

Sonia Minnes, PhD

Biography (2025)

Sonia Minnes is the Verna Houck Motto Professor of Social Work at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (MSASS) and Research Director at the Schubert Center for Child Studies, Case Western Reserve University. She completed her bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology and a doctorate in social welfare from the Mandel School. Her research interests are in the study of child development, the multiple factors that affect cognitive and mental health outcomes, and the development of problematic substance use. Dr. Minnes studies risk and protective factors, both biological and environmental, that interact to affect developmental outcomes. Biologic risk factors of interest include prenatal exposure to drugs and environmental toxins such as lead. Views on environmental factors are focused on those that occur prenatally and in the first years of life including maternal, family stress, exposure to violence, out of home placement and other environmental pressures related to compromised opportunity and socioeconomic status.

Dr. Minnes **served** as the Principal Investigator of a longitudinal **birth cohort** study of prenatal cocaine exposure funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse during **the adolescent and emerging adult phase of the study**. This study has now completed its fifth phase of data collection after 21 years. She and her colleagues followed a group of over 400 caregiver infant pairs since the children were born (1994-1996). Dr. Minnes is currently analyzing data **with her colleagues** from across childhood through emerging adulthood and will evaluate participant substance use and antisocial behaviors, the development of mental health problems, and adaptive functioning.

Dr. Minnes is the Research Director of the Schubert Center for Child Studies where she has collaborated with partners from CWRU's Department of Environmental Health and has worked to evaluate supportive after-school programming for middle and high school children in Cleveland and community programs that support families with young children (Louise Stokes Scholar House, Family Space). Dr. Minnes has also joined the collaborative efforts of First Year Cleveland and the Mandel School to reduce disparities in infant mortality by serving as an advisor and leads environmental social work/justice studies in Ecuador.