**DESIREE LAPEER**

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PERSONAL STATEMENT

As a sociologist, my worldview is framed around intentional interaction with others as a mechanism for social change. I have exceptional research skills and experience as part of my Master of Arts in Sociology program completion. I have designed, implemented, and facilitated my own research projects from scratch. At the heart of the research I conduct and facilitate is scientific integrity and personal curiosity. I have learned how to be an exceptional team member on projects, as well as lead my own studies. At the end of the day, I continually choose to be a researcher because I truly believe in the power of research and knowledge building to promote well-being and social interaction within society.

EDUCATION

**Doctor of Philosophy, Sociology**

University of Kentucky; Lexington, KY

Research and Teaching Assistant

Doctoral Student, Expected 2026

**Bachelor of Arts, Anthropology**

**Master of Arts, Sociology**

University of Kentucky; Lexington, KY

McNair Fellow, 4.0 GPA

December 2023

Lee University; Cleveland, TN

McNair Scholar, 3.91 GPA

December 2020

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

* **Intergenerational Interaction and Creative Movement, 2023**
	+ As a research assistant, I took lead of the organization of the research project. While involved with the project, I was in charge of the qualitative aspects of the research. I was in charge of communication and recruitment of potential participants, as well as survey design and functionality.
* **Social and Cultural Capital for First-Generation Students, 2023**
	+ As part of the fulfillment for my MA, I conducted qualitative research analysis with a group of first-generation college students to determine areas in which they possessed social and cultural capital in relation to resource utilization.
* **Windham School District (WSD) and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, 2022**
	+ The Windham School District serves as the education provider for offenders in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. For this research project, I joined the University of Kentucky Research Evaluation Team in evaluating the effectiveness of WSD programming in outcomes such as educational achievement, certificate and program completion, employment and wages, recidivism, and rearrest rates. At the completion of this project, the evaluation team provided WSD with analyses of its programs, as well as suggestions for programming.
* **College Completion Rates in Appalachia, 2019-2020**
	+ I have received a total of three research grants to complete this research as an undergraduate. In year one of research, I completed an extensive literature review on college completion rates for first-generation, Central Appalachian students that informed my narrower research design in year two of the project. During year two of the project, I spent over 300 hours conceptualizing, planning, conducting, and dissemining this research during the summer of 2020 where I focused on a qualitative research design to analyze factors influencing college completion for first-generation college students from Fentress County, TN (a Central Appalachian County).
* **Hopi and Navajo Cultural Research, 2020**
	+ As part of a cross-culture trip during undergrad, I had the opportunity to complete research in Arizona and New Mexico with the Hopi and Navajo Native American tribes. During this experience, I joined a team in conducting qualitative interviews focused on hearing the lived experiences of many elders of each of the tribes.
* **Quiche Mayan ethnographic research in Antigua, Guatemala, 2019**
	+ As part of a cross-culture trip during my undergraduate career, I had the opportunity to join an ethnographic research team to study the history and culture of Quiche Mayans. During this research experience, I joined the Quiche Mayan in their living quarters, for meals, in their religious practices, and other areas of their daily lives to meaningful engage in participatory research.

PRESENTATIONS

* **Southern Sociological Society, 2023**
	+ Conference in Myrtle Beach, SC where I presented research titled: *“I Just Kind of Had to Figure It Out” Understanding Social and Cultural Capital for First-Generation College Students.*
* **Bluegrass Annual Discussions on Anthropology and Social Sciences, 2022.**
	+ Conference in Lexington, KY where I presented research from *“We Were All Kind of By Ourselves.” Understanding the Challenges Faced by First-Generation College Students in Fentress County, TN.*
* **Lee University’s McNair-Ledford Research Symposium, 2020.**
	+ Symposium in Cleveland, TN for high-achieving undergraduates where I presented research from *“We Were All Kind of By Ourselves.” Understanding the Challenges Faced by First-Generation College Students in Fentress County, TN* and received an award for Overall Highest Score amongst all presenters.
* **Appalachian College Association Virtual Summit, 2020.**
	+ Virtual conference where I presented research from *“We Were All Kind of By Ourselves.” Understanding the Challenges Faced by First-Generation College Students in Fentress County, TN* as part of receiving a grant from the Appalachian College Association to complete this work.
* **Lee University’s McNair-Ledford Research Symposium, 2019.**
	+ Symposium in Cleveland, TN for high-achieving undergraduates where I presented research from *Factors Influencing College Retention Rates for First-Generation Students in Central Appalachia* and received an award for Third Place amongst all oral presentations.

PUBLICATIONS

* LaPeer, D. (2020). “We Were All Kind of By Ourselves.” Understanding the Challenges Faced by First-Generation College Students in Fentress County, TN. *Lee University McNair Research Journal Fall 2020,* (3), 153-194.
* LaPeer, D. (2019). Factors Influencing College Retention Rates for First-Generation Students in Central Appalachia: A Literature Review. *Lee University McNair Research Journal 2019*, (2), 132-142.

HONORS/AWARDS

* **University of Kentucky McNair Fellowship, 2021-2022**
	+ This prestigious fellowship is awarded to one incoming doctoral student university-wide who participated in the McNair Scholars program in undergrad and provides full-tuition scholarship with an additional stipend.
* **Lee University Charles Paul Conn Award, 2021**
	+ This award is one of three prestigious awards Lee University gives to graduating seniors. The Conn award is given to the graduating senior who demonstrates the greatest promise of achievement in their graduate studies. Each department may nominate one student, and then from these nominees, the winner is selected by a faculty-wide vote.
* **Ledford Undergraduate Research Grant, 2020**
	+ This competitive research grant is open to students from Appalachian counties who demonstrate high potential for successful research.
* **McNair Scholars Research Grant, 2020**
	+ As part of the McNair Scholars program, this grant is given to provide students with an opportunity to complete research during their undergraduate career.
* **Segal AmeriCorps Educational Award, 2019**
	+ This award was received after the completion of my AmeriCorps service term.
* **McNair Scholars Research Grant, 2019**
	+ As part of the McNair Scholars program, this grant is given to provide students with an opportunity to complete research during their undergraduate career.
* **Lee University Honors Scholarship, 2018-2020**
	+ This scholarship is awarded to second-year and higher students who demonstrate academic excellence by maintaining a 3.7 or greater GPA.
* **Lee University Presidential Scholarship, 2017-2019**
	+ This scholarship is awarded to incoming freshmen who demonstrate academic excellence by having a competitive ACT/SAT score and a high GPA from their secondary institution.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

* **Graduate Instructor, College of Arts and Science, University of Kentucky, 2023-current**
	+ As a graduate instructor, I taught undergraduates the basics of sociology. I facilitated knowledge through fun and creative ways in order to maintain active engagement with students. I also maintained full organization and scheduling of the course, and I maintained frequent communication with students.
* **Teaching Assistant, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Kentucky, 2021-2023**
	+ In this role, I gained valuable post-secondary teaching experience through assisting my mentoring professors by communicating with enrolled students, leading class discussions, creating and grading assignments, lecturing, and holding office hours for students.
	+ Assigned courses: Introduction to Sociology; Environmental Sociology; Medicine, Health and Society; Health, Illness and Disabilities
* **Travel Guide (Teaching Assistant), Global Perspectives Office, Lee University, 2020**
	+ In this role, I assisted mentoring professors with engaging group discussions, grading assignments, keeping in contact with students to ensure participation and attendance, inputting and reporting all grades, and giving presentations on cross-culture trips.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

* **Targeted Case Manager, 2023-2024**
	+ In this role, I worked with a non-profit, community mental health organization to address the needs of high-risk individuals. I managed a caseload of approximately 35 clients where I adequately assessed needs and created treatment plans to meet those needs. In addition to providing individuals with access to community resources, I took part in various community-based meetings to address resource needs, housing security, and educational needs.
* **First-Generation Think Tank, 2022**
	+ I was invited to participate in a Think Tank comprised of individuals dedicated to increasing opportunities and resources for first-generation college students. In this event, participants were encouraged to brainstorm of ideas relating to how the University of Kentucky could integrate resources provided by/to faculty and staff could facilitate an increase in retention for first-generation students.
* **Panel Discussion on Graduate Studies, 2022**
	+ I was invited to join a group of graduate students to speak at a McNair institute at Lee University in which we discussed navigating graduate school as first-generation students. Through this discussion, I was able to connect with current undergraduates considering graduate school and to provide them practical advice on how to have a competitive graduate school application, to balance social life and academic life, and to find community within their program.
* **Presentation on Interviewing Skills, 2021**
	+ At the request of a former teacher of mine, I gave a presentation on interviewing skills for the journalism students at Alvin C. York Institute. Through this presentation, I was able to go back to my former high school and engage with current students by providing useful resources on how to effectively conduct interviews.
* **AmeriCorps Service Member, 2019**
	+ During my service term with AmeriCorps, I partnered with Tennessee State Parks where I served at Alvin C. York State Historic Park as a Seasonal Interpretive Resourcer. While in this role, I served as a museum tour guide, hosted monthly programs targeted to engage the public with the park and its history, and transcribed and preserved historical artifacts.

MEMBERSHIPS, AFFILIATIONS, and CERTIFICATIONS

* **Certified Targeted Case Manager, 2023-current**
	+ Successfully completed trainings to be qualified to assist at-risk individuals in attaining access to resources. Additional trainings were completed to be certified to work with individuals with Severe Mental Illness (SMI), Substance Use Disorder (SUD), and/or children with Severe Emotional Distress (SED).
* **Southern Sociological Society, 2022-current**
* **Lambda Alpha, 2018-2020**
	+ National anthropology honors society in which anthropology students with a 3.7 or higher GPA is eligible to join after their second year of undergraduate courses.