Julia Lesnick, MSW, PhD Candidate

University of California, Los Angeles – Department of Social Welfare

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. **University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)** Anticipated May 2027

Department of Social Welfare, Luskin School of Public Affairs

Dissertation: Who Governs a Decentralized System of Youth Justice? Realignment, Reform, and the Battle over Youth Incarceration in California

Chair: Laura S. Abrams, PhD, MSW

MSW **University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)** 2023

BS **Cornell University, Ithaca, NY** 2018

Bachelor of Science in Human Development, with High Distinction

AREAS OF INTEREST

Research: *Juvenile Legal System, Youth Justice, Policy Implementation, Youth Organizing, Organizational Change, Qualitative Methods*

Teaching: *Social Policy, Macro Practice, Research Methods, Juvenile and Criminal Justice, Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood, Human Behavior and Social Environment*

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

1. Abrams, L. S., Watson, K., **Lesnick, J.,** & Barnert, E. (In press). "I was able to stay afloat": Formerly incarcerated young adults' experiences of a guaranteed income program. *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research.*
2. **Lesnick, J.,** Wray-Lake, L., Rosales, G., & Vargas, J. (2026). Deciding when to make noise: A study of youth voice in carceral contexts. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 36, e70151.
3. **Lesnick, J.** (2025). Guaranteed income: A promising direction for intervention with transition age youth in reentry. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 108640.
4. **Lesnick, J.,** Abrams, L. S., Angel, K., & Barnert, E. (2025). Envisioning the future of youth justice: A focus group study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 108097.
5. **Lesnick, J**., Abrams, L. S., & Barnert, E. (2023). Youth justice at a crossroads: Twenty-first century progressive reforms and lessons to inform the path forward. *Social Service Review*, *97*(4), 755-804.
6. **Lesnick, J.,** Abrams, L. S., Angel, K., & Barnert, E. (2023). Credible messenger mentoring to promote the health of youth involved in the juvenile legal system: A narrative review. *Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Health Care*, 101435.

7. Maguire-Jack, K., Steinman, K. J., **Lesnick, J.,** Solomon, A., West, K., Roush, K., … Cunningham, N. (2022). Implementing Triple P during the COVID-19 pandemic with families at risk for substance use. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 105636.
8. **Lesnick, J.**, & Mendle, J. (2021). Rejection sensitivity and negative urgency: A proposed framework of intersecting risk for peer stress. *Developmental Review*, 62, 100998.
9. Agans, J. P., Rosenthal, E., **Lesnick, J.,** Sloan, M., Connor, S., Majano, R., Chicas, V., Davis, T., Coyle, S., & Tifft, M. (2021). Research-practice partnerships as community-engaged learning: Lessons learned from a collaborative project with youth development programs. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 13(2), Article 5.

BOOK CHAPTERS

1. Abrams, L. S., & **Lesnick, J.** (In press). Youth in custody in the United States. In T. Goddard, D. Johns, & S. Case (Eds.), *Mapping juvenile justice: Contextual factors, emerging paradigms, and typological insights*. Palgrave Macmillan.

FELLOWSHIPS & GRANTS

2026 – 2027 Social Welfare Dissertation Year Award, UCLA Department of Social Welfare
Title: "Who Governs a Decentralized System of Youth Justice? Realignment, Reform, and the Battle over Youth Incarceration in California"
Awarded: **$30,000**

2025 – 2026 Haynes Lindley Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, John Randolph & Dora Haynes Foundation
Title: "Shifting from State to County Control: Exploring Local Governance of Juvenile Justice Systems"
Awarded: **$28,600**

2025 Melanie Foundation Scholarship, Melanie Foundation
Awarded: **$3,000**

2024 Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Award, UCLA Graduate Division
Title: "Youth Voice and Youth Justice: A Constructivist Grounded Theory Study"
Awarded: **$6,000**

2024 Franklin D. Gilliam Jr. Social Justice Award, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs
Title: "Youth Voice and Youth Justice: A Constructivist Grounded Theory Study"
Awarded: **$2,216**

2017 – 2018 Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research, Cornell University College of Human Ecology
Title: Fellowship Program for Translational Research on Youth Development and Engagement
Awarded: **$4,000**

2017 Cornell Cooperative Extension Summer Project Grant, Cornell University College of Human Ecology

Title: "Trauma Informed Care in Afterschool Programs: A Comprehensive Training Curriculum for Broome County Providers"
Awarded: **$3,600**

PRESENTATIONS

1. **Lesnick, J.** (2026, November). "Governing a Decentralized Youth Justice System: California's Realignment Policy and the Battle over Youth Incarceration." American Society of Criminology (ASC) Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.
2. **Lesnick, J.**, Wray-Lake, L. (2026, January). "Understanding and Facilitating Youth Voice: Integrating Community Engaged Methods with Constructivist Grounded Theory." Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C.
3. Abrams, L. S., **Lesnick, J.,** Mazursky, N., Howard, R., Barnert, E. (2026, January). "Guaranteed Income and Reentry: Perspectives from Formerly Incarcerated Young Adults." Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C.
4. Murray, B., Jacobs, L., Fixler, A., & **Lesnick, J.** (2026, January). "Getting the Warriors and the Guardians to the Table: The Dual Role of Cultural and Structural Factors in Implementing Police Reform for Youth." Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C.
5. **Lesnick, J.**, Wray-Lake, L. (2025, January). "Advancing Social Change on Their Own Terms: A Constructivist Grounded Theory Study of Youth Voice in the Juvenile Legal System." Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA.
6. **Lesnick, J.,** Abrams, L. S., Angel, K., Barnert, E. (2024, September). "Envisioning the future of youth justice: A focus group study." National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Research Conference, Pittsburgh, PA.
7. **Lesnick, J.,** Abrams, L. S., Angel, K., Barnert, E. (2024, January). "Envisioning the future of youth justice: A focus group study." Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C.
8. **Lesnick, J.,** Abrams, L. S., Washington, D., Kolivoski, K., & Lea, C. (2023, January). "Youth justice at a crossroads: A discussion of visions for the next horizon." Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) Annual Meeting, Phoenix, AZ.
9. **Lesnick, J**., Mendle, J., & McKone, K. P. (2018, April). "The impact of pubertal timing on rejection thoughts and relationship outcomes." Society for Research in Adolescence (SRA) Biennial Conference, Minneapolis, MN.
10. **Lesnick, J.**, Mendle, J., & McKone, K. P. (2017, April). "Rejection sensitivity mediates the association between negative urgency and peer relationships." Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Biennial Conference, Austin, TX.

INVITED TALKS & GUEST LECTURES

1. "Youth Voice in Carceral Contexts." (2026, October). Invited presenter for the 2026 Positive Youth Development Research Symposium, Innovation Center of Youth Justice, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

2. "Civic Engagement for System-Impacted, Formerly Incarcerated, and/or Criminalized Youth." (2026, April). Guest Lecturer for Public Affairs 88S: Youth Civic Engagement and Leadership in Public Institutions, Fiona Ma and Dr. Laura Wray-Lake, UCLA.
3. "Youth Incarceration Reform in California." (2026, March). Guest Lecturer for Social Welfare 290T – Juvenile Justice Policy, Dr. Laura Abrams, UCLA.
4. "Positive, Innovative Solutions to Youth Development: STEM, Civic Engagement, and Healthy Living." (2017, October). Invited co-presenter for University Spotlight on Human Ecology – Cornell Trustee Council Annual Meeting, Ithaca, NY.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Faculty Instructor

California State University, Los Angeles, School of Social Work

"Administration of Social Services Agencies" (MSW Level) 2026

Graduate Teaching Fellow

University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Public Affairs

"Senior Public Affairs Capstone Series" (Undergraduate Level) 2024 – 2026

Awarded Outstanding Teaching Assistant 2024

Graduate Teaching Assistant

University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Social Welfare

"Foundations of Social Welfare Policy" (MSW Level) 2023

University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Public Affairs

"Gangs, Criminal Justice & Mass Incarceration" (Undergraduate Level) 2023

"Social Problems and Social Change" (Undergraduate Level) 2022

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant

Cornell Prison Education Program, Cayuga Correctional Facility

"Science Fiction Literature" (Undergraduate Level) 2018

Cornell University, Department of Human Development

"Introductory Research Methods" (Undergraduate Level) 2016

POLICY AND PRACTICE BRIEFS

1. **Lesnick, J.,** Abrams, L. S., Brinderson, E., Howard, R., & Barnert, E. (2025). Evaluation of Transition Age Youth Services at Anti-Recidivism Coalition. California Violence Intervention and Prevention Program.
2. **Lesnick, J.**, Wray-Lake, L., Rosales, G., & Vargas, J. (2025). Youth Voice & Youth Justice: Study Report. Disseminated to the California Alliance for Youth and Community Justice.
3. **Lesnick, J.**, Abrams, L. S., & Barnert, E. (2024). *Positive Youth Development in the Juvenile Legal System*. California Office of Youth and Community Restoration.

4. **Lesnick, J.**, Abrams, L. S., & Barnert, E. (2024). *Stepping Home Elements – Restorative Justice.* California Office of Youth and Community Restoration.
5. **Lesnick, J.**, Abrams, L. S., & Barnert, E. (2024). *Practice Guidelines for Treating Behavioral Health Disorders in Secure Youth Treatment Facilities*. California Office of Youth and Community Restoration.
6. **Lesnick, J.**, Abrams, L. S., & Barnert, E. (2024). *Stepping Home Elements – Credible Messengers.* California Office of Youth and Community Restoration.

PROFESSIONAL AND PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

2024 – Present	**Restorative Justice Mediator**, Centinela Youth Services, Inglewood, CA.
2023 – 2025	**External Evaluator** – Transition Age Youth Reentry Services, Contract with Anti-Recidivism Coalition, Los Angeles, CA.
2023	**Analyst** – Health Based Guidance for the Rehabilitation, Healing, and Care of Youth in the Juvenile Justice System, Contract with California Office of Youth and Community Restoration, Sacramento, CA.
2022	**MSW Intern, Therapist, Group Facilitator**, Social & Emotional Wellness Initiative, Culver City, CA.
2021 – 2022	**MSW Intern, Case Manager**, Disability Community Resource Center, Venice, CA.
2019 – 2021	**Program Quality Analyst** – Evidence Based Community Services and Alternatives to Incarceration, The New York Foundling, New York, NY.
2018 – 2019	**AmeriCorps VISTA**, NYC Administration for Children's Services Division of Youth and Family Justice, New York, NY.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2025 – 2026 **Research Team Member,** *Promote Smart Decarceration Futures Project,* Social Work Grand Challenges
Principal Investigators: Oluwayomi Paseda, PhD, MSW & Carly Murray, MSW
Responsibilities: Collaborated on anticipatory social work, foresight and futures thinking tools to develop transformative directions for smart decarceration.

2025 **Graduate Research Assistant,** *Effective Youth Interventions Evaluation Study,* University of Pittsburgh
Principal Investigator: Leah Jacobs, PhD, MSW
Responsibilities: Conducted field work, site visits, and collected observation data for NIJ-funded multi-year evaluation study of youth policing practices.

2023 – 2025 **Graduate Research Assistant,** *Guaranteed Income for Justice-Involved Youth,* UCLA Social Welfare
Principal Investigators: Laura Abrams, PhD, MSW & Elizabeth Barnert, MD, MPH
Responsibilities: Collected and analyzed longitudinal interview and survey data on a randomized controlled trial study piloting a guaranteed income intervention for transition age youth involved in the legal system.

2023 – 2025 **Principal Investigator,** *Youth Voice and Youth Justice: A Constructivist Grounded Theory Study,* UCLA Social Welfare
Faculty Supervisor: Laura Wray-Lake, PhD
Responsibilities: Designed and implemented community-engaged research on civic engagement and youth voice with young people involved in the legal system; Conducted, coded, and analyzed all interview data using constructivist grounded theory; Recruited and facilitated a team of formerly incarcerated youth consultants to collaboratively interpret and disseminate study findings.

2021 – 2024 **Graduate Research Assistant,** *Life Course Intervention Research Network – Youth Justice Node,* UCLA Department of Pediatrics
Principal Investigators: Elizabeth Barnert, MD, MPH & Laura Abrams, PhD, MSW
Responsibilities: Conducted literature reviews of 21st century reform trends in the juvenile legal system; Coordinated and facilitated national focus groups on juvenile legal system reform priorities; Led qualitative coding and analysis of focus group data; Managed study coordination and participant recruitment.

2015 – 2018 **Undergraduate Research Assistant,** *Adolescent Transitions Lab,* Cornell University Department of Human Development
Principal Investigator: Jane Mendle, PhD
Responsibilities: Conducted data entry, coding, and cleaning of qualitative journal entries, survey measures, and the Add Health (National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health) dataset; Developed a theoretical model of adolescent rejection sensitivity and interpersonal difficulties; Coordinated and managed recruitment, hiring, and SAS training for new research assistants.

2013 – 2016 **Research Assistant,** *Think:Kids,* Massachusetts General Hospital Department of Psychiatry
Principal Investigator: Alisha Pollastri, PhD
Responsibilities: Collected data on the Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) model for child behavioral health; Conducted analyses on demographic differences in treatment efficacy using STATA; Prepared training resources and participant evaluations for CPS model trainings.

ACADEMIC SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

2025 – Present	**Co-Lead for Student Engagement**, Social Work's Promote Smart Decarceration Grand Challenge
2025 – Present	**Doctoral Student Representative**, UCLA Social Welfare Doctoral Committee
2025 – 2026	**Co-Chair for Student Engagement**, Society for Social Work and Research Doctoral Committee
2024 – 2025	**Committee Member for Student Engagement**, Society for Social Work and Research Doctoral Committee
2023	**Faculty Search Committee Member**, UCLA Department of Social Welfare

HONORS & AWARDS

June 2025	Melanie Foundation Scholar
May 2025	Haynes Lindley Doctoral Dissertation Fellow
Feb 2025	Gilliam Social Justice Research Award
June 2024	Outstanding Public Affairs Teaching Assistant, Luskin School of Public Affairs
May 2018	Outstanding Senior Award, Cornell Human Ecology Alumni Association
May 2018	Keynote Speaker, Cornell Human Development Department Graduation
May 2018	Florence Halpern Award for Leadership Excellence in Community Service
May 2018	Cornell LGBT Studies Undergraduate Writing Award
April 2017	Best Psychology Presentation, Cornell Undergraduate Research Board
April 2016	Roberta M. Berns Scholarship for Translational Youth Development Research

CERTIFICATIONS

2024	Certificate in Mixed Methods Research, University of Michigan School of Social Work
2024	Restorative Youth Justice Mediator Certification, Centinela Youth Services
2022	Solution-Focused Therapy Certification, Social & Emotional Wellness Initiative
2018	Certificate in Motivational Interviewing, NYC Administration for Children's Services Workforce Institute

ASSOCIATIONS AND MEMBERSHIPS

American Society of Criminology

Society for Social Work and Research

Society for Research in Adolescence

Society for Research in Child Development

Psi Chi International Psychology Honors Society