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2003 Senior Honors Thesis Abstracts
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Perceptions of Interracial Dating Among Asian American Undergraduates
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Chicago’s Full Service School Initiative:
Examining the Effectiveness of a Community School Approach

A community school forms partnerships with local organizations to create programs that address academic and non-academic needs of students and communities. Two of the three Chicago public elementary schools that adopted this approach in the Polk Bros. Foundation’s 1996 Full Service School Initiative (FSSI) were studied. Each school was matched with a non-community school that was similar in racial composition, low-income percentage, mobility rates, and academic performance in 1995. FSSI did not differentially impact the 1995 to 2002 ITBS test scores of the community schools when compared to the average of 137 demographically similar schools. Results from 16 classroom observations at the four schools suggest that there was little difference between FSSI and non-FSSI classrooms. Data from 19 interviews with various school constituents imply that there was support in community and non-community schools for the approach because of increased educational and recreational opportunities and stronger school-community relationships.
Struggling With Support:  
Low-Income Non-custodial Fathers’ Experiences with Child Support

Child support is important to the economic well-being of low-income single parent families, and low rates of compliance with support orders have led to increasingly stringent enforcement measures, especially since the welfare reform of 1996. This paper reviews qualitative interviews from 84 low-income noncustodial fathers from the Philadelphia metropolitan area. The sample was diverse, encompassing varied races and ages from 17 to 53. This report describes these fathers’ experiences with child support, finding that most fathers begin supporting their children informally, often through in-kind contributions. Systems of informal support and the transition to the formal child support system are also discussed. Fathers’ experiences with the formal system are primarily negative, and they find the system unfair or degrading, though some fathers may use the system as a tool for their benefit. This report also includes a discussion of policy implications.
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The Disconnect Between Problem and Solution in Ex-Offender Reintegration.
Over 600,000 individuals are released from prisons each year in the United States. Communities, like Chicago, have set up agencies to serve the unique needs of these ex-offenders in their reintegration process. This research discusses the disconnect existing between the problems facing this population in their return to the mainstream, and the solutions to these obstacles service providers currently offer. Nine agencies were identified that specifically serve ex-offenders in Chicago. Staff from eight of these organizations were interviewed for this study. What follows is a discussion on these agencies’ current position on crime and reintegration, in light of society’s past actions based on the historical liberal and conservative philosophies. This study shows a lack in capacity of service providers aiding this growing population in Chicago, and also exposes the inadequate focus these programs place on the housing and employment barriers they identify as the largest obstacles to successful reintegration.
The Friendship Club:
Delineating Friendship Patterns among Multiracial and Monoracial Adolescents

Adolescence is a phase during which youth encounter opportunities for friendship development. Such relationship formations can hinge on variables like gender, age, and shared values and behaviors. However, one dimension exerts a particularly strong influence on socialization patterns: race. Substantial empirical data show that monoracial adolescents consistently prefer to have same-race peers as friends. Yet little research focuses on multiracial youth. To what extent might their relationships differ? This study examines 1,496 biracial (BI) and 9,908 monoracial (MO) high school students in order to identify the companions selected most frequently by each group. Results indicate that part-White BI Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians all befriend more BI peers than their MO foils do. Additionally, BIs value their ethnicity in context less than MOs, who in turn feel slightly more confident about both their physical appearance and level of social acceptance. Further studies are needed to assess the psychological and affective motivation(s) behind the existence of racially divided friendships among youth.
The Benefits of Marriage for African American Mothers: 
An Assessment of the Relationship between Marital Status, 
Socioeconomic Status & Psychological Well-being

This study examines the effects of marital status and socioeconomic status (SES) on the psychological well-being of African American mothers. Three hundred and six mothers of varying marital status and socioeconomic status participated in the study. Four hypotheses were tested: (a) the Mediator Effect, (b) the Moderator or Interaction Effect, (c) the Direct Effect, and (d) the No Effect models. Results most strongly pointed to the moderation effect between marital status and SES. It was found that marital status did not significantly affect the well-being of high SES mothers. High SES divorced and never married mothers fared as well as high SES married mothers. However, the well-being of low SES married mothers was significantly higher than the well-being of low SES divorced and never married mothers. It was concluded that single motherhood and low SES are both risk factors for poor psychological well-being. Thus policy initiatives should focus on alleviating both the rising non-marriage rate and socioeconomic disparity.
Poverty Politics in Illinois: Analyses of Legislative and Advocacy Views in the Context of Welfare and State Reforms

In the face of national reauthorization of the major welfare reforms passed in 1996, Illinois faces challenges in the form of uncertain policy changes at the federal level, a shrinking state budget, and a weak economic climate. This study explains the factors influencing poverty politics and, by extension, welfare reform in Illinois as well as the motivations that underlie support of social service programs. It highlights how political parties, political culture, and the state fiscal situation interact to shape policy objectives and assesses the implications of a recently elected, Democrat-led state legislature on the direction of Illinois poverty politics. In particular, the views of state policy makers and poverty advocates are analyzed in order to better understand policy discussions and considerations within the poverty debate.
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**How Teachers Learn and Change: An Investigation of the Theories Held by School Leaders.**

This paper examines the theories of teacher learning and change as held by school leaders. From a sample of thirty-four administrators and teacher leaders from seven Chicago Public Schools, two different perspectives for categorizing these theories were uncovered: the behaviorist and situated models of learning. The behaviorist perspective was associated with 55% of the sample, while the rest of the sample aligned with the situated perspective. The two theories were then compared according to individuals’ conceptions of teacher learning and teaching, curriculum used to teach teachers and motivational factors that inspire teachers to implement change. Significant relationships were found between each perspective and interviewees’ age, biographical background information and the school at which they taught. Hypotheses were developed as to why these relationships existed and prompts for future research were given.
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Influences on Career Decisions of College Student-Athletes

Researchers have extensively studied influences on career development with high school and college students, but few have looked at the population of collegiate student-athletes and the influence of their athletic experience. This study explores the influences (e.g. parents, teachers, peers, gender, ethnicity, being a student athlete) on the career decisions of 65 Northwestern University student-athletes. All participants completed the Career Influence Inventory that assesses the perceived influences on career development and planning, and a ten question qualitative survey measuring the influence of their athletic experience. The results suggested parents were the greatest influence on career decisions, followed by teachers. The majority (53.8%) of the individuals surveyed stated that athletics influenced their career decisions. The student athletes also indicated some of this influence was positive on their career and some was negative. Implications of this research are that career influences for college student athletes are multiple and complex.
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Participation in Child Care Assistance among Current and Former TANF Recipients:  
Which Families Receive Subsidies?  

Researchers have examined the low rate of participation in child care assistance programs, but few have looked at the differences between families inside and outside of the subsidy system. This paper examines the characteristics of the baseline population and provides a description of both groups of families. Then logistic regression examines which characteristics predict utilization and which characteristics decrease the likelihood of subsidy receipt. This study utilized survey and administrative data from the 784 respondents reporting a need for child care in the first wave of data of the Illinois Family Study. The study found that Medicaid receipt, welfare receipt, living in Chicago, and having a youngest child six years old or younger significantly increased the likelihood of receiving a child care subsidy. The paper concludes with a discussion of the differences between families in each category and the implications for participation in child care assistance.
Creative Toys: Facilitating Divergent Thought in Children's Imaginative Play

The imaginative play of children is often very rich in creative thought. This study examines play as a medium through which to develop creative abilities in children through the encouragement of divergent thinking, an integral component of one's capacity for creativity. In research conducted through a series of puppet workshops at the KOHL Children's Museum, the puppet shows of 35 randomly assigned children were analyzed to determine whether participants that constructed their own puppets were more creative and imaginative in their performances than children that did not participate in the construction of their puppets. Results show that those children who did construct and perform with their own puppets were significantly more creative in their puppet shows than those that did not construct their own and performed instead with pre-constructed puppets. Such findings suggest that self-directed construction of toys and playthings within imaginative play could have a positive influence on children's creative development.
Mental Health Service Use in a Juvenile Justice Population with Severe Mental Disorders

An estimated twenty percent of youth with juvenile justice involvement also suffer from a severe mental disorder, and the history of service provision to this special population is disappointing (National Mental Health Association, 2000; Borduin, 1994). Coordination of linkage to appropriate, effective, and community-based mental health services is important (MacKinnon-Lewis et al., 2002; Cocozza & Skowyra, 2000; National Mental Health Association, 2000). This study explores mental health service use in relation to liaison contact and clinical factors for youth participating in the Mental Health Juvenile Justice Service Integration Initiative (MH/JJ). Participants included 489 MH/JJ adolescents, and data was collected on service use, liaison contact, and clinical factors. Extensive case management and specific clinical factors (psychosis, danger to self, intensive treatment needs, and caregiver limitations) do predict linkage to individual counseling and medication management services. MH/JJ liaisons appear to be utilizing their case management skills and the ability to identify salient clinical factors to link clients to the most appropriate services.
Preventing Empty Classrooms: 
Factors that Influence Special Education Teacher Attrition.

Researchers have studied the problem of special education teacher attrition in many different contexts. New legislation stemming from the “Corey H.” case is changing teacher certification requirements in Illinois. This study investigates the factors related to satisfaction and dissatisfaction among special educators in Cook County public schools, how satisfaction relates to teachers’ reported likelihood to leave, and how teachers perceive the changes from Corey H legislation. Both quantitative and qualitative results are reported from surveys from 75 respondents who teach students ages 14-21. Teachers were most satisfied with factors of autonomy and support, personal factors, and the students. Teachers were least satisfied with paperwork, parents, and legal mandates guiding special education. The majority of teachers did not feel that the changes from the Corey H. legislation were beneficial for special education. This study has implications for improving teacher retention in Illinois schools through addressing the factors influencing teacher satisfaction.
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Have Books, Will Travel: The Undergraduate Transfer Story

The undergraduate transfer experience is a voluntary life transition within the developmental context of the college years. Fifteen undergraduate transfer students to Northwestern University were interviewed to provide an understanding of student accounts of their experiences. In a qualitative analysis, a prototypical transfer story became apparent. This story begins with a realization of discontent at the first school followed by an active decision to change schools. However, the student experiences internal doubts over the decision and has a difficult and lonely adjustment period at the new school. In the end, the student is satisfied with the decision to transfer, because of increased opportunities for exploration, which leads to positive identity development. This study adds to developmental theory by illustrating the significant personal meaning that subjects place on their identity development. Implications for the reconstruction of autobiographical memories are also discussed.
Perceptions of Interracial Dating Among Asian American Undergraduates

Interracial dating and marriage is an increasingly common phenomenon, especially among the Asian American population in the United States. This study investigates whether this trend reflects changing opinions about, and growing acceptance of, interracial dating within an Asian American population. In-depth interviews were conducted with five male and five female undergraduates at Northwestern University, a prestigious Midwest college, regarding their dating histories; thoughts on whether race and ethnicity played a role in their previous romantic relationships, or if it is a factor in their current ones; and the influence of gender on their views about interracial dating. The study found that significant gender differences emerged in not only the responses participants gave, but also the manner in which they answered questions. Several theories are proposed for why these gender differences exist, and ideas for further exploration on the topic of interracial dating suggested.