family sex communication among Arab American young adults: A mixed-methods study. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 28(2) 115-128.

- **Spotlight Projects:** Dr. Abboud is developing a sexual health promotion intervention for young adult Arabs in Chicago with a focus on intimate partner sexual violence prevention. She also explores HIV/STI risk behaviors and mental health of Arab queer men, pre- and post-migration to the US.

Yeasir Alve, PhD



Postdoctoral Research Associate

Occupational Therapy

University of Illinois Chicago

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- **Focus Areas:** Dr. Alve is interested in sustainable development and social justice among deprived and low-income communities, particularly those who have experienced trauma and disabilities.
- **Communities of Interest:** Low-income neighborhoods, newly arrived immigrants/ migrants
- **Selected Publications:**

Alve, Y. A., Islam, A., Hatlestad, B., & Mirza, P. M. (2023). Participation in Everyday Occupations Among Rohingya Refugees in Bangladeshi Refugee Camps. *Am J Occup Ther* May/June 2023, Vol. 77(3), 7703205060. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2023.050006>.

Alve, Y. A., Bontje, P., & Begum, S. (2019). Endeavouring sustainable participation: Post-discharge adaptation process of occupational participation among persons with spinal cord injury in Bangladesh, *World Federation of Occupational Therapists Bulletin*, 75 (2), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14473828.2019.1647983>.
- **Spotlight Projects:** Dr. Alve is the Project Director for a large-scale epidemiological study of COVID-19 infection and testing uptake. He also oversees continued research and development within the Model of Human Occupation and Intentional Relationship Clearinghouse.

Xóchitl Bada, PhD



Associate Professor & Director of Graduate Studies

Latin American and Latino Studies

University of Illinois Chicago

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- **Focus Areas:** Dr. Bada's research foci include accountability, migrant worker rights, rural development, migrant organizations, and transnational labor advocacy.
- **Communities of Interest:** Latinx immigrants
- **Selected Publications:**
 - Farmworkers Deserve a Living Wage, *The Progressive Magazine* Scaling Migrant Worker Rights. How Advocates Collaborate and Contest State Power (with Shannon Gleeson), University of California Press
 - The Routledge History of Latin American Migration (edited with Andreas Feldmann, Jorge Durand, and Stephanie Schütze)
 - The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Latin America (edited with Liliana Rivera-Sánchez)
 - "Persistent Rurality in Mexico and 'the right to stay home'" (with Jonathan Fox), *Journal of Peasant Studies*, with a short summary available at *Research Features Magazine*
- **Spotlight Projects:** Dr. Bada is working on a research project on migrations across the Americas that will be launched with colleagues from the Latin American Institute at the Free University of Berlin, UIC, El Colegio de México (COLMEX), and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).

Mary Bunn, PhD



Assistant Professor Psychiatry

Core Faculty Member & Co-Director of the Global
Mental Health Research and Training Program at
the Center for Global Health at UIC

University of Illinois Chicago

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- **Focus Areas:** Community-based mental health prevention and care interventions for war and forcibly displaced populations across the migration continuum, ambiguous loss, social resources and social systems of care, peer-delivered mental health services, implementation science, and human-centered design.
- **Communities of Interest:** Refugee and other forcibly displaced populations, survivors of war, conflict, and torture.
- **Selected Publications:**

Bunn, M., Samuels, G. & Higson-Smith, C. (2023). Ambiguous loss of home: Syrian refugees and the process of losing and remaking home. *Wellbeing, Space & Society*

Bunn, M., Khanna, D., Farmer, E., Esbrook, E., Ellis, H., Richard, A., & Weine, S. (2023). Rethinking mental healthcare for refugees. *SSM-Mental Health*, 100196.

Bunn, M. & Betancourt, T. (2023). Strengthening mental health services for refugee children resettled in the U.S. *Child Evidence Briefs*.

Bunn, M., Zolman, N., Polutnik, C., Khanna, D., Betancourt, T. & Weine, S. (2022). Family-based mental health interventions for refugees across the migration continuum: A systematic review. *SSM-Mental Health*, 2, 100153
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmmh.2022.100153>

Bunn, M., Marsh, J., Haidar, A. (2022). Sharing stories eases pain: Core relational processes of a group intervention with Syrian refugees in Jordan. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*. 47(2), 110-132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2021.2000084>
- **Spotlight Projects:** Dr. Bunn serves as the Principle Investigator on the project *Leveraging Implementation Science and Design Methods to Sustain Community Based Mental Health Services for Refugees (K01MH128524-01A1)*. This National Institute of Mental Health-funded study conducted in partnership with the Syrian Community Network (SCN) and Islamic

Circle of North America (ICNA) Relief adapts and pilot tests a multiple family group intervention for refugee families to improve mental health and strengthen their family and community relationships. This model will be adapted for use with families from the Middle East and for delivery by peer providers who share a similar cultural background and life histories as intervention recipients. The model will be tested for delivery in community-based settings.

She was also the Principle Investigator for *Reimagining Mental Health Services: Developing a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Intervention for Forcibly Displaced Populations in the U.S.*, a SAMSHA-funded study conducted in collaboration with the International Rescue Committee and an advisory team develop a MHPSS framework for forcibly displaced populations in the U.S. To develop the framework, the project reviews the available literature and uses human-centered design methods to engage partners and iteratively develop a framework that reflects the needs of persons with lived experience of forced displacement. The resulting framework is intended to build consensus and provide guidance to service providers, researchers, and policymakers regarding how to plan for and respond to the MHPSS needs of forcibly displaced populations.

Dr. Bunn was also a co-investigator for the *Strengthening Family Resilience among Afghan Newcomer Communities project*. The study, conducted in collaboration with the Research Program for Children and Adversity at Boston College School of Social Work, identifies the priority problems and needs of newcomer Afghan children and youth and culturally specific mental health and psychosocial problems. The project also adapts and pilots a whole family mental health promotion intervention, the Family Strengthening Intervention for Refugees, for delivery to newly arrived Afghan families in New England.

Daysi Diaz-Strong, PhD



Assistant Professor

Social Work

University of Illinois Chicago

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- **Focus Areas:** Dr. Diaz-Strong’s research examines educational outcomes and experiences of Latinx undocumented immigrants, the developmental trajectories of Latinx undocumented immigrants, as well as life course impact of immigration policy on immigrants and immigrant families.
- **Communities of Interest:** Latinx undocumented immigrants
- **Selected Publications:**

Diaz-Strong, D. X., & Gonzales, R. G. (2023). The divergent adolescent and adult transitions of Latin American undocumented minors. *Child Development Perspectives*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12478>

García, A., Diaz-Strong, D.X., & Rodriguez Rodriguez, Y. (2022). A matter of time: The life course implications of deferred action for undocumented Latin American immigrants in the United States. *Social Problems*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spac049>

Diaz-Strong, D.X. (2021) “When did I stop being a child?” The subjective feeling of adulthood of Mexican and Central American 1.25 generation immigrants. *Emerging Adulthood*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/216769682199214>

Diaz-Strong, D.X. (2021). “She did not find one that was for me”: The college pathways of the Mexican and Central American undocumented 1.25 generation. *Harvard Educational Review*, 91(1), 83-108. <https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-91.1.83>

Diaz-Strong, D. X. (2021). “Why we could not study:” The gendered enrollment barriers of 1.25 Generation Immigrants. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105889>

Diaz-Strong, D. X. (2020). “Estaba bien chiquito” (I was very young): The transition to adulthood and “illegality” of the Mexican and Central American 1.25 generation. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 37 (3), 409-438. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558420933231>

- **Spotlight Projects:** Dr. Diaz-Strong is the Principal Investigator in *The Life Course Intersections of Legal Exclusion and Gender-Based Oppression* project. This community-engaged qualitative study examines how legal exclusion and gender-based oppression intersect and change along the life course in the lives of undocumented Latina women living in the Chicago suburbs. She is also the Principal Investigator in *The Role of School Agents in Undocumented Students' Access to Financial Aid Resources* project. The study examines how high school staff in the Chicago metropolitan area learn about financial aid resources for undocumented students, how they distribute information to students, and what shapes the challenges high school staff encounter in this task.

Sylvia Gonzalez, MPH, DACM



Project Manager

Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences

University of Illinois Chicago

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- **Focus Areas:** Sylvia is passionate about providing trauma-informed and healing-centered approaches in both her clinical acupuncture practice and public health work

- **Communities of Interest:** Immigrants, North Lawndale residents, Little Village residents

- **Selected Publications:**

Jeni Hebert-Beirne, Sylvia Gonzalez, Melissa Chrusfield, Adlaide Holloway, Jennifer Plascencia Lopez, Dolores Castañeda. (in press). *Demystifying how academic-community partnerships use reflexivity and praxis to make iterative adaptations across the research cycle to attend to participatory research principles of equity and justice*. Ethical Issues in Community and Patient Stakeholder-Engaged Health Research. Emily E Anderson. Springer.

- **Spotlight Projects:** Sylvia is a part of the Greater Lawndale Healthy Work Project that partners with the Greater Lawndale community, two respective neighborhoods situated on the southwest side of Chicago, North Lawndale and Little Village, to explore community-level approaches for improving residents' health at work; build community capacity for recognizing worker health as community health; and develop community-based interventions that expand residents' access to healthy jobs.

Gabriela Gracia, PhD



Research Assistant Professor

Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences

University of Illinois Chicago

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- **Focus Areas:** Dr. Gracia is a medical anthropologist interested in applying community-based participatory approaches to understand and address the health concerns of underserved populations.
- **Communities of Interest:** Farmworkers, indigenous workers, precarious workers
- **Selected Publications:**

Gracia, G., Guzman, A., Forst, L. (2022) A Day in the Life: Using Contextual Interviews to Understand the Health of Home-Based Mapuche Weavers. PLOS Global Public Health 2(5): e0000353.

Gracia, G., Guzman, A., Forst, L. (2022) Design, Implementation and Evaluation of a Participatory Ergonomics Program among Home-Based Mapuche Weavers. International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10803548.2021.2015907> Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0000353>
- **Spotlight Projects:** Dr. Gracia is currently developing two projects that examine the dynamics between farm labor supervisors and farmworkers and how these relationships affect the safety behaviors of farmworkers. She is also working on a photovoice project to examine farmworker housing and food insecurity.

Rooshey Hasnain, Ed.D., M.A.



Clinical Associate Professor

Disability and Human Development & Undergraduate
Rehabilitation Sciences Program

University of Illinois Chicago

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- **Focus Areas:** Dr. Hasnain’s research focuses on understanding the lives, challenges, and strengths of people with disabilities and mental health conditions, especially those from refugee and immigrant backgrounds. Most of her projects attempt to bridge service and opportunity gaps between US disability service systems and traditionally underserved people with disabilities and their families, especially in areas of employment and education.
- **Communities of Interest:** People with disabilities of all ages from ethnically, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families. Particular focus on immigrants and refugees from pan-Asian, Middle Eastern, and African origins.
- **Selected Publications:**

Hasnain, R., Fujiura, G. T., Capua, J. E., Bui, T. T. T., & Khan, S. (2020). Disaggregating the Asian “Other”: Heterogeneity and methodological issues in research on Asian Americans with disabilities. *Special Issue: Challenging Academia: A Critical Space for Controversial Issues. Societies, 10*(3), 58; <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc10030058>

Mirza, M., Hasnain, R., & Duke, B. K. (2018). Fostering community–academic partnerships to promote employment opportunities for refugees with disabilities: Accomplishments, dilemmas, and deliberations. *Societies, 8*, 2–15. doi:10.3390/SOC803008.

Hasnain, R. Kondratowicz, D. M., Borokhovski, E. Balcazar, F.; Portillo, N., Hanz, K., Johnson, T.; Gould, R.. (2011) Do cultural competency interventions work? A systematic review on improving rehabilitation outcomes for ethnically and linguistically diverse individuals with disabilities? FOCUS Technical Brief No. 31. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED593016.pdf>

Hasnain, R., & Rana, S. (2010). Unveiling Muslim voices: Aging parents with disabilities and their adult children and family caregivers in the US: A call for research and action. *Topics in Geriatric Rehabilitation, 26*(1), 46–61.

Hasnain, R., & Balcazar, F. (2009). Predicting community- versus facility-based employment for transition-aged, young adults with disabilities: The role of race, ethnicity, and support systems. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 31(3), 175–188.

- **Spotlight Projects:**

Career Options and Leadership (CO-LEAD) through Storytelling, Data Visualizations & the Arts: A Partnership with College Students/Faculty, Community Leaders, and Artists to Address Disability Economic Justice, Hasnain (PI); 6/30/23-present.

Illinois Department of Human Services. Illinois Welcoming Centers.
A Partnership between the Immigrant and Refugee Community-Led Capacity Development Network (IRCLCDN) and the Illinois Welcoming Centers, Hasnain (PI); 12/1/2020–6/20/2021.

National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, & Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR). Partners of Refugees in Illinois Disability Employment (PRIDE). Hasnain (PI); 10/2016–12/2020.

Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services of IDHS (state-funded project H8414).
Asians with Disabilities Outreach Project Think-Tank (ADOPT)
Phases 1 through 4. Hasnain (PI); 1/2010-6/2012 & 7/2013-6/2015

Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council.
Systemic and Collaborative Approaches to Achieving Cultural and Linguistic Competence in Disability Outreach and Service, Hasnain (Lead Project Consultant): 10/2009 to 06/2011

Jonathan Inda, PhD



Professor and Director

Latin American and Latino Studies

University of Illinois Chicago

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- **Focus Areas:** Detention, Immigration Policing, Health
- **Communities of Interest:** Immigrants, Detainees
- **Selected Publications:**

Inda, Jonathan Xavier. 2023. "The Necropolitics of Immigration Policing." In *The IRiS Anthology on Migration and Diversity*. Edited by Laurence Lessard-Phillips, Anna Papoutsis, Nando Sigona, and Paladia Ziss. Pp. 265-68. Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham.

Inda, Jonathan Xavier. 2020. "Fatal Prescriptions: Immigration Detention, Mismedication, and the Necropolitics of Uncare." *Death Studies* 44(11): 699–708.

- **Spotlight Projects:** Prof. Inda is currently working on a book tentatively titled *Confined to Death: Uncaring Medicine and the Necropolitics of Detention*. The book focuses on the deadly consequences of care in immigration detention. It argues that the states' responsibility to care for those in its custody clashes with the governmental and popular construction of immigrants as undeserving criminals, producing what he calls "uncaring medicine." This is a type of medicine that cares little for migrant bodies, providing only enough care to minimally sustain life. The goal of detention care appears to be nurturing the lives of detainees only modestly—to give them just enough care so that they are in good enough health to be released or deported. This just enough approach to medical care in detention has disastrous consequences for detainees. Many migrants need more than just enough health care. Since 2003, there have been over 200 deaths in immigration detention. Substandard care contributed to many of these deaths. Ultimately, the book suggests that spaces of detention function as technologies of elimination where migrants are uncaringly treated to death.

Mansha Mirza, PhD



Associate Professor

Occupational Therapy & Disability and Human Development

University of Illinois Chicago

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- **Focus Areas:** Dr. Mirza's research addresses health and social services disparities among low-income, underserved communities with a special focus on immigrant and refugee newcomers
- **Communities of Interest:** Immigrants, refugees, asylees
- **Selected Publications:**

Suarez-Balcazar, Y., Mirza, M., Errisuriz, V. Zeng, W., Brown, J., Vanegas, S., Heydarian, N., Parra-Medina, D., Morales, P., Torres, H., & Magana, S. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on the Mental Health and Well-Being of Latinx Caregivers of Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 18(15), 7971.

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/15/7971/htm>

Mirza, M., Harrison, E. A., Miller, K. A., & Jacobs, E. A. (2021). Indicators of Quality Rehabilitation Services for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency: A 3-Round Delphi Study. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 102(11), 2125–2133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2021.04.020>

- **Spotlight Projects:** Dr. Mirza has worked on a project titled *The Three Rs: Refugees, Rights, Resettlement* - Funded by the Social Science Research Council. This project seeks to develop an online public-facing research platform that brings together applied health scholars, social scientists, and humanities researchers to produce and compile information on refugees' psychosocial and community participation needs during and after resettlement. She also conducts work with Language Access in Healthcare and Social Services. This line of research represents a series of projects funded through different mechanisms that strived to identify, understand, and address disparities resulting from language barriers within service systems for refugees and immigrants with limited or emerging English proficiency.

Dana Rusch, PhD



Associate Professor

Clinical Psychiatry

University of Illinois Chicago

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- **Focus Areas:** Dr. Rusch's research interests include children's mental health services research; research-practice-policy connections to advance mental health equity; community-based organizational models of mental health promotion for immigrant families; impacts of local, state, and federal policies on the mental health and wellbeing of immigrant children, families, and communities; and the integration of policy advocacy within clinical psychology training.
- **Communities of Interest:** Children in Latinx immigrant/mixed-status families, unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, minoritized and marginalized youth
- **Selected Publications:**

Galvan, T., Rusch, D., Domenech Rodriguez, M.M., & Garcini, L.M. (2022). *Familias Divididas* [Divided Families]: Transnational family separation and undocumented Latinx immigrant health. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 36(4), 513-522. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000975>

Buckingham, A., Langhout, R., Rusch, D., Mehta, T.M., Chavez, N., Ferreira van Leer, K., Oberoi, A., Indart, M., Castro, V.P., King, E., & Olson, B. (2021). Statement on the roles of settings in supporting immigrants' resistance to injustice and oppression: A Policy Statement by the Society for Community Research and Action: Division 27 of the American Psychological Association. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 68(3-4), 269-291. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12515>

Rusch, D., Walden, A.L., & DeCarlo Santiago, C. (2020). A community-based organization model to promote Latinx immigrant mental health through advocacy skills and universal parenting supports. *American Journal of Community Psychology* [Special Issue: Applying Community-Based Participatory Approaches to Addressing Health Disparities and Promoting Health Equity], 66(3-4), 337-346. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12458>.

- **Spotlight Projects:** Dr. Rusch created and directs the **Immigrant Family Mental Health Advocacy Program** at UIC’s Institute for Juvenile Research (IJR) to advance research-practice-policy training at IJR to better prepare clinical psychologists to engage in local advocacy efforts and translate research into policy action that can lead to system-level change. In addition to being a founding member of the **Coalition for Immigrant Mental Health (CIMH)**, Dr. Rusch is also a Steering Committee Member and Co-Chair of the Policy and Advocacy Workgroup. She also serves as the Reflective Consultant for the Reimagining Mental Health Supports for Migrants initiative (for more on the CIMH, see <https://ourcimh.org/>). Dr. Rusch is also a **Co-Investigator on an NIMH-funded R01** entitled “Patient Navigators for Children’s Community Mental Health Services in High Poverty Urban Communities,” which examines the effectiveness of paraprofessionals as navigators for children’s mental health services and an **NCCIH-funded UG3/UH3 grant** that examines the feasibility and effectiveness of an after school mindfulness intervention to foster civic leadership, civic development, and wellbeing for youth of color as a strategy to combat structural racism and improve mental health and well-being.

Stephanie Torres, PhD



Assistant Professor

Educational Psychology

University of Illinois Chicago

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- **Focus Areas:** Dr. Torres's research emphasizes the resilience and cultural strengths among the Latinx community by focusing on the contexts of risk and resilience among low-income Latinx communities, particularly those impacted by immigration-related stress. She is also interested in trauma-informed care and ways to incorporate trauma-informed care in educational spaces.
- **Communities of Interest:** Latinx immigrant families
- **Selected Publications:**

Torres, S., Sosa, S.S., Toussaint, R.J.F., Jolie, S., & Bustos, Y. (2022). Oppressive Systems of Discrimination: The Impact of Discrimination on Latinx Immigrant Adolescents' Well-Being and Development. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. 32(2), 501-517.

Salusky, I., Rivera, C., Sanchez, B., & Torres, S.A. (2022). The structural violence of DACA and youth resistance. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*. 1-9.
- **Spotlight Projects:** Dr. Torres has been a part of Pilot Testing of a Structural Racism Intervention for Latinx Immigrant Families: Blending of Implementation Science and Community-Engaged Research. She also led a collaboration with a local community agency, The Resurrection Project, to develop and pilot test FIESTA (Familias Inmigrantes Empoderándose contra eStrés Tomando Acción), a 10-week intervention program led by community health workers which aims to address the stress caused by structural racism among Latinx immigrant families.