



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

School of Education and Social Policy

2010-2011
Senior Honors Abstracts

2010-2011
Certificate in Civic Engagement Capstone
Projects

Poster Session
June 3, 2011

2010-2011 Senior Thesis Honors Program

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MICHAEL ALPERIN

Social Policy

21st Century Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education: Predicting Engagement in a Suburban Setting

STEPHANIE ARIAS

Human Development and Psychological Services

Undocumented Latino/a Students' Perceptions of Legal Status

ZHEN CHENG

Human Development and Psychological Services

The Benefits of Neurobiology over Genetic and Social Essentialism in Lowering Mental Illness Stigma

REBECCA CROOK

Human Development and Psychological Services

Relationship Power and Religion Among Couples in Accra, Ghana

ROBERT GUSTAFSON

Social Policy

Policy, Beliefs, and Practices: Teacher Hiring and Programming in Response to Growing Bilingual Populations

JULIE KORNFELD

Social Policy

The Effects of Overseas Cultural Orientation Programs on Refugees' Perceptions of their Resettlement in American Society

EMMALINE POHNL

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Leadership in Community Gardens: Cultivating Organizational Security and An Engaged, Educated Community

PRIYA SURESH

Learning and Organizational Change

Facebook and Negotiations

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Social Policy

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21st Century Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education:

Predicting Engagement in a Suburban Setting

This study drew upon parent and teacher interviews (N=60 and N=12 respectively) at three early childhood education centers to examine parental involvement in a suburban context. Parental engagement in children's early childhood education can be a key predictor of school success and social competence. Results revealed overlapping, yet distinct definitions of parental involvement, as reported by parents and teachers.

Multivariate ordinary least square regression models demonstrated that four dimensions are important for predicting parental involvement. These include demographic factors - parent education level, number of children enrolled in preschool, length of child enrollment; personal factors - self-efficacy; time-use factors - number of hours worked per week; and programmatic factors - parent-teacher relationships and communication, consistent with previous research. These characteristics better modeled parent-rated involvement than teacher-rated involvement, highlighting that there are differences between parent and teacher conceptualizations of engagement. The results support the

hypothesis that similar factors predict parent involvement in both urban and suburban contexts, an implication that is discussed.

STEPHANIE ARIAS

Human Development and Psychological Services

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Undocumented Latino/a Students' Perceptions of Legal Status

Every year, more than 65,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools, with limited prospects of attending college given their lack of access to federal financial aid. This study examines the perceptions of undocumented Latino/a high school seniors regarding their status and experiences as undocumented youth. Qualitative interview data of 25 Latino/a high school seniors indicates that undocumented youths face challenges that include: approaching school professionals for help in the college-application process, gathering financial aid resources for undocumented students, and sharing their status with others for fear of marginalization. Furthermore, the data reflects undocumented youths' desire for a stronger support system that includes teachers and counselors who are informed on issues related to undocumented youth, as well as a national policy that will allow them the same economic opportunities that their American-born peers are afforded. Having a stronger understanding of these students' perceptions informs the types of resources needed by the undocumented community and could assist community organizations, schools, and politicians dedicated to improving undocumented Latino/as' experiences on a local and national scale.

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**The Benefits of Neurobiology over Genetic and Social Essentialism
in Lowering Mental Illness Stigma**

Individuals tend to explain people's behavior and personal characteristics depending on what they believe to be the underlying essence of a person. As these essentialist beliefs play a key role in shaping people's stereotypes, prejudice, and discriminatory behavior, this study is interested in examining how people's beliefs about the cause of mental illness impact stigma. Results indicated that, compared to both genetic and social explanations, a neurobiological explanation led to lower stigma in terms of people's willingness to associate with, help, and hire those with a mental illness. This pattern can be explained by the fact that neurobiology might be perceived to be more malleable and not a permanent and immutable essence of an individual.

REBECCA CROOK

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Relationship Power and Religion Among Couples in Accra, Ghana

One of few studies to examine relationship power in West Africa, this study describes how married couples initiate and make final decisions regarding finances, childcare, and family planning, as well as how husbands' and wives' religious beliefs influence their decision-making approaches. Fifteen husband and wife dyads from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and 15 from the Church of Pentecost were interviewed separately (60 participants). Interviews indicated that although men consult their wives when making decisions, they hold the final decision-making power, particularly in the domain of finances. Couples' Christianity was found to both support *and* challenge traditional patriarchal gender norms. This study illuminates the complex role religion plays in couples' decision-making processes and understanding of gendered responsibilities, and suggests that given the centrality of the Bible in many Ghanaians' understanding of roles in decision-making, it is important to consider arguments within the Bible for the equality of women and men and to involve churches in women's empowerment initiatives.

Northwestern University – School of Education and Social Policy

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**Policy, Beliefs, and Practices: Teacher Hiring and Programming
in Response to Growing Bilingual Populations**

Hispanic children are a quickly growing population, and many schools are experiencing rapid growth in their Hispanic populations. This study investigates whether staff and practices change when schools and districts are suddenly confronted with a new student population. Using interviews of teachers and administrators from three public schools as well as analysis of school and district primary documents, this study explores this question from the perspectives of school and district administrators themselves. Leaders in all three schools found ways to change staff and increase the number of bilingual/ESL certified teachers. The evidence suggests that policy, resources, and beliefs of school/district leadership affect the practices adopted. This research suggests that accountability of Illinois bilingual education policy must be improved. In addition, districts must adopt and instill integrative beliefs if they wish to engage families and develop best practices.

JULIE KORNFELD

Social Policy

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**The Effects of Overseas Cultural Orientation Programs on Refugees' Perceptions of
their Resettlement in American Society**

Resettlement is often the only solution for refugees but misconceptions about the core value of “self-sufficiency” exists contributing to problems of adjustment upon arrival. This study examined the role CO played in shaping refugee perceptions about resettlement by addressing three main concepts: content and sources of refugee preconceptions; content and structure of CO; and, resettling in American society. To understand how refugees' perceptions developed over the course of their displacement period and how nationality and skill-level affected this process, qualitative interviews and surveys with resettled refugees and caseworkers were conducted. Analyses confirmed that many refugees formed their preconceptions from the media and resettled friends. The findings indicate that CO is ineffective at conveying crucial resettlement topics to refugees because the class is too general and short. Refugees' preconceptions and

resettlement experience varied based on nationality and skill-level. Implications regarding the restructuring of CO to make it more effective are made.

EMMALINE POHNL

Social Policy

Advisor Howard Rosing, Ph.D
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Leadership in Community Gardens:

Cultivating Organizational Security and An Engaged, Educated Community

My research explores challenges to the development of community gardens and investigates how garden leadership address them through the analysis of interviews conducted in four community gardens. Key obstacles discussed by garden leaders and members include unstable land tenure, difficulties in acquiring federal charitable status, interpersonal conflict, and barriers to gardener involvement. To manage challenges, leaders rely upon their social and human capital. Additionally, leaders' personalities profoundly shape the trajectory of their gardens. As a result of these qualities, leaders are able to acquire some measure of organizational security and promote an engaged, educated community within their garden, thus supporting its sustainability. This research contributes to a new body of research on urban agriculture in North American cities and will be a valuable resource for urban community garden leaders by providing a framework they can use to consider adoptable solutions.

PRIYA SURISH

Learning and Organizational Change

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Facebook and Negotiations

The current research explored nonstrategic negotiation preparation by examining whether two independent variables: attire and negotiation expertise, impacted negotiators' perceptions of the other party and their negotiation strategy. Participants viewed the Facebook profile of a negotiation counterpart in preparation for an upcoming negotiation with that person. In a 2x2 design, each participant viewed a Facebook profile in which the other party was either: 1) professional attire-expert, 2) casual attire-expert, 3) professional attire-nonexpert, or 4) casual attire-nonexpert. Participants then completed a survey about their perceptions of the counterpart and their intended negotiation strategy. I found significant differences for each of the independent variables in the level of perceived firmness, aggression, cooperation, competitiveness, and trustworthiness of the other party, as well as expectation of concessions, likelihood of making the first offer, reservation price and counteroffer price. Non-strategic negotiation preparation has been historically underemphasized by JD and MBA negotiations courses, and the results from this study can aid in curriculum development and developing best practices for utilizing social media in negotiation contexts.

2010-2011 Civic Engagement Certificate Program

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|------------------|--|
| Program Director | Dan Lewis, PhD Professor, School of Education and Social Policy |
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| Coordinators | Robert Donahue Center for Civic Engagement Nathan Frideres School of Education and Social Policy Heidi Gross Center for Civic Engagement |

JOAN DEGENNARO and ALEXA HERZOG
Asset-Mapping the First Presbyterian Church Community
First Presbyterian Church of Evanston

JESSICA HOLDEN, SHARONA SERNIK and ARIELLE SULLIVAN
Intergenerational Learning Opportunities
Mather Lifeways

WILL BLOOM, IRISA CHEN, LAUREN MANNING, DINA ROSS and EMILY WEINSTOCK
ETHS/ IMPACT Junior Leadership Program
Evanston Township High School Community Service Department and IMPACT

ARIA FIAT, BETH LYNK and MORGAN PURRIER
Documenting Quality of Life
Center for Independent Futures

JOAN DEGENNARO

Social Policy

ALEXA HERZOG

Social Policy and International Studies

Sponsor: First Presbyterian Church of Evanston

Asset-Mapping the First Presbyterian Church Community

The purpose of this project is to link the assets and interests of the First Presbyterian Church of Evanston members with opportunities to enhance the Evanston community as a whole. To begin, we spent time meeting with the Pastor and Mission Direction of the Church in an effort to learn about current initiatives within the Church. In order to identify the activities that Church members were already involved in or had interest in pursuing, we held two focus groups and created and distributed a survey. We also spent time researching what other houses of worship in Evanston are currently doing in terms of outreach and engagement in their local communities. Our final deliverable involved compiling all of this information so that the leadership at First Presbyterian can guide future efforts for community involvement.

JESSICA HOLDEN

Learning and Organizational Change

SHARONA SERNIK

Human Development and Psychological Services

ARIELLE SULLIVAN

Economics

Sponsor: Mather Lifeways

Intergenerational Learning Opportunities

Northwestern students experience a lack of interaction with older adults. The generational bubble on campus does not include an integrative classroom, student group, or community program. Thus, we hope to provide a setting for students and older adults to engage in discussions. We initiated a partnership with older adult residences of Mather Lifeways to plant the roots for an intergenerational program. Our goal is to hold Northwestern class discussions in the Mather building near campus. This year we conducted focus groups and prepared surveys for potential participants to research the perspective of students and older adults on how intergenerational learning can best enrich their educational and personal experience. We also ran a trial discussion at the Mather with a Northwestern class and collected feedback forms from students and residents. Going forward, we will use this information to continue planning a permanent collaboration between NU and Mather Lifeways.

WILL BLOOM

American Studies, Political Science

IRISA CHEN

Political Science, Legal Studies

LAUREN MANNING

Journalism, Sociology

DINA ROSS

Social Policy

EMILY WEINSTOCK

Learning and Organizational Change, Economics

Sponsors: Evanston Township High School Community Service Department and IMPACT

ETHS/ IMPACT Junior Leadership Program

The purpose of this project was to develop a program for Evanston Township High School Juniors to apply the leadership skills they gained through the Emerge Sophomore Leadership Program. We worked with Mary Collins, the ETHS community service coordinator and IMPACT, the Northwestern student group that developed Emerge last year. We led and evaluated the junior program throughout the 2010-2011 school year. The juniors participated in at least one of the following program components: They planned and facilitated leadership workshops for younger ETHS students, co-facilitated Emerge workshops with Northwestern facilitators, or worked on a project that would benefit their community. Based on our observations and evaluations, we recommend having the each junior lead a designated number of workshops for younger students, co-facilitating at least 3 Emerge workshops and eliminating the project component.

ARIA FIAT

Human Development and Psychological Services

BETH LYNK

Communication Sciences and Disorders and Cognitive Science

MORGAN PURRIER

Social Policy and Linguistics

Sponsor: Center for Independent Futures

Documenting Quality of Life

In the State of Illinois, adults with developmental disabilities receive services based on state standards. Critics of state programs contend that some services, and the measures of success of these programs fail to take the success of the “full person” into account. This project’s purpose was to further examine and document the efficacy of quality of life indicators of participants of the Center for Independent Future’s (CIF) Community Living Option (CLO) model. A model, that differs from state norms by implementing a “full life planning” model and redefining “quality of life” indicators. We created a series of interview protocols and conducted pilot interviews with parents and participants to qualitatively measure and evaluate the efficacy of these quality of life indicators. The next goal for this project includes the conducting of multiple sets of interviews with participants, parents, and community builders to further measure such efficacy of these quality of life indicators.

