

# *Building the Next Generation of Social Work Researchers: The SHAWN Project*

SHAWN Back to School Mixer, 9/22/23, 3-5 pm, SCSU Campus

**Amy B. Smoyer**, Associate Professor, Southern CT State University

**Karen D'Angelo**, Assistant Professor, Southern CT State University

Student Research Assistants, Southern Connecticut University

- ❖ **Grace Beyerl**, SCSU '26, Social Work
- ❖ **Shoshana Mahon**, SCSU '24, Social Work
- ❖ **Jenny Malcein**, SCSU '24, Social Work
- ❖ **Melody Massaquoi**, SCSU '24, Social Work
- ❖ **Sam Morrison**, SCSU '24, Social Work
- ❖ **Sedona Worth**, SCSU '24, Sociology
- ❖ **Sabrina Yaser**, SCSU '26, Social Work
- ❖ **Emily Ziemba**, SCSU BSW '23, MSW '25



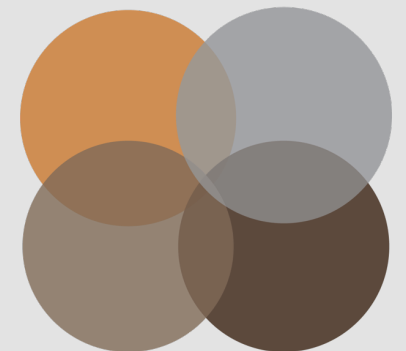
# Today's Agenda 3 pm – 5 pm



- 3:00 – 3:15: Gathering = Name Tag & Padlet
- 3:15 – 3:20: Welcome & Overview
- 3:20 – 3:30: World Premier of SHAWN Video
- 3:30 – 3:40: PhD Pipeline: Challenges & Urgency
- 3:40 – 3:50: Engaging Undergrads in Research
- 3:50 – 4:00: The R15 – SHAWN
- 4:00 – 4:10: Project Teamwork
- 4:10 – 4:25: Developmental Projects
  - Alabama
  - Campus Survey
  - SHAWN Summer
  - Power in a Shower
- 4:25 – 4:35: Preliminary Findings
- 4:30 – 5:00: Mix & Mingle



# The PhD Pipeline: Challenges & Urgency

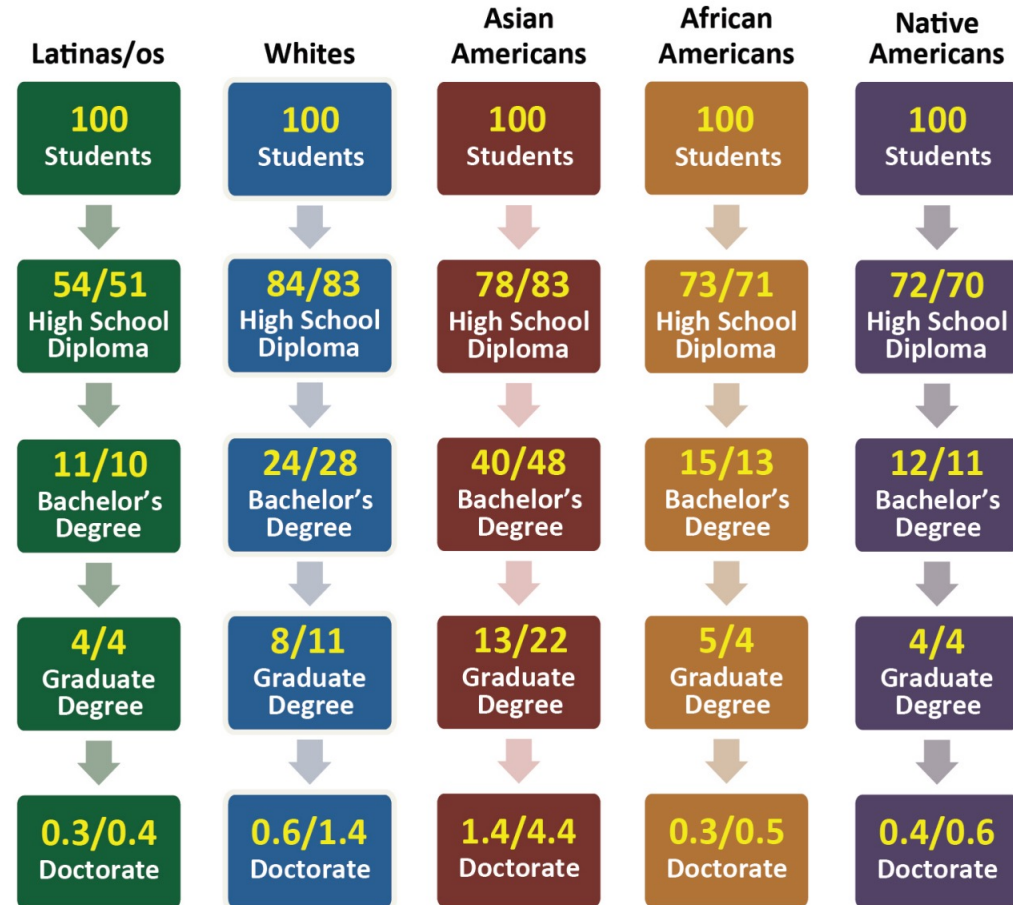


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# The Doctoral Degree Pipeline: Challenges

## Lack of racial diversity among people with PhDs (Men/Women)

Figure 3. The US Education Pipeline, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2000



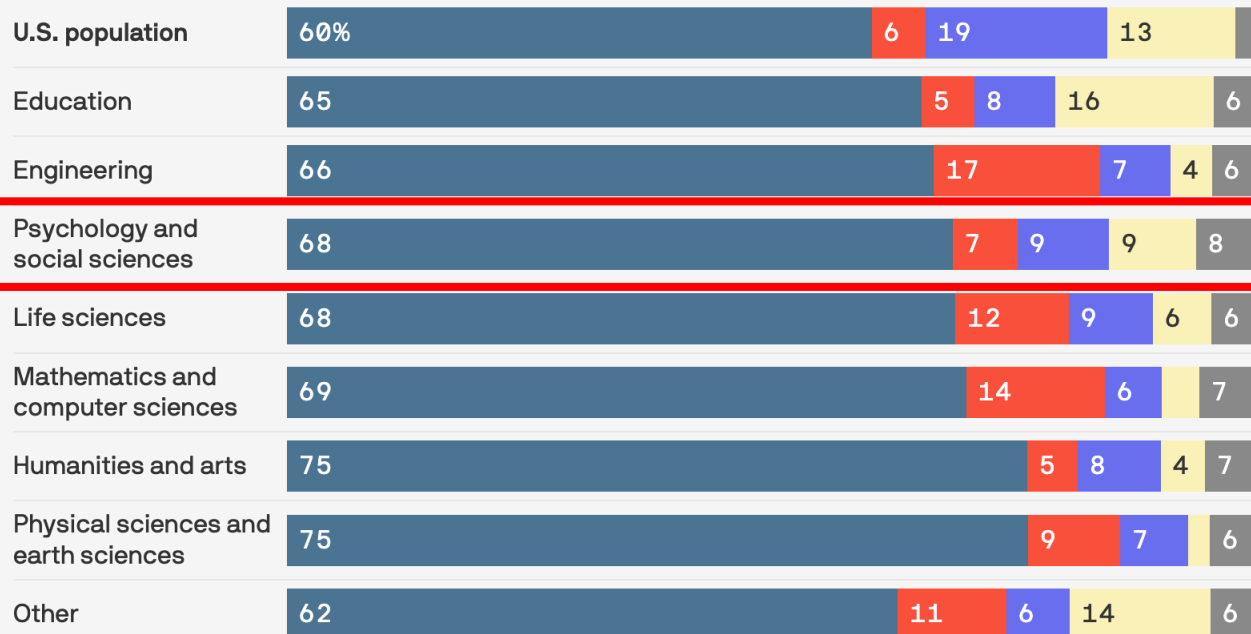
Source: Drawn from American FactFinder data for 2000, compiled by the US Bureau of the Census.

# The Doctoral Degree Pipeline: Challenges

Lack of racial diversity among people with doctoral degrees.

### Doctoral degrees earned by race/ethnicity, 2019

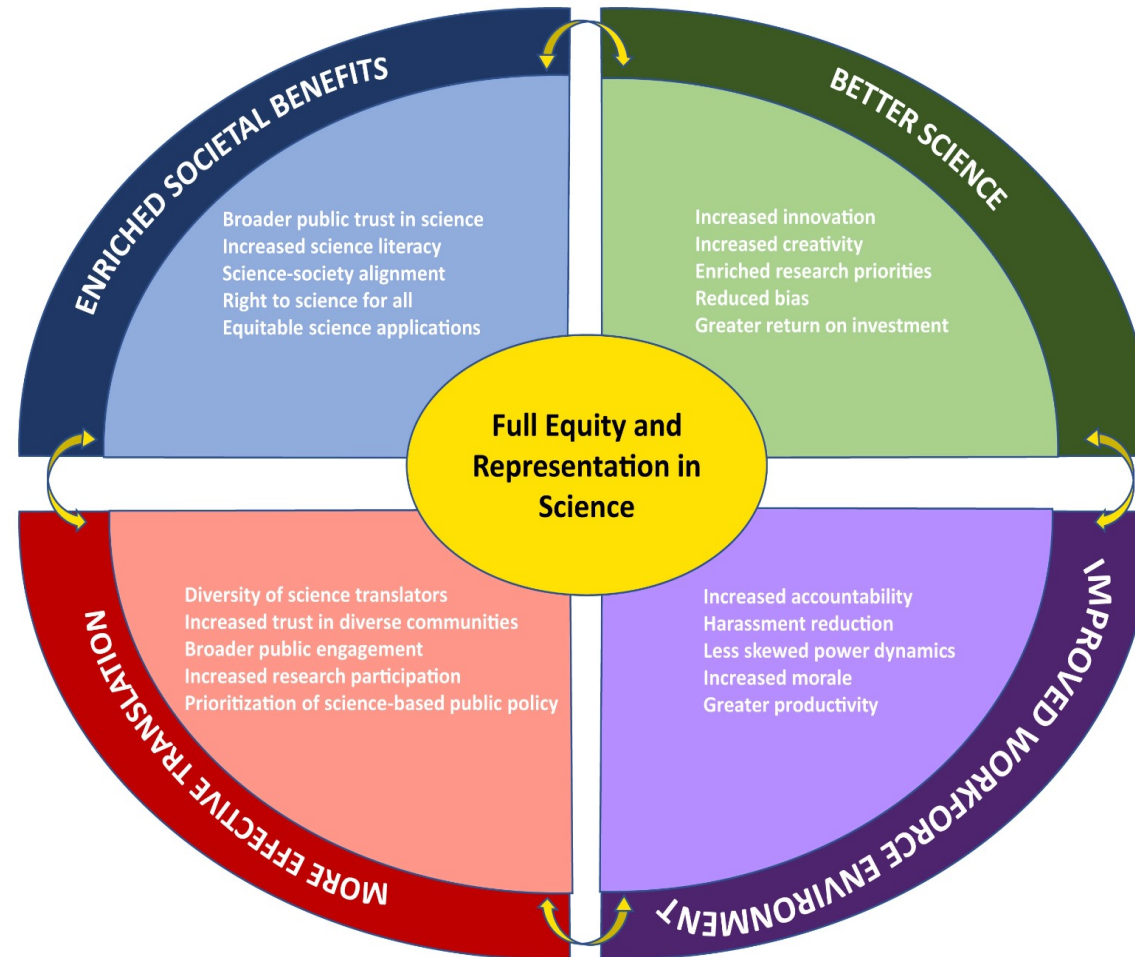
■ White ■ Asian ■ Hispanic or Latino ■ Black ■ Mixed or other



Data: [NSF Survey of Earned Doctorates](#), [U.S. Census Bureau](#); Chart: Connor Rothschild/Axios

# The Doctoral Degree Pipeline: Benefits of Equity & Representation

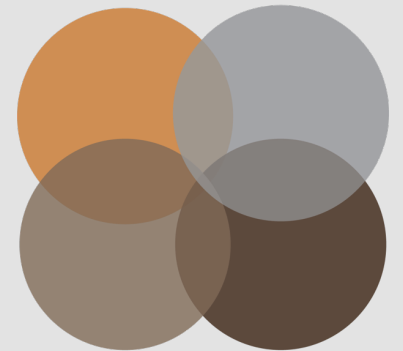
Fig. 1.



*Increased representativeness within the overall science system is central to improving science and societal benefits.*

Graves Jr, J. L., Kearney, M., Barabino, G., & Malcom, S. (2022). Inequality in science and the case for a new agenda. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(10), e2117831119.

# Engaging Undergraduates in Research



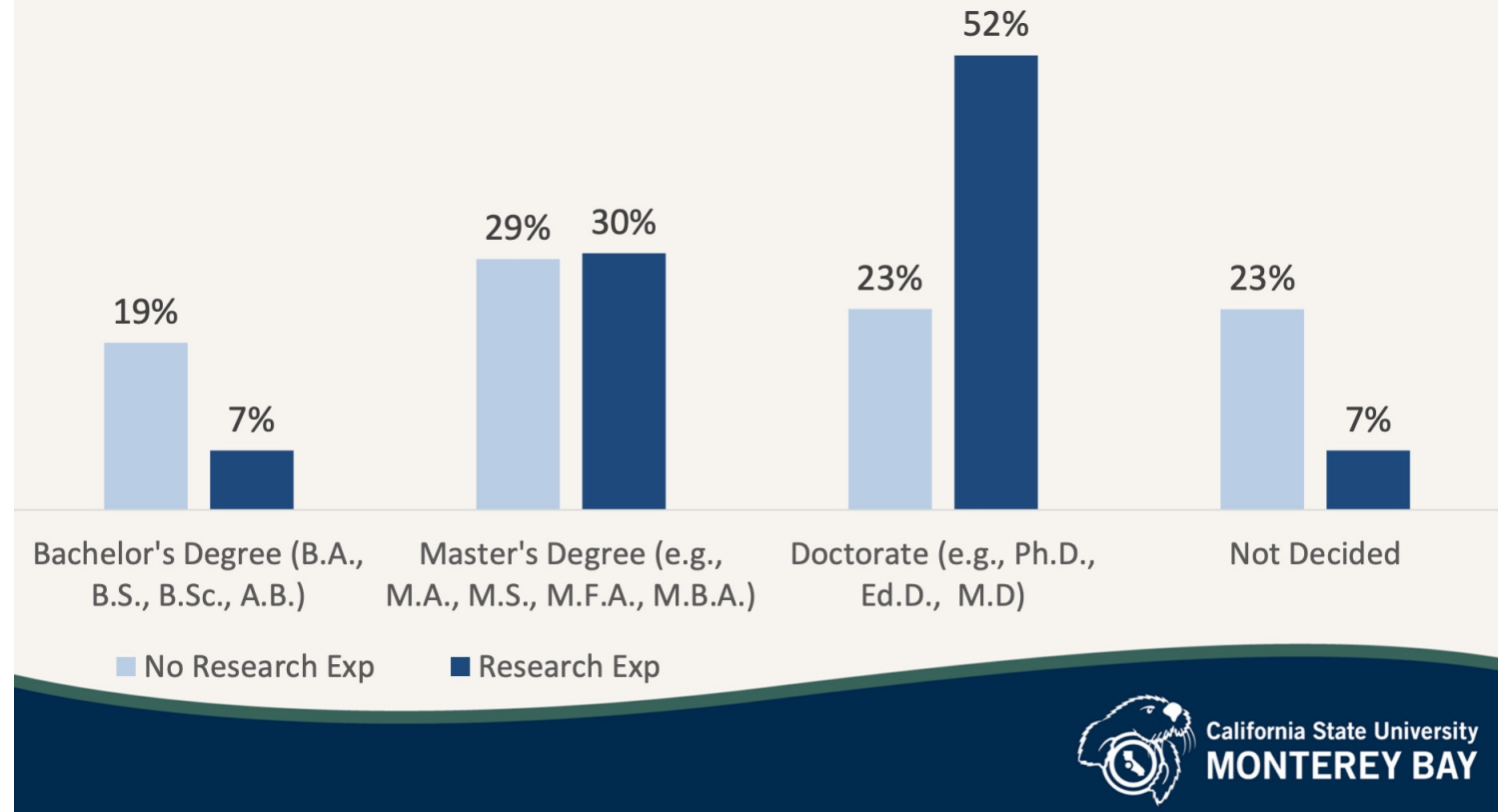
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## Engaging Undergraduates in Research:

*Students who participate in undergrad research are more likely to earn a doctorate.*

## Educational Aspirations

- Students who have research experience are significantly more likely to aspire to go to graduate school, especially at the doctoral level





## Engaging Undergraduates in Research:

*Undergraduate research is a High Impact educational Practice (HIP)*

***Boosts retention & educational outcomes, esp. First Gen and Black and Latinx students***

- **Undergraduate Research**
- **Collaborative Assignments and Projects**
- **Diversity/Global Learning**
- **Service Learning, Community Based Learning**
- Capstone Courses and Projects
- Internships
- First Year Seminars & Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing Intensive Courses

The very best HIPs offer all of the following experiences and benefits:



Considerable time and effort requirements for students



Opportunities to apply concepts in real-world settings



Meaningful interactions between faculty and students



Collaboration with people of diverse backgrounds



Constant, Consistent Feedback



Reflection and integrative learning opportunities



Engaging  
Undergraduates  
in Research

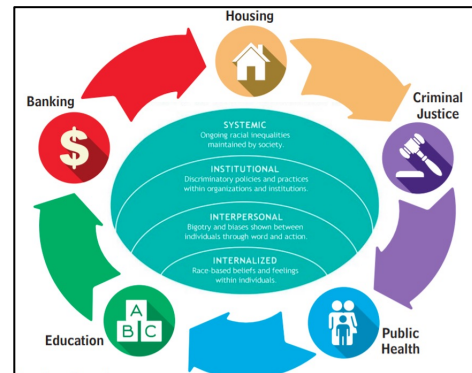
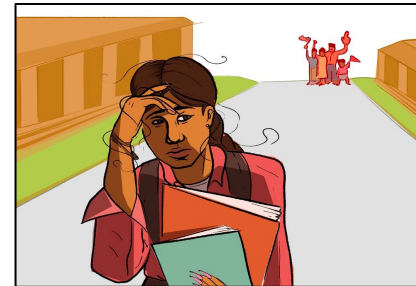
*Opportunities &  
Barriers for  
Faculty*



# Engaging Undergraduates in Research:

## Barriers for Students

- Lower rates of participation in UR
  - First-generation
  - Low-income
  - Transfer
  - Adult learners
  - Students of color are all less likely to participate in UR (even at MSIs)
  - Pell eligible students



Haeger, H., Armstron-Land, M., & Smith, C. (2019). Identifying and breaking down barriers to participation in undergraduate research. <https://researchinsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IDBarriersUndergrad-HaegerArmstrong-LandSmith2019.pdf>

Engaging  
Undergraduates  
in Research

*Opportunities for  
Students*

# 5 **Practical** Benefits *of* **Undergraduate Research**

**1. Units to Graduate**

**2. GPA Booster**

**3. Unique Resume  
Builder**

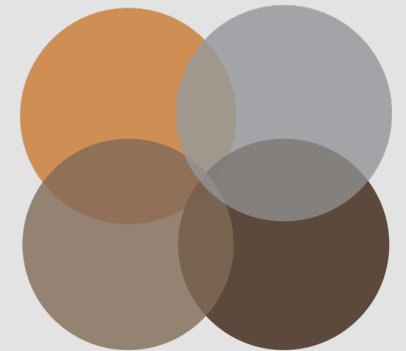
**4. Great Networking  
Opportunity**

**5. Professional Reference  
Letters and  
Recommendations**

# S.H.A.W.N.

## Stop HIV /AIDS Women's Network

NIDA/NIH 1R15DA056285-01, (PI Smoyer, Amy B.) Project Title: **Impact of COVID-19 Criminal-Legal Practices on HIV Risk among Women Who Use Drugs: A Multi-Methods Qualitative Exploration**, 05/01/2022 – 04/30/2025



# SHAWN

# Funding & Inspiration:

## The NIH R15 Mechanism

Shawn Lang

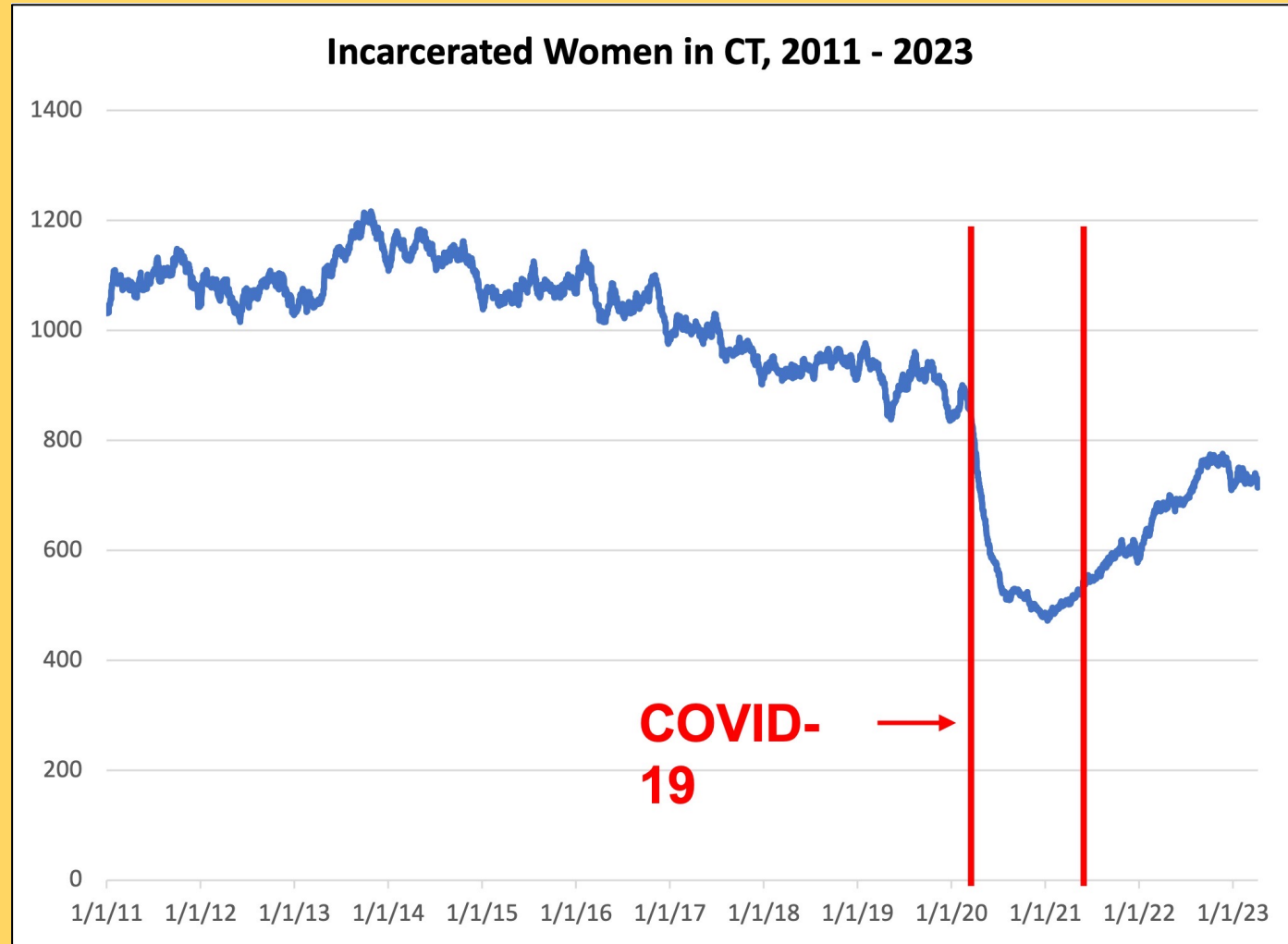
### National Institute of Health R15

*The R15 "Supports small-scale research projects at educational institutions that provide baccalaureate or advanced degrees for a significant number of the Nation's research scientists but that have not been major recipients of NIH support (less than \$6M/year). The goals of the R15 are to:*

- *support meritorious research,*
- *expose students to research, and*
- *strengthen the research environment of the institution.*



The number of women incarcerated in CT dropped by 43% during COVID.



# Specific Aims

## RESEARCH QUESTION:

*What was the impact of COVID-19 shifts in criminal-legal practices on the HIV risk behaviors of justice-involved women who use drugs?*

- **Specific Aim #1:** PROVIDE undergraduate students the opportunity to gain significant experience with community engaged research.
- **Specific Aim #2:** IDENTIFY the pre-COVID-19 HIV risk behaviors and protective factors of justice-involved women who use drugs.
- **Specific Aim #3:** DOCUMENT and ASSESS HIV risk during COVID-19 among justice-involved women who use drugs.



## Team Building

### Recruit & Hire



### Orientation

- CITI Certification
- Teams: Read, Listen, Watch
- Website Photo & Bio
- Office Hours Schedule

### Communication

- Friday Meetings
- Group Text
- Teams Work
- Email



## Community Engagement

### Meetings

- Ryan White
- Reentry Roundtables
- Yale CIRA QRWG
- CT Social Work Action Alliance (SWAA)

### Volunteer

- SWAN
- City Wide Youth
- Stop Solitary CT
- DESK



## Data Collection

### Create Instruments

- Demographic Survey
- Life History Interview
- COVID Calendar Interview

### Develop Recruitment Plan

- Logo & Website
- Flyers & Outreach
- IRB Approval

### Conduct Interviews



## Analysis & Dissemination

### Data Management & Analysis

- Transcribe
- RQI: Summarize & Share
- Code & Thematic Analysis

### Digital Story Telling



### Dissemination

- Peer Reviewed Journals
- Conferences
- Community Meetings
- Website/Social Media

# What was your COVID experience?

**A research study with  
formerly incarcerated women.**

*Amy Smoyer, a social work researcher at Southern Connecticut State University, is interviewing women with histories of drug use and incarceration to learn more about their lives during the first year of the COVID-19 epidemic (2020-2021).*

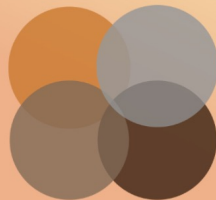
## **Eligibility Criteria**

- Age 18 or older
- History of drug use
- Incarcerated at York CI at least 3 times before March 2020

## **Study Information**

- This study includes 1 survey (30 min) + 2 interviews (60-90 min).
- All participants will be compensated for their time: \$20 for survey and \$40 for each interview.

**All participation will be confidential. No names or  
other identifying information will be shared.**

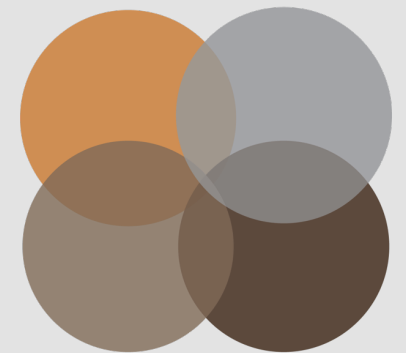


**SHAWN**

If you are interested in participating,  
please complete contact form at:  
<https://tinyurl.com/SHAWN23>



# Project Teamwork



**SHAWN**

# Project Team: SCSU Faculty & Students



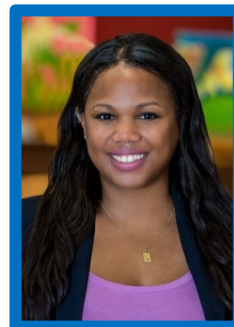
- PI: Amy B. Smoyer, PhD, Associate Professor, SCSU Department of Social Work
- Dynamic Team: SHAWN solicits applications from BSW students at the start of every semester.
- Current team = Seven (7) SCSU undergraduate students, + one (1) MSW GA
- Collaborator: Karen D'Angelo, PhD, Assistant Professor, SCSU Department of Social Work



# Project Team: Community Consultants (SCSU Alum!)



- [www.theshawnproject.com/team](http://www.theshawnproject.com/team)
- Core Team Consultants
  - Maribel Oyola, MSW – ongoing core member (SCSU MSW alumna)
  - Nadine Ruff, MSW – ongoing core member (SCSU BSW & MSW alumna)
  - Jamie Myers, MD, Yale School of Medicine, Clinical Expert
- Community Consultants
  - Ashley Hampton, LCSW – Clinical Supervision (SCSU MSW alumna)
  - Monya Saunders – Recruitment (Yale Researcher)
  - Amber Sutton, LCSW, PhD – Trauma Informed Practice (Faculty, Auburn University in Montgomery)
- Pamela Allen, CEO & President, Evergreen Family Oriented Services – Data Collection



# Harm Reduction Framework

## Principles of Harm Reduction

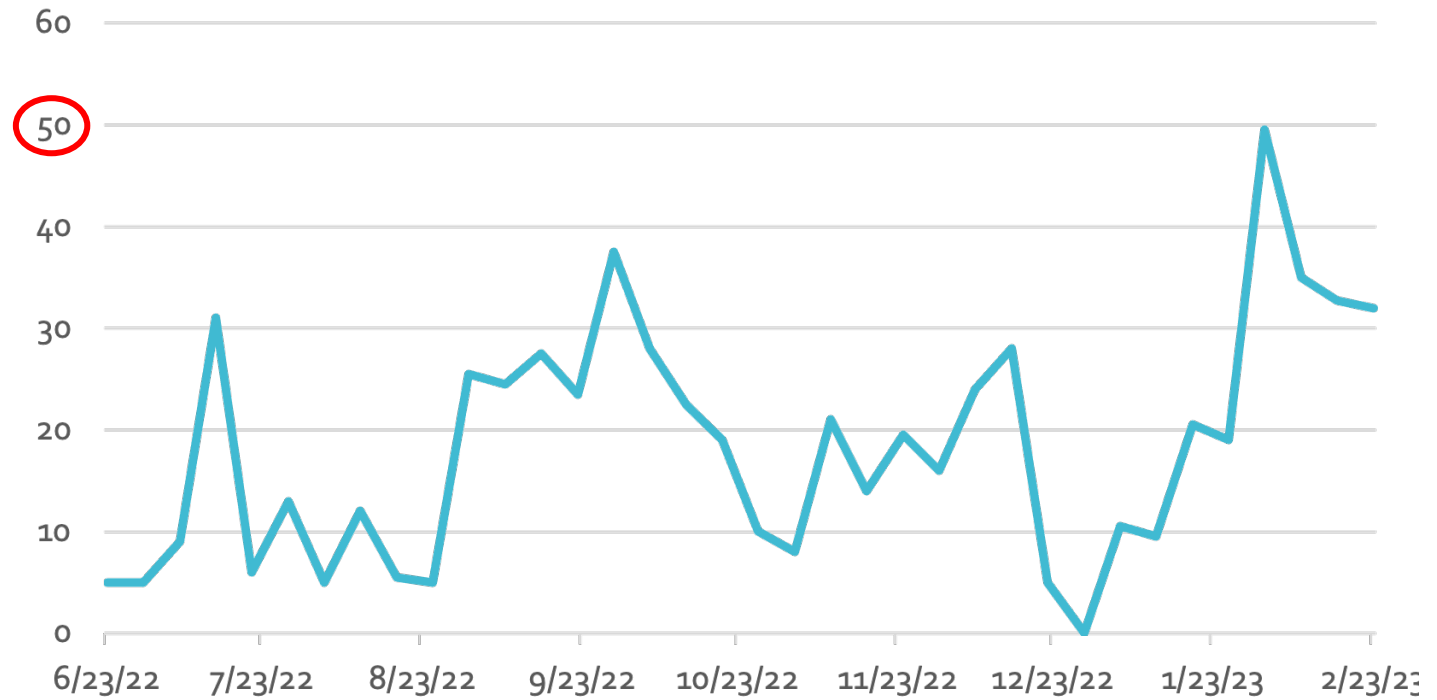
<https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/>

- Meet people where they are.
- Non-judgmental, non-coercive.
- Any level of engagement is better than no engagement.
- Whatever the question, the answer is yes.
- Understands engagement in research is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon that can encompass a continuum of behaviors and acknowledges that people will engage in different ways.
- Recognizes that the realities of poverty, class, racism, social isolation, past trauma, sex-based discrimination, and other social inequalities affect both people's vulnerability to and capacity for engaging in research.
- Ensures that undergrads have a real voice in the creation of research opportunities designed to engage them.

Harm Reduction  
Framework:

Meeting People  
Where They Are

Team Hours Per Week



## Harm Reduction Framework:

## Team Engagement Strategies

### Flexibility & Structure

- Friday Meetings
- Office Hours
- Teams
- Progress Notes

### Belonging

- Snacks
- Office Space
- Field Trips
- Swag
- Website

### Various ways to Engage

- Blog
- Practice Projects
- Community Events
- Writing
- Reading
- Podcasts





## Developmental Project #1:

The Legacy Project  
with AIM  
(Montgomery, AL)

# What is women's lived experience of incarceration in Alabama and how do modern correctional systems reflect the legacy of slavery?


- 15 interviewed focused on activities of daily life: eating, using the bathroom, sleeping, relationship with staff, peers, and self.
- Theoretical Framework = Bryan Stevenson's Legacy
- **PRACTICE:** Transcription, Coding (Dedoose), and Analysis in conjunction with AIM staff and clients



# Developmental Project #2: Campus Survey


## To what extent have undergraduates at SCSU been impacted by criminal legal systems?

- Online anonymous survey (n = 195)
- Questions if asked if participant or any member of their family or any friend had ever been incarcerated or on parole or probation.
- 57% of respondents reported that they have family or friend who has been incarcerated or on parole/probation.
- **PRACTICE: Survey development (Qualtrics), IRB Application, Recruitment, Data Collection, Analysis, Dissemination**



The poster features a central orange square with a green border. At the top, it reads 'SCSU UNDERGRADS' in white. Below this is a black icon of a scale of justice. The text 'Complete this short survey.' is followed by 'The criminal-legal systems affects us all. We need your perspective.' To the right is a QR code. Below the QR code is a URL: 'https://tinyurl.com/4j2wkkch'. At the bottom left is the SHAWN logo, and at the bottom right is a small text block providing details about the research project and contact information for Dr. Smoyer.


**SCSU UNDERGRADS**



**Complete this short survey.**  
The criminal-legal systems affects us all.  
We need your perspective.

- Participation is **anonymous** and voluntary.
- The survey takes **less than 5 minutes** to complete.
- This survey is designed to **build understanding** of the ways in which SCSU undergraduates have been impacted of criminal-legal systems.

<https://tinyurl.com/4j2wkkch>

 This survey was designed and conducted by SHAWN, a research project that is training SCSU undergraduate to engage in community-based research (NIDA/NIH 1R15DA056285-01) For more information about this survey or SHAWN, please contact, Dr. Smoyer at SmoyerA@southernct.edu

***Our article is under review!*** Smoyer, A.B., D'Angelo, K., Jones, E., Mahon, S., Massaquoi, M., Worth, S., & Ziemba, E. (*under review*). Criminal-legal systems, undergraduate college students & community organizing. *Journal of Community Practice*.

**8 weeks of community site visits and conversation in about drug use, HIV, and criminal-legal systems.**

Prep Project #3:

SHAWN Summer



Developmental  
Project #4:

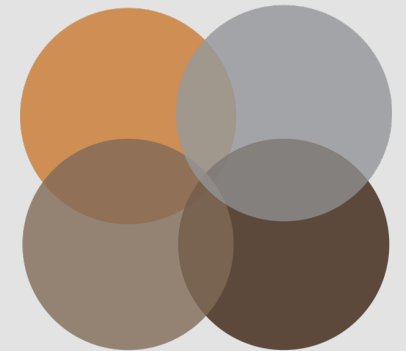
Program  
Evaluation for  
“Power in a  
Shower”



Community  
Engaged Research  
with Dr. D'Angelo



# Preliminary SHAWN Findings



**SHAWN**

	Queen	Cathy	Elaine	Jessica	Elle
Age Range	40-50	50-60	30-40	40-50	30-40
Race	Black	Black	Latina	Latina	Latina
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	Heterosexual	Bisexual	Bisexual	Bisexual
Drug Use	Alcohol, Cannabis, Hallucinogenic, Opioids	Cocaine	Alcohol, Cannabis, Cocaine, Stimulants	Alcohol, Cannabis, Hallucinogenic	Alcohol, Cannabis, Cocaine, Heroin (injection drug use)
Number of Children	2	2	5	2	2
Loss of Child	Death (Cancer)	Death (accident, incarceration)	DCF	Death, DCF	DCF
Sex Work	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
History of Homelessness	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
COVID	Unhoused, using drugs	Working fast food, arrested on warrant	Rent room, sex work, arrested	Unhoused, Substance Use	Living in motel with GF, sex work, IDU



QUEEN



ROOTED IN FAMILY



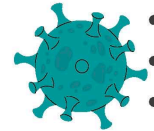
Two sons; eldest passed away from cancer as a child.



- HS Diploma
- Employment Hx
- Caregiver



- Grief & Loss
- PCP, Weed, Alcohol
- Treatment Hx



- Homeless
- Drug Use
- Social Support



# Family Values

- **Supportive family systems**, especially mother & sister.
- **Long-term relationship with male partner** ended after 20+ years.
- **Beloved sons:** One passed away in accident and one incarcerated.



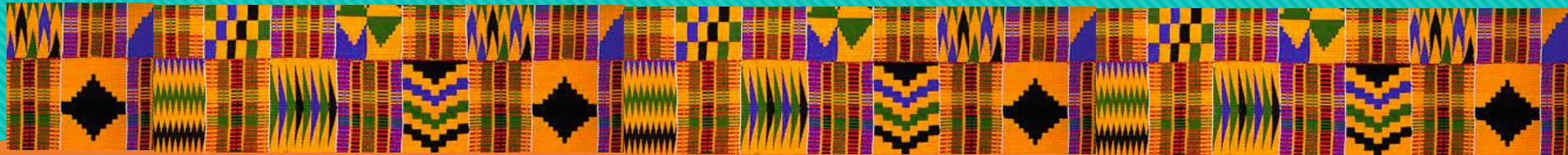
# Cathy

## Criminal-Legal

- Incarcerated (6+ years)
- Probation (various)



History of crack use  
Living with HIV



IN THE U.S., AROUND  
**86%** OF WOMEN  
DIAGNOSED WITH HIV  
CONTRACTED THE  
VIRUS THROUGH  
**HETEROSEXUAL  
SEX**



amfAR  
MAKING AIDS HISTORY

## COVID ERA EXPERIENCE:

- Was displaced from rented unit where she was living with husband. Stayed in shelter and then found new place.
- Worried about her incarcerated son's exposure to COVID.
- Career in food service: Worked through COVID at fast food restaurant.
- Arrested for outstanding warrant and extradited to another state, where she was sentenced to 90 days + probation.



# Elaine

## STRENGTHS

- Very kind to others, even in moments when she does not have much.
- Very friendly & able to create connections and relationships.
- Gained wisdom through periods of homelessness.

## CHILDHOOD

- Elaine's mother used drugs; raised by other kin.
- Elaine's parents died when Elaine was a teenager.

## MOTHERHOOD

- Elaine has five children.
- She had her first child while in high school.
- Her parental rights were terminated for all her children.



## CRIMINAL-LEGAL

- First charge = 3 years probation
- First arrest in 20s; incarcerated 6+ times.
- Lost Section 8 voucher when incarcerated for probation violation.

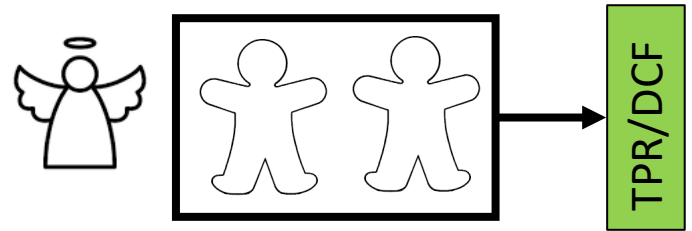
## COVID-19

- HOUSING: Stayed at a friend's house. Not safe.
- INCOME: Sex work with "regulars"
- ARRESTED but not incarcerated
- SOCIAL SERVICES: Visited a drop-in centers.

## MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE

- Depression, suicidal ideation
- Alcohol, PCP, cannabis, crack cocaine

**Jessica**



# Before COVID-19

# During COVID-19

Employment:  
Retail & Food  
Service

Social  
Support:  
Death of  
close friend

Housing  
Instability

Criminal-  
Legal:  
Age 15 →

Substance  
Use (Dust &  
Cannabis)



Employ  
ment

Social  
Support:  
Online  
Individual  
Therapy; Friend

Criminal  
- Legal

Substance  
Use

Housing  
Instability  
(Unhoused)

# Elle

## Childhood Poverty

Father passed away.  
Mother is disabled.  
Sold drugs with sister.

## Substance Use

PCP, weed,  
crack, and  
heroin (IDU)



Physical



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Emotional



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse



## Partner & Child

Long Term Relationship with girlfriend.  
First Child: Co-parent with her partner.  
LOSS: She relapsed and relationship with partner ended. She moved out of family home.  
Child lives with ex-partner.



## Criminal-Legal Involvement

- Stolen Car & Larceny (shoplifting)
- Drug Sales
- Probation Violations

Second Child: Born in prison. Father was sex work client. When she was released from prison, her parental rights were terminated.

## COVID-19

HOUSING = Lived in self-pay motel with girlfriend.

DRUG USE = Opioids, IDU

INCOME = Sex work and drug sales.

ARRESTED = Bonded out, sentenced to 2 years in prison.



Thank you!

[www.theshawnproject.com](http://www.theshawnproject.com)

