



UTA

School of Social Work

PH.D. CANDIDATES

ON THE JOB MARKET

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

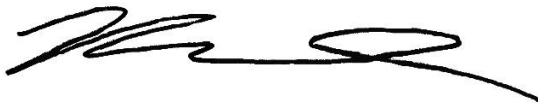
Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to introduce this year's PhD candidates and recent graduates from the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), School of Social Work. UTA strives to produce the highest quality of scholars and educators who are prepared and eager to promote change. At the UTA, our students receive engage in engage in collaborative community research on contemporary issues and problems for the advancement of social work practice and social work welfare policy. They also acquire experience teaching courses across the curriculum at the bachelors and masters level.

As you review their experience, interests, and curriculum vitae, you will see the potential that these talented scholars and educators have as additions to your faculty. They bring a wide diversity of knowledge and practice expertise that informs their research and teaching, and are well suited to engage in impactful education and mutually beneficial collaborations in the community, valuing the expertise and experience of those who live and work in our community, to address important issues with broad-reaching implications for policy and practice, locally, nationally, and globally. We are very proud of their accomplishments.

If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or other members of the UTA faculty. We will be happy to discuss with you the strengths of each of these impressive candidates.

Sincerely,



Poco Kernsmith, PhD, MSW, MPH
Professor and PhD Program Director
University of Texas at Arlington
School of Social Work

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OUR PROGRAM

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Ph.D. program in the School of Social Work prepares students for careers in social work research, policy, and education.

We accept up to 10 students at the beginning of the fall semester each year that come from a variety of regional, cultural, educational, and practice backgrounds.

PROGRAM GOALS



SKILLS

To equip you with knowledge and skills in theory development, research methods, and data analysis.



DEVELOP

To develop your practice, policy, and social work education.



PREPARE

To prepare you for a career in higher education or advanced research.



REBECCA COLE, LCSW-S

Rebecca.cole@uta.edu

Ph.D. Candidate - May 2024

Research Interests

- Online Romance Scams
- Crisis Mental Health
- Social Worker Development



CHRISTINE HIGHFILL, LMSW

christine.highfill@uta.edu

Ph.D. Candidate - May 2024

Research Interests

- Military, Veteran, and Families
- Aging
- Systematic Literature Synthesis Methodology



ALAN KUNZ-LOMELIN, LCSW

Alan.kunzломelin@mavs.uta.edu

Ph.D. Candidate - May 2024

Research Interests

- Implementation Science
- Technological Innovations
- Mental Health
- Health Disparities



RICKA MAMMAH, LMSW, MBA

ricka.mammah@mavs.uta.edu

Ph.D. Candidate - August 2024

Research Interests

- Family and Interrelationship Violence
- Social Determinants of Health and Mental Health
- Cultural and Racial Diversity
- Economic Empowerment

REBECCA COLE, LCSW-S

rebecca.cole@uta.edu



Rebecca Cole is in the 3rd year of the University of Texas School at Arlington Social Work of Social Work's (UTA SSW) Ph.D. program. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, with a double major in criminal justice and psychology. She completed a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree from the University of Houston, where she focused on the clinical social work track.

Rebecca entered the Ph.D. program in the Fall of 2020 during the height of the pandemic. This unprecedented event posed new challenges in conducting research. As a graduate research assistant, Rebecca had to consider, along with her supervisors, creative approaches to oversee participant recruitment and data collection; owing to changes in IRB protocols due to health and safety measures from the pandemic, the qualitative study could no longer be completed in person. She has gained experience with sampling, data collection, and data analysis while working on qualitative and quantitative research projects.

Rebecca has worked as a licensed clinical social worker in a community mental health setting. Rebecca desires to pursue a career in research focusing on online romance scams, cyber victimization, and crisis mental health needs. She believes that her research can contribute to systemic changes that benefits online dating users, inform policies, and support interdisciplinary efforts to reduce violence and victimization.

Rebecca has a long pattern of service to the social work profession, the University, and to her community. She has been a field instructor for Baylor University's Master of Social Work program supervising students since August 2020. Rebecca was a volunteer with the UTA's SSW Ph.D. Student Association as their social media manager from Fall 2020 - Spring 2021. Rebecca is a voting precinct chair for her neighborhood.

Research Interests

- Mental Health and Online Dating
- Online Romance Scams
- Crisis Intervention and Mental Health
- Financial Health of Social Workers
- Social Worker Development

Teaching Interests

- Clinical Social Work Practice
- Social Work and Criminal Justice

CURRICULUM VITAE PREVIEW

EDUCATION

PhD	University of Texas at Arlington, School of Social Work	May 2024
MSW	University of Houston Concentration: <i>Social Work</i>	May 2011
BA	Stephen F Austin State University, Bachelor of Arts	May 2001

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Doctoral Researcher - Project Coordinator	August 2020 - May 2023
School of Social Work, University of Texas at Arlington	
Recruited, screened and registered participants for qualitative research study	
Conducted qualitative interviews with participants on the subject of moral distress	
Participated in data analysis and worked collaboratively in research assignments	

PUBLICATIONS

Cronley, C., O'Dell, A., Fields, N., Mattingly, N., Iroz-Elardo, N., Highfill, C., **Cole, R.**, & Stringfellow, MK., (2022). Designing and Evaluating a Smartphone App to Increase Underserved Communities' Data representation in Transportation Policy and Planning. *Case Studies on Transport Policy*. Accepted for publication.

Fantus, S., **Cole, R.**, & Hawkins, L., (2022). "The hierarchy is your constraint:" a qualitative investigation of social workers' moral distress across a U.S. health systems. *Social Work in Health Care*, 1-25. doi: 10.1080/00981389.2022.2128156.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor - University of Texas at Arlington, School of Social Work	Spring 2022- Spring 2023
SOCW 5353 Social Policy and Mental Health	

**VIEW REBECCA'S FULL
CURRICULUM VITAE**



CHRISTINE HIGHFILL, LMSW

christine.highfill@uta.edu



M. Christine Highfill, LMSW, comes to social work research with a background in psychology (BS) and human services counseling in military resilience (MA). Two decades as a Military/Veteran spouse inform her research of Military, Veteran, and family well-being. Christine published the first international literature synthesis of military-connected spouse abuse survivor narratives. The Institute for Military and Veteran Family Wellness (University of Texas, Austin) recently recognized her as an expert in U.S. Military policy on domestic abuse, the topic of her dissertation.

Christine is an emerging systematic literature synthesis methodologist. She has authored six registered protocols, published four literature synthesis articles, and is finalizing two additional scoping reviews. After mentoring numerous doctoral and MSW students in scoping review methodology, she developed a semester-long work group to support students and presented instructional sessions to the UTA community.

As author of Military-Connected Families and member of UTA's Military Social Work Certificate Sub-Committee, Christine contributed to the creation of the Military Social Work Graduate Certificate and the Military, Family, and Veteran Care Graduate Certificate. She currently serves on UTA's Intimate Partner Violence Education Sub-Committee. Additionally, she is on the research and development team for Veteran Suicidality Assessment Virtual Reality (VET-SAVR), an education program for social work and nursing students as well as community gatekeepers.

As the data and evaluation coordinator for a local child welfare agency, she assists with grant writing, curriculum development, program evaluation, data management, and staff cohesion. Currently in clinical supervision, she is a therapist with a local practice. She also serves on the Fort Worth Family Justice Center's VOICES Survivor Advocacy Network.

Research Interests

- U.S. Military Policies on Family Violence
- Military, Veteran, and Family Wellbeing
- Social Determinants of Health Across the Life Course
- Systematic Literature Synthesis Methodology

Teaching Interests

- Military-Connected Populations and Issues
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Social Welfare Policy
- Macro Social Work Practice and Theory

CURRICULUM VITAE PREVIEW

EDUCATION

PhD	University of Texas at Arlington, School of Social Work	May 2024
MSW	University of Texas at Arlington, Social Work Concentration: <i>Community and Administrative Practice</i>	August 2019
MA	Liberty University, Master of Arts Concentration: <i>Human Services Counseling: Military Resilience Cognate</i>	August 2016
BA	Southwest Baptist University, Bachelor of Science	December 1991

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant - The University of Texas at Arlington	June 2021 - Present
Qualitative Study of Students Who Accessed Title IX	
Veteran Suicidality Assessment in Virtual Reality (VET-SAVR)	
Wind Therapy with Military Veterans	

PUBLICATIONS

Highfill, M. C. & Chen, Z. (2022). A qualitative interpretative meta-synthesis of military-connected spousal abuse survivor narratives. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 52(1), 177-197.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcaa226>.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Assistant Professor - University of Texas at Arlington, School of Social Work	Spring 2021- Present
SOCW-5314 Intimate Partner Violence	
SOCW-5353 Social Policy and Mental Health	
SOCW-5355 Military Social Work	
SOCW-5392 Selected Topics in Social Welfare: Military-Connected Families	

**VIEW CHRISTINE'S FULL
CURRICULUM VITAE**



ALAN KUNZ-LOMELIN, LCSW

alan.kunzlomelin@mavs.uta.edu



Alan Kunz Lomelin is a Mexican immigrant with dual citizenship who arrived in the United States when he was 13 years old and since then has earned degrees in psychology, criminology, and social work. Alan received his bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Dallas and his two master's degrees in social work and criminology from The University of Texas at Arlington. These degrees eventually allowed him to become a licensed clinical social worker, while working as a behavioral health provider in the community clinics at Baylor Scott and White Health. He has worked for four years in this setting providing therapy mostly to underrepresented or marginalized patients presenting diagnoses of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, among others.

Alan is now a Ph.D. candidate in his final year at The University of Texas at Arlington. His research interests include implementation science, technological innovations (e.g., artificial intelligence), mental health, and health disparities. In addition, he has a special interest in quantitative research methods and has participated in workshops, classes, and training to improve these. He is mainly interested in social network analysis and the use of the R programming language for statistical analysis. However, Alan also recognizes the value of qualitative data and is actively engaged in mixed methods research projects that combine quantitative and qualitative findings. Alan hopes that his research will guide the implementation of technological innovations, like artificial intelligence, so that these can be implemented in an ethical and equitable way that can help mitigate rather than exacerbate health disparities.

Research Interests

- Implementation Science
- Technological Innovations (e.g., artificial intelligence)
- Mental Health
- Health Disparities
- Social Network Analysis

Teaching Interests

- Research Methods
- Statistics
- Mental Health
- Practice Classes

CURRICULUM VITAE PREVIEW

EDUCATION

PhD	The University of Texas at Arlington, School of Social Work	May 2024
MSW	The University of Texas at Arlington, Social Work <i>Concentration: Mental Health and Substance Abuse</i>	May 2019
MA	The University of Texas at Arlington, Criminology and Criminal Justice	May 2019
BA	University of Dallas (Cum Lade), Psychology <i>Concentration: Biopsychology</i>	May 2016

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Baylor Scott and White Health - Research Assistant	May 2020 - Present
NIH funded role to participate in the project design and data collection on the phase II of an NIH funded project to validate the Spanish version of the TAPS (tobacco, alcohol, and drug use) measure for Spanish-speaking populations in primary care settings.	

PUBLICATIONS

Fields, N. L., Schuman, D. L., Miller, V. J., **Kunz-Lomelin, A.**, Kusmaul, N., & Anderson, K. A. (2023). "Knowing when it's time to take a break": Nursing home social workers' coping during COVID-19. *Aging and Health Research*, 3(2), 100144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ahr.2023.100144>

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The University of Texas at Arlington , Arlington, TX	Fall 2022 and Fall 2023
Graduate Student Statistics Tutor , Social Work	
Datathon Workshop Instructor , Social Work	

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CURRICULUM VITAE**



RICKA MAMMAH, LMSW, MBA

ricka.mammah@mavs.uta.edu



Ricka Olga Mammah holds two degrees from Stephen F. Austin State University: a Master's in Social Work and a Master's in Business Administration, and a Bachelor of Social Work degree from Texas A&M University Central Texas. Born and raised in Sierra Leone, West Africa, Ricka's firsthand experiences observing domestic violence, mental health challenges, and severe poverty fueled her commitment to advocating for marginalized communities through teaching, service, and research.

Her research specializes in qualitative research, program evaluation, and community-based participatory action research, focusing on gender-based violence among immigrants, cultural sensitivity, economic empowerment, and improving survivors' access to services. Her research aims to inform policy development and create more inclusive support systems for immigrants.

Ricka has actively engaged in federally funded projects, taking on leadership and support roles throughout the research cycle, from grant writing and project design to data collection, management, analysis, and publication in peer-reviewed and community-focused outlets. She has authored eight peer-reviewed publications spanning various disciplines and presented at fourteen peer-reviewed conferences.

With direct social work practice experience, Ricka brings a wealth of expertise as a client advocate for refugee populations, a research coordinator, and a foster and adoption case manager. She also has teaching experience as a lead instructor at the University of Texas at Arlington for BSW and MSW level courses. In her teaching and mentoring roles, she effectively utilizes her personal, research, and practical experiences to engage students in virtual and in-person settings.

Research Interests

- Violence Against Women
- Prevention of Family Violence in Global Settings
- Immigrant and Refugee Populations
- Social Determinants of Health and Mental Health
- Cultural and Racial Diversity
- Economic Empowerment

Teaching Interests

- Social Work Practice with Immigrant Communities
- Immigration and Mental Health
- Human Behavior in the Social Environment
- Qualitative Methodology
- Diversity, Oppression, and Social Injustice
- Intimate Partner Violence

CURRICULUM VITAE PREVIEW

EDUCATION

PhD	University of Texas at Arlington, School of Social Work	August 2024
MBA	Stephen F. Austin State University, Master of Business Administration Concentration: <i>Human Resource Management</i>	May 2015
MSW	Stephen F. Austin State University, Social Work	May 2012
BA	Texas A&M University, Social Work	August 2010

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Evaluation of Technology-based Advocacy Services: Assessment of Program Outcomes

Research Assistant

September 2023 - Current

Responsibility: Analyzed transcripts to conduct a process and outcome evaluation focused on chat/text services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Contributing to the preparation of manuscripts for peer reviewed publication.

PUBLICATIONS

Childress, S., **Mammah, R.**, Voth Schrag, R., Arenas-Iltotia, K., Orwig, T., Roye, J., Michael, J., Dombrowsky, T., & Jarrell, L. (in press). Preparing to intervene in intimate partner violence: An interprofessional safety planning and assessment simulation. *Journal of Social Work Education*.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Instructor - UTA, School of Social Work

Summer 2020, Summer 2023

SOCW- 5303 Foundation of Social Policy and Services

SOCW-2303 Life Span Development

SOCW-5353 Social Policy and Mental Health

SOCW-5281 Foundation Field Liaison

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON



**Have Questions about The Program?
Want to learn more about our students?
Want to promote a job listing?**

CONTACT



POCO KERNSMITH, PH.D.

Ph.D. Program Director

Professor

poco@uta.edu

UTA



School of Social Work

**WHEN THE WORLD TALKS ABOUT CHANGE
WE CREATE THE CHANGE**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK & SMART HOSPITAL BUILDING

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