

# Saharra L. Dixon, MA, CHES®

Email: [saharradixon@umass.edu](mailto:saharradixon@umass.edu) | Website: [saharradixon.com](http://saharradixon.com)

## EDUCATION

**University of Massachusetts Amherst**, Amherst, MA

May 2026

**School of Public Health and Health Sciences, Dean's PhD Fellow**

PhD, Public Health, Community Health Education (Candidate)

Minor: African American Studies

Advisor and Dissertation Committee Chairperson: Aline Gubrium, PhD

Research Areas: Arts in Public Health, Health Equity, Critical Narrative Intervention, Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors

**New York University**, New York, NY

December 2019

**Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development**

MA, Educational Theatre in Colleges and Communities: Specialization in Applied Theatre

Study Abroad: Dublin, Ireland *Creating Meaning Through Community Drama*

Summer 2019

Advisor: Jonathan Jones, PhD

**University of Delaware**, Newark, DE

May 2018

**College of Health Sciences**

BS, Health Behavior Science, Minor in Public Health [*Cum Laude*]

## CERTIFICATIONS & MEMBERSHIPS

- National Commission for Health Education Credentialing

CHES®, Certified Health Education Specialist #32970

October 2019

- Member, National Organization for Arts in Health (NOAH)

September 2020-Present

- Member, Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE)

March 2019-Present

- Member, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

November 2016-Present

## AWARDS

- SOPHE Health Promotion Practice Sarah Mazelis Paper of the Year 2024 2025
- University of Massachusetts Graduate School Predissertation Grant 2023
- Active Minds Emerging Scholars Fellowship 2022
- UMass Amherst SPHHS Dean's PhD Fellowship 2021
- Nancy and Lowell Swortzell Educational Theatre Scholarship 2019
- NYU Steinhardt Student Research and Creative Project Grant 2019
- Alpha Kappa Alpha North Atlantic Regional Conference Miss AKA Award 2016

## PUBLICATIONS (peer reviewed)

- Fisher, T., Gubrium, A., **Dixon, S.**, Chan, J., Weil, M., Simoun, A., Egan, J., Beatriz, E., & Salerno Valdez, E. (2025). Using Youth Participatory Action Research to Examine Structural Violence and Youth Mental Health. *Journal of Prevention and Health Promotion*, 6(1), 94-116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/26320770241276735>
- Valdez E., **Dixon S.**, Chan J., Evora J., Phuntsog T., Delorme E., Egan J. & Gubrium A. (2024). PAR to explore trust and mistrust of marginalized young parents as social service recipients. *SSM – Qualitative Research in Health*, (5)100445. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmqr.2024.100445>
- Keller, A., Gubrium, A., **Dixon, S.**, Bell, B., Hart, D., & Haglund, K.. (2024). Digital storytelling among African American caregivers: evaluation of the intervention parameters, *Innovation in Aging*, Volume 8, Issue Supplement\_1, Page 339, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geroni/igae098.1105>

3. **Dixon S.**, Valdez E.S., Chan, J., Weil, M., Fisher, T., Simoun, A., Egan, J., Beatriz, E., & Gubrium, A. (2024). Stacked Up Against Us: Using Photovoice and Participatory Methods to Explore Structural Racism's Impact on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Inequities. *Health Promotion Practice*, 0(0). doi:10.1177/15248399241229641
4. Valdez, E., Weil, M., **Dixon, S.**, Chan, J., Fisher, T., Simoun, A., Egan, J., & Gubrium, A. (2024). Using youth participatory action research to explore the impacts of structural violence on LGBTQIA+ youth health. *Culture, health & sexuality*, 1–18. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2024.2403108>
5. Gorry, E., Valdez, E. S., Chan, J., **Dixon, S.**, Carroll, G. D., Phuntsog, T., ... & Gubrium, A. (2024). On caring and a love ethic to address the effects of structural violence on adolescent health. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 163, 107760.
6. **Dixon, S.** and Isaac, M. (2023). No one-size-fits-all: Critical Narrative Intervention & Archeology of Self as Anti-racist and Anti-Colonist Practices in Body-focused Repetitive Behaviors. *Health Education and Behavior*, 50(4): 508-516. doi:10.1177/10901981231177081
7. Valdez, E.S., Chan, J., **Dixon, S.**, Davidson Carrol, G., Dorney, T., Delorme, E., Egan, J., Gubrium, A. (2023). Participatory action research to explore the role of structural violence on marginalized and racialized young parents. *Health Education & Behavior*, 10901981231197397.
8. Valdez E.S., Valdez L., Gorry E., Chan, J., **Dixon, S.** [...] Gubrium, A. (2023). Mind the Gaps: The Need for Inclusion of Male-Identified Voices in Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 17(3). doi:10.1177/15579883231181570
9. Valdez, E.S., Chan, J., Donis, A., Collins-Lovell, C., **Dixon, S.**, Beatriz, E., Gubrium, A. (2022). Structural Racism and Its Influence On Sexual and Reproductive Health Inequities Among Immigrant Youth. *Journal of Immigrant Minority Health*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-022-01385-x>
10. Sajnani, N., William, B., Yuan, M.L., Edwards, J., **Dixon, S.**, Stevens, A., Morris, M., Li, S.Y., Garcia Rodriguez, I., Ikram, S., Bell, W., Rodriguez Perez, C. (2022). Turbulence: Arts-based Participatory Action research on the Experience of Creative Arts Therapists and Creatives Who Identify as Black and people of Color. *Drama Therapy Review*, 9(1). DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1386/dtr\\_00123\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/dtr_00123_1)
11. **Dixon, S.**, Gundersen, A. & Holiman, M. (2020). [The #StayHome Project: Exploring Community Needs and Resiliency Through Virtual, Participatory Theatre During COVID-19](#). *ArtsPraxis* 7(2a).

#### PUBLICATIONS (under review)

1. Haglund, K., **Dixon, S.**, Gubrium, A., Oparah, N., Bell, B., Hart, D., Keller, A. (Under Review). Digital Storytelling as a Culturally Relevant Qualitative Research Methodology: An Exemplar of Implementation in a Community Setting with African American Women Caregivers.
2. Simoun, A., Valdez, E.S., **Dixon, S.**, Chan, J., Fisher, T., Weil, M., Beatriz, E., Gubrium, A. (Under Review). Not My Body, Not My Choice: Historically Marginalized Young People's Lived Experience of Commodification, Subjugation of Bodies, and Heterosexism.

#### PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

- Panel Presentation-** Thomas, P.M., Onopa, J., **Dixon, S.**, Rodriguez, T., (2023). The Process Is the Product(ion), or: Collective Leadership Works Panel. Accepted for oral panel for the *Association for Theatre in Higher Education* conference. Paper Title: From Respect to Soul: Honoring the Revolutionary Theatre of the Black Arts Movement
- Oral Presentation** - Weil, M., Valdez, E.S., **Dixon, S.**, Chan, J., Simoun, A., Fisher, T., Beatriz, E., Gubrium, A. (2022). YPAR Explorations of Structural Violence Impacting Queer Youth Health. Accepted for oral presentation to the *Youth+Tech+Health* conference. October 12, 2022.
- Oral Presentation** - Valdez, E.S., Chan, J., Donis, A., Collins-Lovell, C., **Dixon, S.**, Beatriz, E., Gubrium, A. (2022). Structural Racism and its Influence on Sexual and Reproductive Health Inequities Among Latinx Immigrant Youth. Accepted for oral presentation to the *American Public Health Association* 2022 Annual Meeting.
- Oral Presentation** - **Dixon, S.**, & Isaac, M., (2021). No One-Size-Fits-All: Critical Narrative Intervention and Archeology of Self as Anti-Racist and Anti-Colonist Practices through BFRBs. Accepted for oral

presentation at the *National Organization for Arts in Health* (NOAH) 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference  
November 2021

**Panel Presentation** - Burch, S., Dixon, S., Blanks Jones, J. (2021) Leveraging Theatre & Storytelling  
Pedagogies: A Theatre for Health Workshop. Selected for panel presentation at the  
*Society for Public Health Education* (SOPHE) 72nd Annual Conference April 2021.

**Oral Presentation** - Dixon, S. (2020). We're Having a Party!: Using Interactive Theatre Experiences to  
Improve Self-Efficacy, Health, & Play for the Very Young. Accepted for oral presentation at the  
*National Organization for Arts in Health* (NOAH) 4th Annual Conference October 2020

**Panel Presentation** - Sajnani, N., William, B., Yuan, M.L., Edwards, J., Dixon, S., Stevens, A., Morris, M., Li,  
S.Y., Garcia Rodriguez, I., Ikram, S., Bell, W., Rodriguez Perez, C. (2019). Turbulence: Arts-based  
Participatory Action research on the Experience of Creative Arts Therapists and Creatives Who Identify  
as Black and people of Color. Accepted for oral presentation at the  
**North American Drama Therapy Association** 40th Annual Conference September 2019

### INVITED TALKS and PODCASTS

**Keynote Speaker** – Annual Luncheon  
*The Lyder Foundation* October 2024

**Podcast** – Stacked Up Against Us with Saharra Dixon  
*The Health Promotion Practice Podcast* July 2024

**Panel** – BlackOut Boston “Black mental Health Matters”  
*The Front Porch Arts Collective and Central Square Theatre* June 2024

**Speaker** – TLC Community Conversations with Saharra Dixon  
*The TLC Foundation for Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors* December 2022

**Panel** – Equitable, Engaging, and Energizing: a Conversation on BIPOC Mental Health  
*Active Minds* July 2022

**Keynote Speaker** – TLC Talks: Black with BFRBs  
*The TLC Foundation for Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors* March 2022

**Panel** – Virtual Conference on BFRBs: Stories of Success and Recovery  
*The TLC Foundation for Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors* September 2021

**Podcast** – I Wrote It Ten Times or More  
*The Fidget Podcast* January 2021

### TEACHING and GUEST LECTURE EXPERIENCE

**Adjunct Visiting Lecturer**, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, Health Studies Major  
The College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA Fall 2024  
Undergraduate Course: CISS 150-01 Introduction to Global Health, 25 students  
Undergraduate Course: CISS 150-02 Introduction to Global Health, 27 students

**Guest Lecturer**, School of Performance, Visualization, and Fine Arts, Texas A&M University  
Undergraduate Course: PERF 103, Introduction to Devised Theatre Fall 2023

**Teaching Assistant**, Health Promotion and Policy, University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Graduate Course: HPP 608, Health Communication Fall 2022

**Guest Lecturer**, Health Promotion and Policy, University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Graduate Course: HPP 602, Community Development and Health

Spring 2022

**Guest Lecturer**, Programs in Educational Theatre, New York University Steinhardt School  
Graduate Course: Understanding Diversity Teaching Pluralism  
**Lecture Title**: Healing Through Drama: Leveraging Theatre for Collaboration and Problem-solving in Public Health

Fall 2020

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI

January 2023 - Present

**Research Consultant**, College of Nursing

- Project management of a grant-funded study using the Method for Program Adaptation through Community Engagement in Digital Storytelling
- Code digital stories and interviews and assist in the construction and writing of manuscripts related to study data dissemination in peer-review journals
- Oversee regulatory compliance issues such as tracking and recording protocol-specific certifications and procedure certifications such as Human Subject Protection and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and record Institutional Review Board approvals
- Coordinate the evaluation of procedures implemented during pilot studies to determine necessary design and logistical changes for the main study

University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA

August 2021 – May 2023

**Research Assistant**, funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH)

- Collaborated with Massachusetts youth, examining how structural racism and systemic violence contributes to inequitable youth sexual and reproductive health outcomes using Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and arts-based research methodologies
- Co-led three youth retreats (ages 14-21) in Springfield, MA and Lynn, MA, (each cohort about 15 participants) guiding youth in honing the expertise of their lived experience and documenting challenges and strengths in their respective communities
- Conducted interviews with youth and community leaders, code transcripts and prepare youth to disseminate findings to local state officials
- Partnered with community nonprofits and organizations in participant recruitment

Active Minds, Philadelphia, PA

January 2022 – August 2023

**Emerging Scholars Fellow**, Independent Creative Project, *I'm Picking Me*

- Developed, implemented, and facilitated a 4-month digital storytelling workshop with 8 Black women and gender non-confirming persons with body-focused repetitive behaviors (BFRBs)
- Examined and thematically coded digital stories and story scripts to understand how socio-cultural factors affected mental health behaviors for minoritized people
- Presented digital stories as a [composite film](#) to stakeholders including staff at the TLC Foundation for Body-focused Repetitive Behaviors, Active Minds, UMass Amherst SPHHS, and clinicians
- Presented findings at the 6<sup>th</sup> annual National Organization for Arts in Health conference

New York University, New York, NY

September 2018 – August 2022

**Co-Researcher/Performer**, Theatre & Health Lab, "Turbulence"

- Explored the experiences of Black and Brown People of Color (BPOC) in clinical settings and the larger world through drama therapy and other arts-based inquiry, which included the writing and production of an interactive performance-activism ethnodrama titled *Turbulence*
- Participated in participatory-action research involving image theatre, play, and other qualitative methods of data collection to understand how best to serve the needs of BPOC clinicians, health educators, and society at-large who function in predominantly White spaces

- Engaged audience members in challenging systems of oppression through interactive performance elements with the aim of enhancing cultural awareness around BPOC identities and fostering social action
- Assisted with data collection and analysis, collaborated with co-researchers on data dissemination

*The #StayHome Project*, The Dramatic Health Educator, Atco, NJ

March 2020-March 2021

**Creative Director**

- Devised a virtual [COVID-19 arts response](#), leading a group of 8 co-investigators using a trauma-informed, community-engaged participatory action approach
- Coded interviews and field-notes which served as the basis for developing the ethnodrama

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

Render Creative Inc., DBA Main IDEA, Worcester, MA

July 2024 – May 2025

**Interim Executive Director**

- Provide vision and direction to stabilize the organization during a leadership transition, ensuring alignment with the mission, values, and long-term goals
- Manage day-to-day operations, including budget oversight, program delivery, and staff management, to maintain organizational momentum and donor confidence
- Foster strong relationships with board members, funders, community partners, and staff to support organizational continuity and future growth

Town of Ware, Healthy Quaboag Initiative, Ware, MA

November 2023-May 2024

**Communications and Community-Engagement Coordinator**

- Lead community engagement and communications efforts for the Healthy Quaboag initiative for community health
- Conduct marketing and publicity media and communication to build community awareness and support, liaising between local newspapers, radio stations, and virtual marketing
- Develop monthly newsletters and manage all social media platforms
- Grow email listserv and transform social media analytics into tangible goals for growth
- Build relationships with key partners across the Quaboag Valley region by planning and promoting community events our service areas: Community Health Improvement Plan, Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council, Education to Employment and Baystate Better Together, and the Youth Advisory Council
- Partner with team members on grant writing and program implementation

Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts

September 2022-January 2025

**Co-Director and Teaching Artist**, Worcester Youth Speak Honestly Program (WYSH)

- Co-direct the WYSH program, a Mass Cultural Council-funded devised theatre program that includes creating an original piece of theatre based on the lived experiences of Worcester youth
- Develop WYSH tour for Worcester Public High Schools to recruit new ensemble members
- Create weekly rehearsal schedules with Director of Education
- Run weekly rehearsals and lead youth in various theatre-based processes
- Manage all logistics for the end of program show in the Jean McDonough Arts Center

University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA

August 2023-May 2024

**Program Assistant**, Peer Health Education Program

- Support the executive functioning of the Peer Health Education (PHE) program in Recreation and Wellbeing (RecWell)
- Co-create wellbeing sessions including stress management, mental health, contemplative practices, and writing for wellness
- Manage, advise, and mentor a team of 11 undergraduate peer health educators and 4 undergraduate program managers

- Oversee the success and function of all focus groups including social media, contemplative practices, and mental health, as well as planning campus-wide events like Paws and Sleep Fairs
- Foster partnerships across the university through streamlined communication efforts

Bloomfield Department of Health and Human Services, Bloomfield, NJ

February 2021-July 2021

***Health Education Specialist and Social Media Manager***

- Promoted community health education by managing all department social media accounts
- Curated accurate, evidence-based, and engaging health communication through social media outreach and monthly newsletters to Essex, Union, and Morris counties
- Facilitated and moderated events for Bloomfield residents including nutrition, lead poisoning, brain injuries, and the COVID-19 vaccine rollout

CAMBA, Inc., Brooklyn, NY

September 2019-September 2021

***Health Educator***, Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program (CAPP)

- Implemented comprehensive, age-appropriate, and evidence-based sexual education programming to youth ages 10-21 in high-need communities and schools across Brooklyn using the *Be Proud! Be Responsible!* and *Making Proud Choices!* curricula through this state-funded program
- Developed and facilitated original Youth Development Activities including using art in health and social justice, mental wellness, STI & HIV/AIDS education, contraception, and LGBTQ+ identities
- Referred youth to medical providers and other social services as needed
- Trained and supervised youth educators in a peer leadership summer program

Indiana State Department of Health, Indianapolis, IN (remote)

May 2020 - August 2020

***Lead Investigation Specialist***

- Lead investigations into situations concerning individuals who have tested positive for COVID19 and their contacts.
- Educated and counseled clients regarding transmitted disease and risk reduction
- Provide education and information on COVID-19
- Connect appropriate persons to social services and additional resources as needed to ensure their health and safety
- Prepare reports and managing patient and contact data

New York University, New York, NY

September 2018-August 2019

***Preprofessional Advisor***, College of Arts and Sciences

- Advised students and alumni interested in pursuing professional studies such as medicine, dentistry, law, and veterinary and tailored messaging to each student's needs
- Interviewed over 30 students as part of the Committee Letter process for medical school applications
- Wrote over 20 Committee Letters, attesting to applicant strengths and weaknesses in several areas including education, research, work, and volunteer experience
- Refer students to other on and off-campus resources as needed, including health and wellness services
- Worked actively to maintain confidentiality

**CREATIVE PROJECTS**

*Free Play: Scripts Towards an Anti-Racist Tomorrow*, CollideOscope Reparatory Theatre Company

2020

***Performer***, NYU Steinhardt Program in Drama Therapy

- Mission is to advance racial justice and healing through performance; Led by artistic director and NYU Drama Therapy alum Adam Stevens
- Played Mattie in an excerpt of *Sugar in Our Wounds* by Donja R. Love



*We're Having a Party!*, New York University, New York, NY

July 2019

**Playwright and Developer**, NYU Steinhardt Program in Educational Theatre

- Project Synopsis: Youth aged 5 to 7 discover what it means to make healthy lifestyle choices as they help characters prepare for a party in an immersive and interactive theater experience. Children will be asked to help plan the best party of the century while exploring topics like choosing healthy foods, physical activity, hygiene, and safety.
- All health information in the script is evidence-based. A focus group of caregivers was conducted before the script-writing process

*Back to the Basics*, New York University, New York, NY

September 2018 - September 2019

**Student Developer/Facilitator**, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development

- Explored how interactive theatre and health coaching programming can assist students in identifying and alleviating stress and anxiety for academic success in an effort to supplement university counseling services in outreach to first-year students and high-risk students
- Curriculum development for implementation at colleges and universities to serve as a tool to alleviate burden on counseling centers and to identify at-risk students

*Band-aids*, New York University, New York, NY

January 2019 - April 2019

**Director**, Steinhardt Educational Theatre Youth Ensemble

- Directed a micro-ensemble of youth ages 13-18 in a new play, *Band-aids: A Temporary Fix*, which explores how school dress codes disproportionately target feminine bodies
- Explored multiple acting pedagogy and practice with youth, leading them through a co-created process to ensure their thoughts and feelings were reflected in the art piece

New York University, New York, NY

January 2019 - May 2019

**Student**, Steinhardt Program in Educational Theatre

Project Title: *Act Up! Peer Health Exchange: A Peer Educator Training Program*

- Course: Acting: Pedagogy, Technique, and Performance
- Developed an arts-based peer health educator training program
- From Synopsis: *Act Up! Peer Health Exchange* is a program for college students to develop as health leaders on their campuses, in local high schools, and within their communities. Peer Educators fulfill the program's goals by receiving training in the foundations of public health, social justice, and applied theatre. More so, Peer Educators will be able to provide interactive, drama-based educational outreach and conduct needs-assessments

## SELECTED MEDIA

- **University Press** – Public Health Doctoral Student Saharra Dixon Receives SOPHE Health Promotion Practice Paper of the Year Award <https://www.umass.edu/news/article/public-health-doctoral-student-saharra-dixon-receives-sophe-health-promotion-practice>
- **Podcast** - The Health Promotion Practice Podcast: Stacked up Against Us with Saharra Dixon <https://creators.spotify.com/pod/show/health-promotion-practice/episodes/S04E11--Stacked-Up-Against-Us-with-Saharra-L--Dixon-e2mcl0a/a-abet1aq>
- **Magazine** – Elle Magazine: Compulsive Hair Pulling May Be Incurable, but the Shame Around it Isn't <https://www.elle.com/beauty/a39788544/amy-schumer-trichotillomania/>
- **News** - 6 ABC Action News Philadelphia: Symphony & Saharra Honor Late Father with Poetry Contest in Southwest Philadelphia [https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cs1Mw4WPMiVC2jwsVTZ\\_MLvPKi54snYxQOJsg0/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFiZA%3D%3D](https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cs1Mw4WPMiVC2jwsVTZ_MLvPKi54snYxQOJsg0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFiZA%3D%3D)

## REFERENCES

### **Aline Gubrium, PhD**

Professor, Community Health Education  
Advisor, Dissertation Committee Chairperson  
University of Massachusetts Amherst  
School of Public Health and Health Sciences  
Department of Health Promotion and Policy  
715 North Pleasant Street  
Amherst, MA 01003  
Email: [agubrium@umass.edu](mailto:agubrium@umass.edu)

### **Linnea Evans, PhD**

Assistant Professor, Community Health Education  
Advisor, Dissertation Committee Member  
School of Public Health and Health Sciences  
Department of Health Promotion and Policy  
715 North Pleasant Street  
Amherst, MA 01003  
Email: [linneaevans@umass.edu](mailto:linneaevans@umass.edu)