

# Sarah E. Gzesh, MSW

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## EDUCATION

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<b>UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL POLICY &amp; PRACTICE</b>	<i>anticipated 2025</i>
Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare	
<b>COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK</b>	<i>2019</i>
Master of Science in Social Work, Advanced Clinical Practice with specialization in Family, Youth & Children	
<b>UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION</b>	<i>2016</i>
Coursework in Human Rights and Multicultural Education, maintained GPA of 3.9	
<b>LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION</b>	<i>2013</i>
Single Subject Secondary English Teaching Credential	
<b>BRYN MAWR COLLEGE, BACHELOR OF ARTS</b>	<i>2012</i>
History of Art Major and English Minor, focus in Gender and Sexuality Studies, graduated with honors	
<b>UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, VISITING SEMESTER</b>	<i>2011</i>
Coursework in Islamic Art and Post-Colonial Theory	

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

LGBTQ+ youth; developmental trauma; attachment ruptures; identity-based support, homelessness; system involvement; harm reduction; sexual exploitation/work; substance use; critical theory; discourse analysis; participatory action research

## RESEARCH & PROGRAM EVALUATION EXPERIENCE

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<b>GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT, UPENN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL POLICY &amp; PRACTICE</b>	<i>Philadelphia, PA August 2021 – present</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Assist with data collection, grounded theory analysis, and co-authorship of peer reviewed manuscript in partnership with UPenn Center for High Impact Philanthropy; qualitative study investigating how COVID-19 pandemic affected mental health of older youth currently in or aged out of foster care who experience mental health challenges</li><li>● Conduct phenomenological analysis and co-authoring of peer reviewed manuscript disseminating findings from Families in Transition study, examining differential experiences of disclosure for trans/gender-expansive individuals</li></ul>	
<b>STUDENT INTERN, FIELD CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH</b>	<i>Philadelphia, PA May 2021 – present</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Co-author research reports, academic conference presentations, and peer-reviewed journal articles to disseminate topical findings pertaining to child welfare.</li><li>● Participate in monthly interdisciplinary forum exploring abolitionist movement in child welfare</li></ul>	
<b>PROJECT EVALUATOR, ROSINE 2.0</b>	<i>Swarthmore, PA February 2022 - present</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Evaluate extent to which the final project aligns with objectives of exploring how harm reduction and mutual aid seek to reduce stigma and increase community health and social cohesion in marginalized communities</li><li>● Co-authored Institutional Review Board submission to ensure protection of welfare, rights, and privacy of human subjects; assist in community-based participatory action research project on harm reduction modalities</li></ul>	
<b>GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT, SILBERMAN CENTER FOR SEXUALITY &amp; GENDER</b>	<i>New York, NY July 2021 – present</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Assist in design, implementation, and analysis of exploratory study on field experiences of trans and gender-expansive social work students</li></ul>	
<b>SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, PACIFIC CENTER</b>	<i>Berkeley, CA August 2020 – August 2021</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Identified strategic priorities to align with mission and purpose as third-oldest LGBTQ+ center in the US</li><li>● Contributed to national search for new Chief Executive Officer; support interim CEO by evaluating current needs</li><li>● Spearheaded national search for Clinical Director; provided weekly support to interim CD</li><li>● Facilitated Town Halls; served as liaison between Board and clinical staff during time of transition</li></ul>	

- Initiated organizational assessment to infuse Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in systemic and clinical practices
- Conducted listening tour to heal ruptures between staff and management, and better inform Strategic Plan

**PROGRAM MANAGER AND CLINICIAN, LARKIN STREET YOUTH SERVICES**

*San Francisco, CA August 2020 – April 2021*

- Evaluated organizational practices for serving LGBTQ+ youth across various housing sites, focusing on comparison of two engagement centers; utilize cluster analysis from intakes and youth feedback, conducted focus group with Youth Advisory Board, and present findings and recommendations to Core Leadership
- Authored Behavioral Health reference for therapists and case managers, guiding best practices for non-pathologizing and liberatory documentation; integrated clinical imperatives while maintaining anti-racist framework
- Co-crafted staff survey in service of Strategic Plan, incorporating tenets of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

**FULBRIGHT-HAYS GROUP PROJECTS ABROAD: UC BERKELEY CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES**

*Morocco, Summer 2017*

- Conducted socio-cultural ethnographic field research on impact of Arab-Israeli conflict and the Arab Spring on inter-communal and minority-majority relations, utilizing material culture and sacred objects as tools for storytelling
- Developed programming with Moroccan counterparts, focused on cultural competence and narrative healing

**WASC ACCREDITATION PROJECT LEAD AND AUTHOR: LEADERSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*San Jose & Hayward, CA 2013 – 2018*

- Pioneered instructional/assessment modalities with Gooru & Exit Ticket vis-à-vis idea formation and beta-testing
- Served as a member of Solidarity Advisory Council and adapted research-driven socio-emotional best practices to address the impact of racism on educational experience of students of color; implemented Leaders of Equity tools for planning and action, in coalition with FREE (Fellowship for Race and Equity in Education)
- Advised school action plan; gave key feedback on program elements as member of Instructional Leadership Team
- Utilized investigative process with key stakeholders (students, alumni, faculty, staff, Board of Directors, community partners); achieved the maximal 5-year accreditation granted at both school sites

**COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCE**

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**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINICIAN, LARKIN STREET YOUTH SERVICES**

*San Francisco, CA August 2020 – April 2021*

- Performed on-site behavioral health screening, clinical assessments, crisis intervention and support services at Larkin Street Youth Access Points; conducted street-level outreach and harm reduction interventions for homeless youth
- Provided clinical consultation and professional development to staff on a range of behavioral health issues and best practices for transitional age youth experiencing homelessness, substance abuse, sex work and exploitation
- Facilitated Collaborative Case Conferences to assist in determining treatment plans for caseload of 20 clients
- Coordinated services with other agencies and resources to address youths’ needs, including: biopsychosocial health, education, employment, independent living skills, advocacy, placement stability, and age-appropriate enrichment activities; assisted youth in accessing community resources
- Acted as Program Manager during on-call rotation for nine transitional housing programs and three shelters
- Crafted community-based photo narrative entitled “Elegy for My Inner Child” which centered the experiences of transitional age LGBTQ+ youth, addressing the impact of developmental trauma through narrative therapy, using ‘testimonios’ and ethnography to showcase individual and collective healing within the community

**MENTAL HEALTH THERAPIST, WESTCOAST CHILDREN’S CLINIC**

*Oakland, CA July 2019 – August 2020*

- Conducted community-based, trauma-informed psychotherapy, crisis intervention and stabilization to assess cognitive, emotional, and social functioning and needs for sexually exploited youth
- Provided mental health screening/assessment as children entered into or changed placement within the child welfare system; implemented in milieu setting at Alameda County Assessment Center for ages 0 to 18 years old
- Integrated psychological, social, cultural, medical, developmental, educational, and other relevant information into wrap-around service development and clinical case management plan for youth; convened planning meetings with adults in youths' support system to develop a Community Team and provide referrals/linkages with other agencies
- Developed and provided trainings to other mental health providers on best practices in working with transitional age youth, specific to LGBTQ+ identity and commercially sexually exploited children and young adults

**SOCIAL WORK INTERN, OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

*Oakland, CA August 2018 – May 2019*

- Provided counseling at Title I public elementary and high schools for children and families struggling with histories of

trauma, forced migration, incarceration, housing instability, substance abuse, domestic and community violence

- Conducted psychosocial and clinical case evaluations, risk assessments, crisis response, and safety planning
- Managed case load and coordinated with probation officers, school administrators, teachers, wraparound services, and immigration attorneys; supported clients and families with MediCal enrollment
- Assessed family situations and reported cases as needed to Child Protective Services
- De-escalated student dysregulation through behavioral/therapeutic interventions in counseling-enriched Special Day Class for children with ADD/ADHD, ODD, emotional disturbance, and autism
- Participated in coordination of care team meetings to evaluate Tier II and III supports for individual students
- Facilitated weekly therapeutic groups on emotion regulation, mindfulness, grief (loss of caregiver), racial trauma

#### **SOCIAL WORK INTERN: LEADERSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*Hayward, CA January 2017 – June 2018*

- Advocated for AB540 (undocumented) students on the “Dream Team” and fostered coalitional agency
- Designed and implemented “Project Hearts Desire,” a project pairing mentors with youth who lacked an identified caring adult for allied exploration of a mutual interest, modeled after Johanna K. P. Greeson’s CARE intervention
- Developed and spearheaded “Culture Keepers,” a Youth Participatory Action Research mental health initiative training student first-responders to address conflict utilizing peer-led restorative practices
- Facilitated mindfulness therapeutic groups to promote belonging certainty and emotion regulation for students struggling with academic mindset, identity safety, stereotype threat, forced migration, and community violence
- Created and presented professional development aligned with PBIS, targeting Tier I and Tier II interventions

### **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

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#### **EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT, SCHOLAR CO**

*San Francisco, CA June 2017 – present*

- Advise youth and families on all aspects of college access and narrative-building, beginning in ninth grade and culminating with submitted applications in twelfth grade
- Utilize reflective practices to enhance students’ competitiveness, support their educational/vocational goals, and help them develop executive functioning skills and practical strategies for purposeful learning

#### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER, COURSE FACILITATOR: LEADERSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*San Jose & Hayward, CA 2013 – 2018*

- Taught English 2, English 3, Senior English, and AP English Language & Composition in Title I high school serving 60% free or reduced lunch, 74% English Language Learners, 85% first generation, 9% undocumented students
- Fostered language acquisition and progress: over 75% of incoming students performed at elementary skill levels, with average of 1.8 years of MAP growth; mean score for AP Language & Composition increased from 2.15 to 3.14
- Achieved “Accomplished Teacher” designation through rigorous application process with portfolio review

#### **BAY AREA REGIONAL FACILITATOR: GIRLS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**

*Bay Area, CA July 2014 - December 2016*

- Conducted weekly workshops for elementary-aged girls and their guardians on assertive self-expression, social-emotional intelligence, and leadership capabilities using theater-based Freirian model of kinesthetic learning

#### **ENGLISH TEACHER: SAN JOSE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

*San Jose, CA August 2012 - June 2013*

- Taught English Language Arts and English Intervention classes to 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade system-involved students who had been expelled from public schooling
- Differentiated instruction for students with special needs, including speech impairment, ADD/ADHD, ODD, emotional disturbance, developmental delay, and autism (approximately 68% of students had 504 plans or IEPs)

#### **LEAD FACILITATOR AND GRANT-WRITER: BUILDABRIDGE INTERNATIONAL**

*Philadelphia, PA, 2010-2012*

- Educated youth in transitional housing, using hope-infused, child-centered, trauma-informed arts-based model
- Collaborated on designing and facilitating the Annual Institute for Arts and Transformation in Philadelphia
- Wrote annual report for organization; secured continued \$75,000 grant from Philadelphia School District

#### **YOUTH ADVOCATE AND MENTOR: WINDOWS FOR PEACE NGO**

*Tel Aviv, Israel 2011*

- Designed and implemented project-based expressive arts healing for Israeli, Arab-Israeli, and Palestinian youth
- Empowered and educated through new media cultural programs designed to break down stereotypes

**ACCESS ACADEMY TEACHER, TIGER PASS SCHOOL CO-FOUNDER: ASIAN UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN** Chittagong, Bangladesh 2010

- Instructed >120 Access Academy students during their pre-university bridge program; improved lexile scores and English proficiency, as measured by diagnostic and summative assessment
- Co-founded Tiger Pass School, located in an impoverished 'slum' and serving 90 students between ages of 5 and 15
- Designed three tiers of skill groupings; developed and launched curriculum and assessment metrics; trained university students to be teachers by utilizing a hierarchical structure modeled after BRAC schools

## PUBLICATIONS

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*Manuscripts in revision, under review, & in preparation*

Greeson, J. K. P., **Gzesh, S.**, Wasch, S., Ciluffo, K., & Jaffee, S. (under review). "Just being there, like a shoulder to lean on": Resiliency and mental health among older youth in and aged out of foster care during COVID-19.

Gyourko, J. R., Greeson, J. K. P., Jaffee, S., Wasch, S. & **Gzesh, S.** (in preparation). Mental health and social connectedness of older youth in and recently aged out of foster care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cooper, S., Lopez-Rios, J., Shelton, J., **Gzesh, S.** (in preparation). Sexual Agency in LGBTQQ Young Adults who are Experiencing Homelessness.

**Gzesh, S.** (in preparation). Cunning Linguists: Epistemic Elision in Sex Work Discourse.

**Gzesh, S.** Shelton, J., Kroehle, K., Narendorf, S., Santa Maria, D., Bender, K., DeChants, J., Petering, R., Hsu, H., Barman-Adhikari, A., & Ferguson, K. (in preparation). Homeless experiences of transgender youth and young adults at the intersections of race and gender.

**Gzesh, S.** Shelton, J., Narendorf, S., Santa Maria, D., Bender, K., DeChants, J., Petering, R., Hsu, H., Barman-Adhikari, A., & Ferguson, K. (in preparation). LGBTQ youth homelessness, suicidality, and depression: An examination of mediating factors.

## PRESENTATIONS

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**Gzesh, S.** (2022, upcoming). Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner: Discourse Analysis in Sex Work and Social Work. Will present at the LGBTQ Research Symposium. Virtual.

**Gzesh, S.**, Eskridge, S., Briere, X. (2020, October). Creating Safe and Affirming Systems of Care for LGBTQ Children, Youth, and Families. Co-presented at the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Annual Conference. Virtual.

**Gzesh, S.** (2018, June). The Culture Keepers: YPAR, Restorative Justice, and Community Cultural Wealth. Presented at the Leadership Public Schools Equity Symposium. Oakland, CA.

**Gzesh, S.** (2017, October). Literature of Liminality: Displacement, Diaspora, and Cultural Dialogue. Presented at the Fulbright-Hays Summit at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at University of California. Berkeley, CA.

**Gzesh, S.** (2017, June). Project Hearts Desire: Allied Exploration for Youth Experiencing Belonging Uncertainty in Schools. Presented at the Leadership Public Schools Equity Symposium. Oakland, CA.

**Gzesh, S.** (2016, June). iLearn: Collective Feedback Tool for Equitable Engagement. Presented on Innovation Award Panel at the Teach for America Bay Area EdTech Summit. San Francisco, CA.

**Gzesh, S.** (2016, March). Trauma Transformed: School Sites as Conduits for Healing, Empowerment, and Social Cohesion. Presented at the Comparative and International Education Society 60th Summit. Vancouver, Canada.

Kristof, N., McAuliffe, J., **Gzesh, S.** (2010, September). Women's Education and Global Engagement: The Case Study of Bangladesh. Co-presented with Nicholas Kristof and College President Jane McAuliffe at the Heritage and Hope International Conference. Bryn Mawr, PA.

## GRANTS & AWARDS

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**MARYMOUNT FELLOWSHIP**, nominated by faculty at School of Social Policy & Practice, selected from applicant pool across twelve graduate schools by University of Pennsylvania faculty committee, 2022-23. Total Direct Support: \$5,000

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN SOCIAL WELFARE STIPEND**, funded by School of Social Policy & Practice, University of Pennsylvania, 2020 to present. Total Direct Support: \$30,547 (nine month cycle repeated annually)

**FULBRIGHT-HAYS SEMINAR THROUGH CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES**, funded by Office of Resources for International and Area Studies. Total Project Support: \$80,059, Direct Support amount not available

**MARGOT STERN STROM INNOVATION GRANT**, funded by Facing History and Ourselves, 2017. Total Direct Support: \$2500

**INNOVATION AWARD GRANT**, funded by Teach for America, 2015-2016. Total Direct Support: \$10,000

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OFFICE PRAXIS GRANT**, funded by Bryn Mawr College, 2012. Total Direct Support: \$5000

**HEPBURN CENTER SUMMER FUNDING GRANT**, funded by Bryn Mawr College, 2011. Total Direct Support: \$7000

**CARE NATIONAL CONFERENCE AMBASSADOR**, funded by Bryn Mawr College, 2011. Total Direct Support: \$600

**STORIES THAT LIVE GRANT**, funded by Holocaust Storytelling Fellowship, 2009-2010. Total Direct Support: \$2000

**CENTER FOR PEACE & GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP INTERNSHIP GRANT**, funded by Haverford College, 2010.  
Total Direct Support: \$6500

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

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- Counsel on Social Work Education
- National Association of Social Workers
- Society for Social Work and Research
- University of Pennsylvania SexGen Policy Lab
- Sexuality, Relationships, Gender Research Collective
- Treatment Not Trauma Collective

## CERTIFICATIONS & TRAINING

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- Cleared Secondary English Teaching Credential, State of California
- Red Cross Disaster Relief Mental Health First Responder
- American Teenager Project Ambassador
- Mindful Schools Facilitator
- Mind-Body Awareness Project Facilitator
- National Suicide Hotline Certified Counselor
- CITI Human Subjects Training: Social-Behavioral-Educational Track