

Meet & Greet with Dr. Jameela Conway-Turner

Tuesday April 27, 2021 at 2:00pm ET/11:00am PT

Dr. Jameela Conway-Turner Biography:

Dr. Jameela Conway-Turner is a researcher at American Institutes for Research (AIR). Dr. Conway-Turner provides research and evaluation support to research practitioner partnerships and programs with a focus on youth development, social and emotional learning, and justice-related issues. This work includes K-12 education, out-of-school time, and youth programs. Dr. Conway-Turner works to bridge the research to policy and practice gap by conducting studies to examine the use of research evidence, working with stakeholders to make evidence-based decisions and examining the impact of programs, policies and practices. Dr. Conway-Turner also emphasizes the importance of data visualization and writes reports for a variety of audiences to disseminate research findings.

Dr. Conway-Turner is currently the implementation lead and quantitative analyst for the Evaluation of the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families' Justice Services Programs. In that role, she has conducted analyses with administrative records to understand justice services program involvement and has conducted program staff interviews.

Prior to joining AIR, Dr. Conway-Turner was a policy fellow for the Society for Research in Child Development at the National Institute of Justice working on the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative.

Dr. Jameela Conway-Turner Contact Information

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Questions Asked during Meet & Greet

Background

1. You are our first speaker that does not have a strict criminology background which is what makes your lens so important to the work that you do. Before we dig into the actual work you do, can you tell us a little bit about what you studied and the focus of your PhD studies?
2. Prior to working at AIR, you worked as an AAAS fellow within NIJ. Can you first talk to us about why you pursued a post-doc position?
 - a. Can you talk to us about the AAAS fellowship -- what is it? How does it work?
 - b. Why did you choose this type of policy-oriented fellowship versus a more research-based post-doc position within a university?
 - i. What does it mean to do a policy-based post doc versus a research-based post doc?
 - c. Your AAAS fellowship placed you at NIJ. How did you use your background in a traditional justice space?

- i. Are there skills that you learned in your program that you used more than others in this space?
- ii. Which (if any) skills transcend topic area?

Current Position

3. You're currently at the American Institute of Research (AIR). Can you first tell us a little bit how AIR identifies itself (research firm, think tank, non-profit etc)? And, overall the type of work that it does?
 - a. Can you tell us a little bit about why you choose this Alt-Ac route compared to heading back to a tenure track position?
4. Generally, what does research look like at AIR?
 - a. Qual v Quant? Mixed methods? Primary v Secondary data collection? Program evaluations? Technical assistance work? All of the above?
 - b. What does project work look like? Do you have interdisciplinary research teams who all collaborate to address a specific problem or issue, or is it more siloed by topic area?
 - i. How are project assignments made? How much agency does an individual who works at AIR have over the projects they become involved with?
 - c. If mission of AIR is to build evidence for a just and fair world, what does "evidence building" look like at AIR?
 - i. What does "client-centered" research mean, and what does it look like? And how does this differ from research topics that are generated by the researcher themselves?
 - ii. Given that the team at AIR are the experts but clients themselves contract with AIR to accomplish research needs, how much leeway do you have to answer your own research questions?
 1. You mentioned that due to the client-centered nature of your work you don't have much room for development of your own research questions per se, so how do you incorporate your subject matter expertise into proposals and research designs that you present to clients?
 2. How is the participatory research component of your applied research position where you work with clients to help them define their research questions differ from your experiences with research occurring within a more traditional university academic research environment?
 - iii. What does research dissemination look like at AIR? What sort of deliverables do you create? Who is your target audience when you think about disseminating your research findings?
5. What's a project you've worked on that you're really proud of or were really motivated by?
6. How do you incorporate your psych/early childhood development background into these projects? Particularly for those projects that have a justice/criminal legal system lens.
 - a. Some of our students who have a traditional criminal justice degree are interested in working in policy and research spaces that are not CJ specific, and are bit

broader in the research they do. Do you have any advice for students on how to apply what they know to other “topic” areas?

7. What types of skills do successful researchers at AIR need? And what does AIR look for in researchers who are most successful at AIR?
 - a. By the way, how is success measured there?
 - b. What does the pace of the work look like? Do you have to balance the needs of many projects at once, or do you tend to focus on one specific topic or project at a time?
 - c. What other things should students keep in mind about this space? What would you tell your younger self about either your fellowship or your position with AIR?
8. How does position/pay work? Is it temporary? Grant- or contract driven? Who are the funders?
 - a. Would you consider AIR a “soft money” arena?
9. From application to hire, what’s the interview process look like?