

UNIVERSITY-BASED CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY CONSORTIUM

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Linking Research to Policy: Perspectives from Researchers of At-Risk Youth Melissa N. Richards

*In this issue of Linking Research to Policy, I interviewed scholars who focus their work on preventive programs and interventions for at-risk youth. I spoke with **Dr. Deborah Gorman-Smith** at the University of Chicago who conducts research on the risk factors of, and development and prevention of aggression and violence in youth. I also interviewed **Dr. Alice Carter** at the University of Massachusetts Boston, who studies how infants and children can be identified as at-risk for social, emotional, and behavioral deficits, and how families play a role in the development of these at-risk children. Finally, I talked to **Dr. Linda Teplin** at Northwestern University who studies how psychiatric disorders and risky behaviors in delinquent youth develop and persist over time.*

It is clear that the women I interviewed conduct research that has many real-world policy applications. When asked about the links between their research and social policy, they each gave examples that illustrate the strong ties between research on at-risk youth and policy. For example, Carter believed that her research could help to characterize early emerging psychopathology, social emotional behavioral problems, and in a perfect world, this would influence policies. Gorman-Smith thought that her research informs how we understand risk and protective factors for children, and that eventually, these findings should go on to help develop large-scale interventions that may be able to help at-risk youth. Gorman-Smith's work at the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy shows that nonprofit organizations such as the Coalition can work to 1) increase funding for research that will build the evidence base for policy and 2) increase the widespread use of research to inform policy-makers. Teplin also thought that without research, "you cannot advance public policy", and that policy should be rooted in research. Collectively, this suggests that these



scholars view research findings as a crucial part of the foundation of policy-making.

There are, however, limitations to applying research to policy. Gorman-Smith and Teplin emphasized that the biggest barrier to the effective dissemination of research findings in the policy world is the language and jargon that researchers use. They both emphasized the importance of talking about concepts in a way that people without a



research background can understand. As Gorman-Smith said, "we need to be able to translate the numbers into real meaning for teachers, practitioners, etc."

Furthermore, when writing up results, Teplin emphasized that it is important that researchers try to publish in general journals that have a wide audience so that their findings are read by a variety of people from different disciplines.

Condensing long papers into short pieces that are easy to read is essential.

Carter also noted a major limitation of the application of research to policy. She mentioned that there is "always a danger of going too big, too fast". Her experience is that applying research to policy is very nuanced, and people in different communities have different needs and beliefs- and these need to be considered when translating research into policy. Therefore, researchers must be cognizant of the degree to which their results are generalizable to the larger population and thus be sensitive to how a policy based on this research is likely to affect large groups of people.

When asked if they had ideas for how these translation challenges could be ameliorated, Gorman-Smith suggested that training programs in graduate school need to be restructured . She believes that graduate students should be taught how to "distill research findings into translatable impact" and "how to turn a 20-page research paper into a two-page piece that highlights the important findings." She also believes that it would be helpful if students learned to frame their research questions in a way that make the answers to these questions useful to policymakers.



Carter also had some suggestions about how to change policies directly that may help make the transition from research to policy smoother. She mentioned that she would like to see pediatricians who are implementing policies get support in their everyday jobs since they are extremely busy and often asked to do an incredible array of tasks. For example, Carter would like to see more mental health specialists and pediatricians working together on-site so that children who may be showing early warning signs for mental illness can receive prompt, preventative care. Furthermore, if all children were routinely screened for mental health disorders, it would eliminate the stigma of getting

screened in the first place.

Despite the limitations they mentioned, these researchers are hopeful about the application of research to policy in the future. Gorman-Smith says that "the big picture suggests that we have come a long way. Federal Hill now thinks about the evidence base when allocating program funding." Teplin mentions that she has seen her own research help develop special programs to aid youth in the juvenile justice system and implement training programs that ameliorate mental health problems. Carter had a similar viewpoint, and mentioned that today there are many more empirically supported prevention programs instituted in places like daycare centers and preschools.

To summarize, although each of these scholars see barriers to applying their research to policy, they believe there are ways to address them, such as improving in the writing skills of researchers and changing in the way young researchers are trained. Nonetheless, there has been significant progress over the years in how policymakers consider research when implementing laws, and hopefully this will continue to improve in the future.

Calendar

Upcoming monthly calls:

Monday, February 18, 11am - 12pm (EDT)

Adam Winsler, Editor, Early Childhood Research Quarterly
&
Peg Burchinal, Associate Editor, Child Development and Early Childhood Research Quarterly

Monday, March 25, 11am - 12pm (EDT)

Vivian Tseng, W.T. Grant Foundation

Monday, April 15, 11am - 12pm (EDT)

TBD

Friday, May 17, 2013, 11am - 12pm (EDT)

Amy Claessens, Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago

&
Liz Davis, Applied Economics, University of Minnesota (*tentative*)

Join a featured presenter and other Consortium members for this month's conference call! Presenter information and call-in instructions will be sent to the list serve closer to the event. *For more information about calls, please contact [Erin Bumgarner](#).*

Relevant Conferences

Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness

March 7-9, 2013, Washington, DC

Council on Contemporary Families

April 5-6, 2013, Coral Gables, FL

ChildCare Aware of America

April 10-13, 2013, Washington, DC

Population Association of America

April 11-13, 2013, New Orleans, LA

Child Welfare League of America

April 14-17, 2013, Washington, DC

Society for Research in Child Development

April 18 - 20, 2013, Seattle, WA

American Educational Research Association April 27- May 1,
2013, San Francisco, CA

For more upcoming events, visit the [Consortium's calendar](#).

If you would like to add an event to the calendar, please contact [Paige Peltzer](#).

Announcements

Join the Consortium LinkedIn Page!

The Consortium is now an active member of LinkedIn! In an effort to build connections among members, we've created a LinkedIn group page where members can share job postings and start discussions. Please consider joining our LinkedIn group by searching for "National University-Based Child and Family Policy Consortium (CFPC) Careers Group" or by clicking [here](#).

Welcome Nick Langley, Consortium Intern!

Nick Langley came on board last fall and has been working with Sara Benning (UMN Children, Youth & Family Consortium) on a wide variety of National Consortium activities.

Nick is in his second year of the Masters in Applied Developmental Psychology program at Clayton State University. His specific interests include educational policy and social justice, and he intends to pursue a Ph.D. in a related field. Nick is excited to be working with the Consortium to support young scholars and strengthen collaboration amongst researchers, policymakers, and professionals.

Nick can be reached at nlangley@student.clayton.edu.

Goodbye, Shannon Smith!

Much of the Consortium's behind the scenes work could not be

accomplished without the help of Shannon Smith, staff assistant at Duke's Sanford Center. Shannon has been an integral part of the team that kept things running smoothly for the Consortium and she will be sorely missed. She is looking forward to returning home and being closer to family in Ohio in her new role as executive assistant to the VP of investor relations at Signet Jewelers in Akron. Shannon may be knocking on the doors of our Case Western members and others once she gets settled in! We wish her all the best in her new role and thank her for all she's done on behalf of the Consortium.

W.T. Grant Officer's Grant Awarded to Consortium Members

Consortium member Chapin Hall (University of Chicago) - in collaboration with Duke's Center for Child and Family Policy and the UMN's Children, Youth & Family Consortium (CYFC) - have received a \$25,000 grant from the W. T. Grant Foundation for the *University-Based Child and Family Policy Consortium's Child Welfare Learning Community Network*. This network supports W.T. Grant's mission by expanding on their existing learning community model to create a four-state researcher-policy maker network that focuses on youth in child welfare. This grant provides one year of funding for network-related travel and meeting costs.

If your Consortium center is working on child welfare issues, and you're interested in being a part of this network, please contact Sara Benning at sbenning@umn.edu for more info.

New Conference Call Platform

We will no longer be using Adobe for Consortium conference calls, but instead use Webex.

To check whether you have the appropriate players installed for UCF (Universal Communications Format) rich media files, go to <https://dukeuniversity.webex.com/dukeuniversity/systemdiagnosis.php>.

Consortium Membership

Consortium membership is offered on an institutional or an individual level and includes, but is not limited to, university-based centers and programs that represent the social, behavioral, and health sciences fields, including anthropology, economics, human development, nursing, pediatrics, political science, psychology, public health, and sociology. All persons affiliated with a member institution (i.e., university or center staff, faculty, and students) are considered Consortium members. All members are welcome to engage in Consortium calls and events and to [join](#) the Consortium list serve. For membership information, click [here](#).

The annual individual membership fee is \$100. If the cost of individual membership is prohibitive, or for more information regarding membership, please contact [Jenni Owen](#).

Members in the News

November 2012

Boston College Associate Professor Ana M. Martínez Alemán's

observations on the cause-and-effect relationship between school funding and educational achievement were featured in an article in [*The Street*](#), an online financial news and commentary service.

Curtis Skinner, director of Family Economic Security at the National Center for Children in Poverty at **Columbia University**, talks in the [*Courier Press*](#) about how much cliff effect is caused by public assistance programs.

Renee Wilson-Simmons, director of the National Center for Children in Poverty at **Columbia University**, sat on PBS [*Frontline*](#)'s panel on child poverty.

December 2012

Research by Lynch School Assistant Professor **Paul Poteat** at **Boston College** was included in an American Psychological Association [*Monitor on Psychology*](#) article on how schools can be more welcoming to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth.

Curtis Skinner, director of the Family Economic Security program at the National Center for Children in Poverty at **Columbia University**, emphasizes the importance of the federal and state safety net to vulnerable families in a [*Salon*](#) article discussing the fiscal cliff.

Kirabo Jackson, economist at **Northwestern University**, cites his study highlighting what testing *doesn't* show about why teachers matter in the [*Boston Globe*](#).

Janet Currie of **Princeton University's** Center for Research on Child Wellbeing was cited in an [*Atlantic*](#) article about how fiscal cliff compromises and a weaker safety net might affect children.

Duke University's Center for Child and Family Policy Director **Ken Dodge** gave advice to parents of children feeling stressed or anxious after the Sandy Hook school shooting in this [*Time*](#) article. Dodge advised parents to empower their children by helping them do something like write a letter to those in Newtown and to stay tuned to their children's feelings as a way to help them cope after the recent school shooting in a [*WRAL story*](#).

Senior **Duke** Research Scholar **Joel Rosch** commented on whether permanent school resource officers (SROs) are needed after Orange County Schools announced the possibility that it may permanently assign SROs to each elementary school in the [*Herald Sun*](#).

January 2013

Dr. Janis Whitlock, director of **Cornell University's** Research Program on Self-Injurious Behavior, discussed the risk of public images

of cutting in a *Huffington Post* article.

Director of Youth-Nex at the **University of Virginia**, **Patrick Tolan** weighs in on mommy blogs for *C-ville Weekly*.

Duke University's Ken Dodge told the *Huffington Post* that arming teachers, principals is not the answer.

William Darity, faculty fellow and professor of public policy at **Duke University's** Center for Child and Family Policy, co-authored a *Huffington Post* piece, which advocates wealth, rather than income, as a marker if race-based affirmative action is voided by the Supreme Court.

Ted Fiske and **Duke University's** Center for Child and Family Policy Fellow **Helen "Sunny" Ladd** write in the *Huffington Post* about the U.S. facing two radically different visions of public education.

Resources

Accepting Applications:

The National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect 2013 Summer Research Institute (SRI)

Applicants are to submit, via e-mail attachment, their CV along with the official Application (MS Word Format) which is available for download at this link:

www.ndacan.cornell.edu/Ndacan/Summer_Institute/SRI2013.html

Applications must be received on or before January 30, 2013.

Hiring: Teaching Assistant Professor in the Child Development and Family Studies program at West Virginia University

The Child Development and Family Studies (CDFS) program in the Department of Technology, Learning, and Culture is seeking to fill a 9-month renewable appointment at the rank of Teaching Instructor or Teaching Assistant Professor, depending upon qualifications, to begin August 16, 2013.

Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the position is filled.

Post-Doctoral Position Opening at University of Texas at Austin Population Research Center

The Population Research Center (PRC) at the University of Texas (UT) at Austin will have one opening for NICHD-funded postdoctoral position starting September 1, 2013. This position is for one year, but is potentially renewable for a second year. The PRC is an interdisciplinary research and training unit of UT that provides infrastructure support services and project development support for a very productive, interdisciplinary group of faculty, postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduate students at UT.

Screening of applications will begin on January 28, 2013 and will continue until the position is filled.

Hiring: Assistant Professor of Social Work, Miami University, School of Education, Health and Society, Department of Family Studies and Social Work

The Department of Family Studies and Social Work is seeking an enthusiastic, dedicated Assistant Professor in Social Work committed to working in a collaborative environment. The faculty member is expected to demonstrate exemplary teaching and research, and provide a strong contribution to the program, department, division, and university.

Screening of applications will begin December 15, 2012 and continue until the position is filled.

Hiring: Sociology/PRC Senior Faculty, Population Research Center, University of Texas at Austin

The Department of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin invites applications for a senior social demographer at the rank of full professor with tenure starting in Fall 2013. The position will include an affiliation with the Population Research Center. All areas of specialization within social demography are open. Duties will include undergraduate and graduate teaching, research, publication, and service.

Applications will be screened until the position is filled.

Hiring: Human Development and Family Science Faculty Leader (tenure-line, rank open) George Mason University

The George Mason University College of Education and Human Development seeks a dynamic faculty leader (mid-career or senior scholar) to join a new interdisciplinary academic program in Human Development and Family Science (HDFS) with concentrations in Early Childhood Development and Services, Adult Development and Aging, and Family Processes and Policy.

Review of applications will begin on January 10, 2013.

Hiring: Assistant Professor of Child and Family Development
This tenure track position begins on August, 2013. Requirements include an earned doctorate in human development, family studies or related field at time of hire.

Review of applications will begin on January 7, 2013 and will continue until the position is filled.

**American Psychological Foundation (APF)
Request for Nominations: Diane J. Willis Early Career Award**

APF provides financial support for innovative research and programs that enhance the power of psychology to elevate the human condition and advance human potential both now and in generations to come.

The submission deadline is January 31.

Hiring: Georgetown University Tenure Track Assistant Professor of Psychology

The Department of Psychology is seeking to fill a tenure-track assistant professor position effective August 1, 2013. They are interested in candidates whose research explores influences on educational outcomes, including those at the elementary, middle and high school levels, as well as early educational outcomes.

Hiring: Senior faculty position in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) program at Wayne State University

The successful candidate will have demonstrated leadership in interdisciplinary research and a record of scholarly achievement (i.e., research publications, grantsmanship) commensurate with appointment as an associate or full professor.

Postdoctoral Fellowship Opening at Penn State's Prevention and Methodology Training Program

The Prevention and Methodology Training (PAMT) program at Penn State has an opening for a postdoctoral fellow. PAMT, a joint effort between the Prevention Research Center and the Methodology Center, cross-trains graduate and postdoctoral researchers as prevention scientists and methodologists.

Please visit methodology.psu.edu/pamt/ for full application instructions.

Upcoming Newsletters

We are always looking for Consortium news, resource information, and other relevant material to highlight in the newsletter. *Please send suggestions to Paige Peltzer.*

The Consortium is a national, interdisciplinary member organization of university-based child and family policy research centers, institutes, and programs.



*This is a periodic newsletter of the Consortium.
We welcome your feedback and submissions for inclusion in future issues.*

