THE **GRAND CHALLENGES** AT PITT SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

University of **Pittsburgh** | School of Social Work

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As we take stock of where we are and what we're doing in this complex world we inhabit, we found it useful to think about our efforts around the **13 Grand Challenges for Social Work**. In the following pages, we provide a listing of our ongoing and recent projects in each of the Grand Challenges, and highlight projects associated with the Challenges to illustrate our work. While I was already well aware of how active, productive, and impactful we are on many fronts, this exercise helped confirm our areas of strength, suggested overlapping interests and possibilities, and demonstrated the depth and breadth of engagement and impact of our faculty and doctoral students.

Going through this process helped us realize how broadly we are working across the 13 Grand Challenges. And as we looked at how our collective work clustered together under the umbrellas of Individual and Family Well-being, Stronger Social Fabric, and Just Society, it was interesting to look at how our research, intervention development, dissemination, implementation and social justice imperatives all come together. The process also highlighted how we are embedded in the broader world – whether it's our relationships with counties across the state via our work in child welfare, our intensive and multi-faceted work in various Pittsburgh neighborhoods, our connections with a broad range of colleagues, or our integral connections with systems and organizations that address the full range of societal needs and issues.

Elizabeth M.Z. Farmer, Dean

The review also highlights the importance of our centers to this work. The Child Welfare Resource Center and broader Child Welfare Education and Research Program, the Center for Interventions to Enhance Community Health, and the Center on Race and Social Problems create respective cores for much of our work in child welfare, mental health, and racial and social justice. In fact, two of our centers have important anniversaries this year — the Child Welfare Resource Center is celebrating its 25th anniversary, and the Center on Race and Social Problems is celebrating its 20th. Please stay tuned for announcements about events to celebrate each!

I hope that you enjoy reading through this as much as we enjoyed pulling it together! In a world and field where there are so many critical, complex, and pervasive issues that demand our attention, it's energizing to stand back for a moment to take inventory of what we're actually doing. If any of you who are reading this see connections or potential collaborations with what we're working on, we would love to expand our reach, thinking, and possibilities by joining forces. Our contact information is readily available via our **website** — we look forward to what we can do together!

Onward to achieving the goals set forth in the Grand Challenges!

Betsy

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About the Grand Challenges

For more than a century, social workers have been transforming our society. Today, we face serious, interrelated, and large-scale challenges—heightened awareness of racial inequalities and the need for structural change, a global pandemic, violence, substance abuse, environmental degradation, injustice, and isolation. We need social workers' unique blend of scientific knowledge and caring practice more than ever. The **Grand Challenges for Social Work**, initiated by the American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare in 2016, and sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work and other schools, is a call to action for social work educators, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to work together—and across disciplines—to tackle some of our toughest social problems.

Pitt Social Work is deeply committed to the ideals and social work values that direct the work of the Grand Challenges, and the research of the school's faculty is a reflection of that commitment.

University of PITTSBURGH | School of Social Work

INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

◎ Ensure healthy development for all youth

- From Data Literacy to Collective Data Stewardship: Technology-Supported Community-Driven Solutions for Urban Youth, **Jaime Booth**, Associate Professor

- Get Safe: Youth Social Networks and Activity Spaces, **Jaime Booth**, Associate Professor

- The SPIN Project: Spaces and People in Neighborhoods for Positive Youth Development, **Jaime Booth**, Associate Professor

- Stronger Collaboration with Intensive Family Coaching: A Pilot Study, **Marlo Perry**, Research Associate Professor

  Child Welfare Education and Research Programs, **Helen Cahalane**, Principal Investigator

  ▶ **SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 5**

- Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) , **Helen Cahalane**, Principal Investigator

- Allegheny County Department of Human Services Training Program and Student Internships, Helen Cahalane, Principal Investigator

- Navigation and Parent Peer Support to Promote Access and Retention of Children in Mental Health Services, **Elizabeth M.Z. Farmer**, Dean

- Countywide Mental Health Literacy Survey Project, **Dashawna Fussell-Ware**, Doctoral candidate

- Redefining Resilience and Reframing Resistance: Evaluation of a Violence Prevention and Health Promotion Empowerment Program for Black Girls, **Sara Goodkind**, Associate Professor

- Just Discipline Initiative and Just Discipline Regional Impact Model, **James Huguley**, Assistant Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Parenting While Black, **James Huguley**, Assistant Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and **Cecily Davis**, Doctoral candidate

- School-Based Trauma intervention, **James Huguley**, Assistant Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and **Shaun Eack**, Professor and James and Noel Browne Chair

- OnTrackNY's Learning Healthcare System, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

- Enhancing Safety and Well-Being for Ohio's Children and Families, **Deborah Moon**, Assistant Professor

  Homewood Children's Village Full-Service Community School Education Pipeline, **John Wallace**, Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development, David E. Epperson Chair and Professor, Center on Race and Social Problems Interim Director and **Aliya Durham**, Assistant Professor and Director of Community Engagement

  ▶ **SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 6**

- Child/Youth Thriving Matrix: a community-level strategy to reduce youth violence (a project of *The Pittsburgh Study*, UPMC Children's Hospital), **Mary Ohmer**, COSA Chair and Associate Professor

- Community Thriving: Enhancing Resiliency of Communities after Stress and Trauma, **Mary Ohmer**, COSA Chair and Associate Professor

- Preventing Violence and Improving Community Mental Health in Fineview & Perry Hilltop (Intergenerational Community-based Intervention focused on building collective efficacy and social connections for the prevention of youth and community violence and the promotion of community mental health), **Mary Ohmer**, COSA Chair and Associate Professor

- Supporting the Education of Youth in Foster Care during the Pandemic: Foster Parent and Agency Perspectives, **Mary Rauktis**, Research Associate Professor

- Behavioral Health Scholars Program (BHSP), **Daniel Rosen**, Professor

- Interprofessional Infant Oral Health Education at the Community Engagement Center, **Daniel Rosen**, Professor

- The Integrated Health Care Training Crops, **Daniel Rosen**, Professor

- Pitt Assisted Communities and Schools Program in Homewood - Program Operational Support, **John Wallace**, Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development, David E. Epperson Chair and Professor, Center on Race and Social Problems Interim Director and **James Huguley**, Assistant Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs

The Child Welfare Education and Research Programs (CWERP) at Pitt School of Social Work have been dedicated to improving the lives of Pennsylvania's children for 25 years. CWERP has been led by principal Investigator Dr. Helen Cahalane since 2006. Funded by the Administration for Children and Families and the PA Department of Human Services, CWERP offers social work education, training, technical assistance, policy implementation, organizational interventions, program evaluation, and support for best practice for the public child welfare workforce in Pennsylvania.

As the second largest child welfare program in the country (at approximately $22 million dollars each year) and with over 100 associated faculty and staff across the state, the CWERP "prepares and supports the public child welfare workforce and the public child welfare agencies in Pennsylvania to enhance the safety, permanency and well-being of vulnerable children and families" explained Cahalane.

Dr. Helen Cahalane

CWERP operates several signature programs to build the PA child welfare workforce including the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates and the Child Welfare Education for Leadership (for master's level students) programs. Both are Title IV-E, professional social work education programs created to enhance the caliber of the public child welfare workforce in Pennsylvania. Pitt faculty run the CWEL and CWEB programs for Pitt students and also oversee such programs across the state in 15 other universities. Nearly 3,000 graduates have contributed their social work knowledge and skill to the PA child welfare workforce over the past 25 years.

Recent funding by the Administration for Children and Families, the U.S. Children's Bureau, and the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute made it possible to expand these training opportunities through the Child Welfare Workforce Excellence Fellows (CWWEF). CWWEF provides educational preparation and support for public child welfare career development. MSW graduates who receive targeted child welfare education and foundational training are better prepared to enter the child welfare workforce and contribute to sustainable change in child welfare organizations.

In addition to its training arm and mission, CWERP engages in a wide range of activities — from technical assistance, to expertise in organizational development, to extensive trainings, to research and evaluation of child welfare-focused topics. For example, CWERP research faculty are preparing to lead the state-wide evaluation of PA's Family First Prevention Services Act. FFPSA offers new opportunities and foci for child welfare services. CWERP will conduct process- and outcome-focused evaluations as well as a focus on whether and how selected evidence-based programs/practices improve promising parenting practices, support child safety and permanency, and improve parent and child mental health. CWERP also supports the workforce through innovative curricula, training approaches, and understanding of factors that support staff and reduce burnout. In particular, CWERP staff have been instrumental in developing and implementing team-based learning and simulation-based training throughout the state. This extensive work in developing innovative and alternative training approaches was particularly relevant in 2020 when pandemic conditions required a shift to virtual trainings. Based on CWERP's ongoing work, PA had approaches ready, along with data showing that these virtual methodologies produced statistically similar outcomes to in-person trainings. CWERP faculty also conduct a wide range of evaluations to better understand and serve youth and families. A recent project, in collaboration with colleagues in NY and VA, focuses on how to better understand and encourage healthy use of technology and social media by older youth in the child welfare system. This mixed-methods study is designed to explore disparities in access to technology, social media's role in social support, and how adults can help youth navigate technology and social media in safe, productive, and healthy ways. A newly funded project will explore the experience of Black female caseworkers in order to inform the development of a racially-informed mindfulness intervention to help mitigate the impact of emotional labor and gendered racial microaggressions. All of these projects contribute to the knowledge base, practice improvement efforts, and continuous quality improvement framework of CWERP. ■

Homewood Children's Village

Homewood Children's Village was founded in 2008 by Pitt Social Work faculty members, Dr. Aliya Durham and Dr. John Wallace. The Village was originally envisioned as a comprehensive, place-based initiative, that would integrate the research, teaching and service missions of the School of Social Work, with a deep commitment to utilizing knowledge to fulfill the Village's mission, "to simultaneously improve the lives of Homewood's children and to reweave the fabric of the community in which they live."

Key funders include the National Institutes of Health, The Department of Education, The Richard King Mellon Foundation, The Gismondi Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, and The Kresge Foundation. More than a dozen years after its founding, the work of the Homewood Children's Village partnership with Pitt SSW has resulted in numerous locally and federally funded research projects, a range of peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations and theses, national and local conference presentations, dozens of newspaper articles, launch of the SSW's Community Based Participatory Research course, and countless field placements and volunteer opportunities for faculty, staff, students and members of the Homewood community.

Dr. Aliya Durham

In fact, the SSW's work with Homewood Children's Village (HCV) helped to catalyze the University of Pittsburgh's **"Neighborhood Commitments"** via the launch of the Homewood Community Engagement Center.

More importantly, the HCV has positively impacted the lives of hundreds of children and families who live, learn, work and worship in Homewood. The HCV provides programming for families and adults centered on the core belief that parents are children's first teachers, and research suggests that increasing adults' capacity can improve child outcomes. They connect families to resources that include continued education, job training, and anti-poverty and leadership programs. The ultimate goal for this multigenerational (2Gen) programming approach is to support families towards self-determination, physical and economic well-being, which provide the foundation for self-sufficiency. When families thrive, children succeed.

Dr. John Wallace

The SSW's Pitt Assisted Communities and Schools (PACS) research-practice partnership with HCV, and its numerous community partners, provides academic, social and health programming to over 1,200 children, families, schools and the community.

Recent projects and partnership outputs for 2020-2021 include programs such as the Pitt*Enrich*, tutoring program that served 43 students in grades 1-4 over 19 Saturday group sessions. These students engaged with 17 tutors for over 600 hours of activity. The *Justice Scholars Initiative* served 47 students in three College in High School courses. Participants earned a total of 126 college credits, and *Justice Scholars* staff and volunteers worked with 17 seniors to earn a total of $68,000 in scholarship funds. And the *Pittsburgh Parenting Project*, served more than 600 community members this year. A total of 35 parents registered for two 6-week programs *(Parenting While Black)* featuring weekly 90-minute parenting support sessions.

The Homewood Children's Village continues to be a critical project and placement site for the School of Social Work's students, faculty, and staff. ■

◉ Close the health gap

- Get Safe: Youth Social Networks and Activity Spaces, Jaime Booth, Associate Professor

- The SPIN Project: Spaces and People in Neighborhoods for Positive Youth Development, Jaime Booth, Associate Professor

- Center for Interventions to Enhance Community Health (CiTECH)

- Countywide Mental Health Literacy Survey Project, Dashawna Fussell-Ware, Doctoral candidate

- Redefining Resilience and Reframing Resistance: Evaluation of a Violence Prevention and Health Promotion Empowerment Program for Black Girls, Sara Goodkind, Associate Professor

- Black Maternal Caregivers' Engagement in HIV Care while Parenting Dependent Children Study, Laurenia Mangum, Doctoral candidate

- Understanding the impact of involuntary psychiatric holds on youth pathways to care, Nev Jones, Assistant Professor

Contraceptive Use Decision-Making and Uptake Among Black Women Living with HIV, Laurenia Mangum, Doctoral candidate

- Social Work Education Inclusivity of Sexual Health Curricula Study, Laurenia Mangum, Doctoral candidate

The CHURCH (Congregations as Healers Uniting to Restore Community Health) Music Project, PI: Deborah Moon, Assistant Professor Co-PI: John Wallace, Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development, David E. Epperson Chair and Professor, Center on Race and Social Problems Interim Director, Toya Jones, BASW Program Director and Assistant Professor, Aliya Durham, Assistant Professor and Director of Community Engagement

- Promoting trustworthiness of the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine among Black and Latinx communities, Daniel Rosen, Professor

- The CHURCH (Congregations as Healers Uniting to Restore Community Health) Project, PI: John Wallace, Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development, David E. Epperson Chair and Professor, Center on Race and Social Problems Interim Director, Co-PI: Deborah Moon, Assistant Professor Toya Jones, BASW Program Director and Assistant Professor, Aliya Durham, Assistant Professor and Director of Community Engagement

- Homewood Children's Village Full-Service Community School Education Pipeline, John Wallace, Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development, David E. Epperson Chair and Professor, Center on Race and Social Problems Interim Director and Aliya Durham, Assistant Professor and Director of Community Engagement

Contraceptive Use Decision–Making and Uptake Among Black Women Living with HIV

Laurenia Mangum

Doctoral candidate Laurenia Mangum's new research project, *Contraceptive Use Decision-Making and Uptake Among Black Women Living with HIV*, is funded by the Society of Family Planning.

Although mother-to-child transmission of HIV has the lowest incidence among all new HIV diagnoses, it can occur anytime during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. As of 2018, less than one percent of new HIV diagnoses were due to perinatal transmission, but of those new HIV diagnoses, 65% were among Black children—a rate 4.5 times the rate of perinatal HIV diagnoses among White children and more than seven times the rate of perinatal HIV diagnoses among Latinx children.

A contributing factor for perinatal transmission of HIV is unintended pregnancy, and these unintended pregnancies were associated with lower odds of viral suppression at delivery, meaning the fetuses were at higher risk of perinatal transmission

Mangum's study explores attitudes and health-seeking behaviors about contraception among Black mothers living with HIV in the United States. More specifically, she seeks to better understand the decision-making process of choosing whether or not to use contraception, deciding which type to use, and managing contraception use in addition to antiretroviral treatment adherence. This research project expands the existing literature on family planning to better understand contraception self-efficacy among Black women living with HIV.

"While rates of perinatal HIV transmission have declined in recent years due to biomedical advances in HIV care and obstetrics, current trends mirror the disproportionate rates of HIV incidence among Black women in the United States" stated Mangum.

This cross-sectional exploratory study will recruit Black women living with HIV from across the United States to complete an anonymous web-based survey regarding their antiretroviral therapy (ART) adherence, social support, HIV self-management, contraception attitudes/beliefs, and HIV healthcare utilization. Study findings will be shared with HIV care physicians, healthcare providers, case managers, social workers, and other essential staff. The study aims to improve understandings about how to increase discussions of family planning between healthcare providers and Black women living with HIV. ■

The CHURCH (Congregations as Healers Uniting to Restore Community Health) Music Project

The *CHURCH (Congregations as Healers Uniting to Restore Community Health)* Music project led by PI Dr. Deborah Moon, and Co-PIs: Drs. John Wallace, Toya Jones, and Aliya Durham, is built on the foundation of the *CHURCH (Congregations as Healers Uniting to Restore Community Health)* project led by Wallace.

Churches consistently have been significant sources of material, physical, mental, and spiritual support for black families and individuals. Thus, churches have been increasingly recognized as an ideal platform to implement programs designed to promote the mental wellness of African Americans.

The CHURCH project seeks to develop and evaluate a mental health intervention that can be implemented within black churches. The CHURCH Music project expands the CHURCH project by engaging black church musicians to incorporate musical components into the mental health intervention. Music has played a central role in the religious tradition of African Americans, and black sacred music can enhance the process of culturally tailoring the mental health intervention as many contemporary musical forms such as gospel, rhythm and blues, soul, and hip-hop, were originated from African culture. Furthermore, modern medicine recognizes therapeutic effects of music on mental wellness at the physiological, cognitive, and socioemotional levels. Moon and colleagues hypothesize that music will increase buy-in from churches, aid the process of culturally tailoring the intervention, and enhance the benefits of the mental health intervention at the physiological, cognitive, and socioemotional dimensions.

Dr. Debora Moon

This Community-Partnered Participatory Research (CPPR) study seeks to assess the feasibility of developing and implementing a music-incorporated mental health intervention in collaboration with African American faith leaders. The team of Pitt members and community partners will conduct semi-structured key informant interviews to understand core participants' experiences in developing and participating in the intervention; analyze CHURCH Project process and planning documents to gather insight into the process of developing a partnership with faith leaders; and conduct surveys, in-depth interviews and focus groups with clergy and congregational members who participate in the intervention to ascertain the impact on their mental health awareness, knowledge, and skills. Participants' perceptions of the role of music on the quality of their engagement, sense of cultural identity, and therapeutic benefits of the intervention will also be examined. ■

◉ Build healthy relationships to end violence

- Get Safe: Youth Social Networks and Activity Spaces, **Jaime Booth**, Associate Professor

Translating TGQN Campus Climate Findings into Practice, **Rachel Gartner**, Assistant Professor and **Adrian Ballard**, Doctoral candidate

▶ SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON **PG. 11**

- Understanding conflict and violence in families of persons with serious mental illness, **Travis Labrum**, Assistant Professor

Families as Partners in Reducing Violence, **Christina Newhill**, Professor

▶ SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON **PG. 12**

- Preventing Violence and Improving Community Mental Health in Fineview & Perry Hilltop (Intergenerational Community-based Intervention focused on building collective efficacy and social connections for the prevention of youth and community violence and the promotion of community mental health), **Mary Ohmer**, COSA Chair and Associate Professor

- Expect Respect Middle School: Preventing Severe and Lethal Violence among Youth with Prior Violence Exposure, **Daniel Rosen**, Professor

Translating TGQN Campus Climate Findings into Practice

Dr. Rachel Gartner, with doctoral candidate Adrian Ballard and doctoral student Emil Smith, is at work on her project: *Translating TGQN Campus Climate Findings into Practice* which builds on Gartner's previous work on assessing gender-based violence on college campuses, "A New Gender Microaggressions Taxonomy for Undergraduate Women on College Campuses: A Qualitative Examination" and her work examining violence and victimization of sexual and gender minority adolescents, "Social Ecological Correlates of Family-Level Interpersonal and Environmental Microaggressions Toward Sexual and Gender Minority Adolescents."

Dr. Rachel Gartner

Campus climate surveys and emerging research increasingly addresses the magnitude of the problem of sexual violence against transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, or otherwise gender nonconforming (TGQN) college students (i.e., prevalence and incidence); however, little has been done to understand the context and nature of their experiences, their perception of campus service provisions, and the gaps they see in prevention and response efforts.

This study addresses the higher rates of sexual violence against TGQN university students by identifying gaps in sexual violence prevention, policy, and response, as well as climate concerns on the University of Pittsburgh campus. The study addresses the aforementioned gaps with the following activities: (1) a scoping review of the literature to identify best practices in campus sexual violence prevention programming targeting TGQN students; (2) listening sessions with TGQN students (from diverse backgrounds and disciplines) on the University of Pittsburgh campus to understand their experiences of violence and discrimination, gaps in service provision, and response to potential prevention efforts; (3) a follow-up survey with the TGQN students who participated in the listening sessions; (4) a community feedback session conducted with community stakeholders to ensure that recommendations to the University of Pittsburgh Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion align with their vision and needs; and finally (5) the development of a report with findings and recommendations for the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. ■

Families as Partners in Reducing Violence

While most individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) do not commit violence, this population is at an increased risk of engaging in aggressive behavior. Acts of violence by individuals with SMI contribute to stigma and are often used as justification for coercive public policies (e.g., involuntary outpatient treatment).

Dr. Christina Newhill's research project, *Families as Partners in Reducing Violence*, funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, examines how people with SMI and their support persons perceive and experience the same specific act of violence involving both parties to better understand how such incidents unfold how this knowledge can be used to inform prevention interventions. There are four specific aims: (1) Identify and describe the precursors, processes, and outcomes of violent incidents involving individuals with SMI who are being cared for by family members; (2) Identify what family members, patients, and clinicians see as the components and approaches of useful services for intervening with and managing violent incidents involving SMI family members; (3) Test associations among key measures of the triggering factors, the filtering processes, and the occurrence of violence; and (4) Develop a novel revised version of family psychoeducation for reducing the occurrence of violent incidents.

In-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with 34 dyads of individuals with SMIs who had engaged in violence in the past six months and a family member or friend who witnessed or participated in the violent incident. Several themes emerged from the qualitative interviews: (1) Nearly all acts of violence occurred in the context of verbal arguments; (2) Violence is frequently triggered by the perception of disrespect or the need to defend oneself or others; (3) Violence is seen as more justified if someone "crosses a line" understood by both parties; (4) Violence involving family members frequently involves longstanding feelings, patterns and conflicts as if the violence follows an understood "script"; (5) Scarcity of resources (cigarettes, food, housing, time) is a frequent source of conflict; (6) Mental illness is often invoked as an explanatory or exculpatory factor in the occurrence of violence. Additional results are in process.

Dr. Christina Newhill

"We have only begun to analyze the data and answer the research questions. However, our initial findings suggest that most violent acts by individuals with SMI targeted support persons and occurred in the context of ongoing conflict and immediate disagreements" said Newhill. "Family Psychoeducation is an evidence-based intervention shown to delay illness relapses and reduce family stress and burden. An innovative refinement of Family Psychoeducation addressing the themes identified in this study (e.g., educating parties on conflict resolution strategies), currently in development, is a promising intervention to prevent acts of violence by persons with SMI."

◉ Advance long and productive lives

- Change-Sensitive Measurement of Adult Functional Outcomes in Developmental Disabilities, **Shaun Eack**, Professor and James and Noel Browne Chair

- Cognitive Enhancement for Persistent Negative Symptoms in Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder, **Shaun Eack**, Professor and James and Noel Browne Chair

  ▶ **SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 14**

- Developing a Gold Standard for Tracking Adult Functional Outcomes in Autism Cognitive Enhancement Therapy for Adult Autism Spectrum Disorder, **Shaun Eack**, Professor and James and Noel Browne Chair

- Dimensional Outcomes and Neural Circuitry Associated with Psychosis Risk, **Shaun Eack**, Professor and James and Noel Browne Chair

- Implementation of Cognitive Enhancement Therapy for Verbal Adults with Autism Throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, **Shaun Eack**, Professor and James and Noel Browne Chair

- Web-Based Training and Community Implementation of Cognitive Enhancement Therapy, **Shaun Eack**, Professor and James and Noel Browne Chair

- The Impact of COVID-19 on Human Service Organizations and the Essential Services They Provide, **Rafael Engel**, Associate Professor

- Assessing the Effects of COVID-19 on the Economic, Health, Mental Health, Workplace and Family Well-being of Health Care Workers, Associate Professors **Rafael Engel**, **Sara Goodkind**, **Jeffrey Shook**

- **Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education**

- Early Psychosis Intervention Network, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

- Lancet Commission on Psychoses in a Global Context, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

- Statewide policy for homeless persons with mental health issues, State of Tamil Nadu, India, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

- Understanding long-term trajectories following discharge from specialized early psychosis services, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

- Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program, **Elizabeth Mulvaney**, Clinical Associate Professor

- Aging in the Community with Pets, **Mary Rauktis**, Research Associate Professor

- Center for Integrated Health Care Delivery and Prevention Program, **Daniel Rosen**, Professor

- Opioid Workforce Expansion: Social Work Initiative for Program Professionals, **Daniel Rosen**, Professor

- 2020 Expansion of Practitioner Education (Prac-Ed) Grant Program, **Daniel Rosen**, Professor

- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Strength-based Perspective and Intervention, PI: **Fengyan Tang**, Professor and Co-PI: **Elizabeth M.Z. Farmer**, Dean

  ▶ **SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 15**

- Preventing Cognitive Decline and Dementia Among Older Chinese Immigrants: The Role of Activity, Engagement, Immigration Experience, and Neighborhood Environments, **Fengyan Tang**, Professor

Cognitive Enhancement for Persistent Negative Symptoms in Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder

How can we help individuals with schizophrenia build an enjoyable quality of life and participate in meaningful activities that enrich their recovery? The question has eluded mental health practitioners for over a century. When one asks affected individuals and family members, a theme of lack of inclusion, meaningful activity, motivation, and social participation emerges.

Dr. Shaun Eack

Such challenges largely describe the "negative symptoms" of schizophrenia — those that involve social isolation, reduced motivation, slowed thinking and motor movement, and unelaborated speech. These are some of the most functionally impairing symptoms of the condition, which at their extreme, can be expressed as catatonia and a complete inability to move.

Advances in psychiatric medications have helped many individuals gain good control over the more commonly recognized symptoms of schizophrenia, such as hearing voices or holding delusional beliefs. Unfortunately, there are currently no medications available that are effective for the treatment of negative symptoms, which too often prevent individuals from obtaining work, forming meaningful relationships, and building a life that most would consider minimally sufficient.

Dr. Shaun Eack, Professor and James and Noel Browne Chair, and his colleagues hope to arrive at the first effective treatment for the negative symptoms of schizophrenia with their recently awarded R01 from the National Institute of Mental Health. This work builds on Eack's previous research with Cognitive Enhancement Therapy, where he has shown cognitive rehabilitation approaches to be effective at improving thinking, social understanding, and key outcomes such as employment.

In 2013, Eack and his colleagues published the first signals that cognitive and other psychosocial rehabilitation approaches are likely to be effective at addressing some of the negative symptoms of schizophrenia (**Negative symptom improvement during cognitive rehabilitation: results from a 2-year trial of Cognitive Enhancement Therapy**). They observed marked reductions in social withdrawal and other negative symptoms after cognitive rehabilitation, and were surprised by this given that the treatment was not focused on negative symptoms. In 2019, Eack was part of a team of scientists at Harvard Medical School that further linked the cognitive challenges of schizophrenia to negative symptoms (**Cerebellar-prefrontal network connectivity and negative symptoms in schizophrenia**).

"When we review the last several decades of clinical trials of Cognitive Enhancement Therapy for schizophrenia, we see an unexpected but consistent pattern of negative symptom improvement," says Dr. Eack.

These observations set the stage for his current National Institute of Mental Health-supported project, *Cognitive Enhancement for Persistent Negative Symptoms in Schizophrenia*, which hopes to demonstrate the efficacy of cognitive and other psychosocial rehabilitation approaches for the treatment of negative symptoms.

The project will consist of an 18-month parallel arm randomized controlled trial that includes 90 outpatients with schizophrenia with persistent negative symptoms being treated with novel cognitive and psychosocial rehabilitation approaches based on Gerard E. Hogarty's, MSW Personal Therapy and Cognitive Enhancement Therapy.

"This study hopes to arrive at better treatment options for the largely untreated domain of negative symptoms in schizophrenia through the use cognitive rehabilitation and psychosocial treatment" said Dr. Eack.

If effective, Eack and his team will have developed one of the only treatments that addresses negative symptoms in schizophrenia and the findings will also underscore the importance of cognitive rehabilitation in this population. ◼

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Strength–based Perspective and Intervention

Principal Investigator Dr. Fengyan Tang, along with Co-PI Dr. Betsy Farmer, and Dr. Mary Beth Rauktis, is working with local partnering agencies on *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Strength-based Perspective and Intervention*.

An increasing number of grandparents are raising grandchildren, yet intensive childcare is stressful with many negative personal, interpersonal, economic, and health implications. Custodial grandparents face numerous challenges and adversities in raising their grandchildren, yet their resilience can be built through providing coping resources and enhancing stress management skills. For the sake of the entire family unit, it is crucial to improve grandparents' resilience in dealing with caregiving and daily stress.

Dr. Fengyan Tang

Guided by the stress and resilience model, the team investigated the associations of parenting stress and coping resources with life satisfaction and mental wellness among custodial grandparents. Data were collected through collaborations with two local agencies that provide supportive services to custodial grandfamilies. Between December 2020 and April 2021, 76 eligible participants completed the survey, ten grandparents engaged in focus groups, and two focus groups were conducted among agency staff.

One major finding indicates that a higher level of parenting stress was associated with less life satisfaction and worse mental health, but a higher level of stress management boosted life satisfaction and mental wellness, respectively. In addition, respondents with more informal social support and prior experience with social services had higher levels of life satisfaction than those with less social support or without experience with social services. Findings underscore the importance of stress management in promoting quality of life, providing implications on how social work interventions can help grandparent caregivers build and strengthen their coping resources to deal with parenting stress.

Further, the team will investigate how grandparents define resilience and how to build a multi-level resilience framework for interventions that aim at better supporting caregiving grandfamilies. ■

STRONGER SOCIAL FABRIC

◉ Eradicate social isolation

- Get Safe: Youth Social Networks and Activity Spaces, **Jaime Booth**, Associate Professor

- The SPIN Project: Spaces and People in Neighborhoods for Positive Youth Development, **Jaime Booth**, Associate Professor

- Factors associated with perceived social isolation among family caregivers of persons with mental illness, **Travis Labrum**, Assistant Professor

- Community Thriving: Enhancing Resiliency of Communities after Stress and Trauma, **Mary Ohmer**, COSA Chair and Associate Professor

  Preventing Violence and Improving Community Mental Health in Fineview & Perry Hilltop (Intergenerational Community-based Intervention focused on building collective efficacy and social connections for the prevention of youth and community violence and the promotion of community mental health), **Mary Ohmer**, COSA Chair and Associate Professor

  ▶ **SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 17**

◉ End homelessness

- Statewide policy for homeless persons with mental health issues, State of Tamil Nadu, India, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

- Understanding long-term trajectories following discharge from specialized early psychosis services, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

◉ Create social responses to a changing environment

- Cyber Awareness: PGH Blueprint, **Mary Ohmer**, COSA Chair and Associate Professor

◉ Harness technology for social good

- Get Safe: Youth Social Networks and Activity Spaces, **Jaime Booth**, Associate Professor

- From Data Literacy to Collective Data Stewardship: Technology-Supported Community-Driven Solutions for Urban Youth, **Jaime Booth**, Associate Professor

  The SPIN Project: Spaces and People in Neighborhoods for Positive Youth Development, **Jaime Booth**, Associate Professor

  ▶ **SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 18**

- Teaching to Tech: A Quasi-experimental assessment of a technology-enhanced social work course, **Leah Jacobs**, Assistant Professor

- Developing and Evaluating Social Work Teletherapy Continuing Education Course, PI **Deborah Moon**

Preventing Violence and Improving Community Mental Health

Research shows that "collective efficacy" helps prevent community and youth violence and improve community mental health. By building collective efficacy (defined as trust among residents and willingness to intervene to address neighborhood problems) among youth and adult residents in two Pittsburgh neighborhoods, Dr. Mary Ohmer hopes to help prevent violence and lessen the impact of exposure to violence on mental health. Her project, *Preventing Violence and Improving Community Mental Health in Fineview & Perry Hilltop (Intergenerational Community-based Intervention focused on building collective efficacy and social connections for the prevention of youth and community violence and the promotion of community mental health)*, is funded by CITECH, the University of Pittsburgh Center for Interventions to Enhance Community Health.

Dr. Mary Ohmer

Ohmer's project is designed to build collective efficacy among youth and adult residents in Pittsburgh's Perry Hilltop and Fineview neighborhoods by engaging them in a community-based training program and a project to address a community-identified issue after the training.

Ohmer recently completed a community survey of 100 residents during Phase I to evaluate the effects of the intervention on neighborhood collective efficacy, community and youth violence and community mental health. This phase also accessed administrative community and youth violence data that will be used to examine impact of the intervention on community outcomes.

Next steps include evaluating the effects of the intervention on youth and adult participants before and after the training program (Phase II) and the community project (Phase III). Ohmer's team will use survey methods to assess the effects of intervention on participants' social cohesion/trust, informal social control, psychological empowerment, and anxiety, stress, and depression.

The study explores whether participants will develop stronger and more trusting relationships with one another and other residents; improve their norms and values around preventing youth and community violence and promoting community mental health; increase their ability and likelihood to restoratively and safely intervene; and improve their own mental health related to violence exposure.

"This study translates research on the power of collective efficacy into action by engaging and building capacity among community partners and youth and adult residents to prevent violence and improve community mental health," said Ohmer. ◼

SPIN Project: Spaces and People in Neighborhoods for Positive Youth Development

Dr. Jaime Booth

Dr. Jaime Booth is the PI of the *Spaces and People in Neighborhoods (SPIN)* Project, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), that seeks to understand Black youths' experiences of supportive and stressful micro-spaces in their neighborhood, with the goal of designing interventions that may mitigate race-based health and well-being disparities. For example, Black youths historically use less substances than their peers, however, recent trends indicate that they are using marijuana earlier and more frequently. Black youth may use marijuana to cope with the disproportionate amount of stress they experience in their neighborhoods that are a result of racist policies that have resulted in segregation and systematic divestment. It is also possible that Black youth are experiencing support in micro-space in their neighborhood, supports that are often overlooked when talking about segregated neighborhoods.

This study hypothesizes that when Black youth experience more stressors (racism and violence) and less support in a particular space they frequent throughout the day they will report more stress and marijuana use. Guided by a youth research advisory board (YRAB) based in the neighborhood, the SPIN project engaged 78 Black youth ages 13-18 living in Homewood, PA (41.47% below poverty, 94.24% African American) to participate in the study. Youth were given a mobile phone with an app, Metricwire, that triggered brief surveys several times a day for a month based on location identified by the YRAB as important. In these geo-surveys youth were asked about their level of stress at the time of survey completion and their perceptions of the spaces, including social support, collective efficacy, racism, and violence. Participants also completed surveys at the end of each day reporting on their overall level of stress and/or support in the day and marijuana use that day.

The study data included over 2,070 geo-surveys and 1,381 end-of-day surveys. Results showed support for the study hypotheses; perceived supportive or stressful spaces were related to stress and subsequent marijuana use. Findings highlight the limitations of aggregating features of a "neighborhood" across an entire census tract. The relationship between features of space and marijuana use differed based on where the observation was taking place, differences that were partially explained by stress. Advances in technology allow us to assess the entirety of an adolescent ecological system in real time which is critical to advancing social work mission of not only addressing individual factors that impact adolescent's well-being but also the way that larger systems influence their lives. This new insight will lead to targeted intervention that will address environments that inhibit Black youths' ability to thrive. ■

JUST SOCIETY

Promote smart decarceration

> Behavioral Health Treatment, Neighborhoods, and Housing: How Services and Social Circumstances Affect Criminal Recidivism, **Leah Jacobs**, Assistant Professor

> ▶ **SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 20**

- Housing Instability and Recidivism: Understanding Risk and Sources of Systematic Discrimination, **Leah Jacobs**, Assistant Professor

- Juvenile Mental Health Courts & Linkage to Care for Youth with Psychosocial, Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

- Improving Juvenile Indigent Defense and Health through Holistic Representation, **Jeffrey Shook**, Associate Professor

Build financial capability for all

- Career Development & Advancement Pathways among Peer Providers in the United States, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

- Optimizing SSI decision making and vocational advancement in the context of first episode psychosis, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

> Optimizing family representative payeeship for persons with mental illness, **Travis Labrum**, Assistant Professor

> ▶ **SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 21**

Reduce extreme economic inequality

- COVID-19 Impact of COVID-19 on nonprofit organizations. **Rafael Engel**, Associate Professor, **Sara Goodkind**, Associate Professor and **Jeffery Shook**, Associate Professor

- COVID-19 Study. Impact of COVID-19 on low wage workers and nurses, **Rafael Engel**, Associate Professor, **Sara Goodkind**, Associate Professor and **Jeffery Shook**, Associate Professor

- From Barely making it To . . .? Effect of Raising Wages among Low-Wage Workers and Their Families, **Rafael Engel**, Associate Professor and Co-PIs: **Sara Goodkind**, Associate Professor and **Jeffery Shook**, Associate Professor

> Moving Beyond $15: Comparing Hardships among Healthcare Workers Earning Below and Above $20/hour, **Rafael Engel**, Associate Professor, **Sara Goodkind**, Associate Professor and **Jeffery Shook**, Associate Professor

> ▶ **SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 22**

- Understanding the Effects of the Benefits Cliff on Low-Wage Workers and their Young Children, **Sara Goodkind**, Associate Professor and Co-PI: **Jeffery Shook**, Associate Professor

- Career Development & Advancement Pathways among Peer Providers in the United States, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

- Optimizing SSI decision making and vocational advancement in the context of first episode psychosis, **Nev Jones**, Assistant Professor

- Raising the Minimum Wage to $15: Effects on Pittsburgh Nonprofit Human Service Organizations, **Jeffrey Shook**, Associate Professor

Behavioral Health Treatment, Neighborhoods, and Housing: How Services and Social Circumstances Affect Criminal Recidivism

Behavioral Health Treatment, Neighborhoods, and Housing: How Services and Social Circumstances Affect Criminal Recidivism, led by Dr. Leah Jacobs, is focused on decreasing incarceration rates by assessing interventions to prevent recidivism and identifying broader factors and circumstances that may constrain effectiveness of these interventions. Specifically, this study addresses this need by examining the effect of behavioral health treatment on criminal recidivism among probationers with mental and substance abuse problems. The study also moves beyond treatment effects, exploring the role of housing-related factors in shaping outcomes.

Jacobs' work draws on an original, longitudinal dataset to measure differences in recidivism for a cohort of people on probation. Data were drawn from county court records, behavioral health service records, probation case records, and a validated recidivism risk assessment instrument.

The study addresses the following research questions: (1) do community-based behavioral health services reduce recidivism for people on probation with psychiatric and/or substance use disorder diagnoses? (2) does the effect of behavioral health services vary by diagnoses and service type (mental health vs. substance abuse)? (3) do housing circumstances and homelessness affect recidivism among people on probation? and (4) does housing instability alter the effect of behavioral health services on recidivism?

Results for the first two research questions indicate that behavioral health service use is associated with reductions in the risk of rearrest for persons with psychiatric disorders, but not substance use or co-occurring psychiatric and substance use disorders. Results for the third research question indicate that housing-related factors are statistically significant predictors of rearrest. Specifically, Jacobs found lacking an address at the start of probation, and homelessness during probation, are associated with significant increases in recidivism risk, after adjusting for an extensive array of covariates. Analyses related to the final research question are currently under way.

Results from this body of research suggest that both behavioral health services and interventions that provide housing could reduce recidivism among people on probation.

Dr. Leah Jacobs

Perceptions of Beneficiaries with Mental Illness and Family Representative Payees Regarding Satisfaction and Challenges

Approximately 700,000 adults with a mental illness have their Social Security benefits managed by a representative payee, most commonly a family member. While representative payeeship is associated with health benefits, it can also lead to dissatisfaction and various challenges, including conflict. Unfortunately, little is known about the perspectives of beneficiaries with mental illness or their family representative payees as to how representative payeeship may be optimized. Dr. Travis Labrum's study *Perceptions of Beneficiaries with Mental Illness and Family Representative Payees Regarding Satisfaction and Challenges* funded by the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, will expand the research in this area.

The primary research questions examined in this study are: 1) What recommendations do beneficiaries with mental illness and their family representative payees make for how the Social Security Administration can improve satisfaction with family representative payeeship? and 2) What recommendations do these parties make for how conflict/arguments can be better prevented?

Dr. Travis Labrum

Over the coming year, in-depth interviews of beneficiaries with mental illness who currently have family representative payees, as well as family representative payees for this population, will be conducted. Utilizing the qualitative descriptive method and thematic analysis, Labrum will analyze the perspectives of participants. Results are expected in summer 2022.

"It is hoped that this study will offer valuable insights to the Social Security Administration for improving family representative payeeship for persons with mental illness," explained Labrum. ■

Moving Beyond $15: Comparing Hardships among Healthcare Workers Earning Below and Above $20/hour

The *Fight for $15* focused attention on the struggles of many workers to make ends meet. Yet, the question remained: Is $15 an hour enough? The **Pittsburgh Wage Study**, led by faculty members Drs. Ray Engel, Sara Goodkind, and Jeff Shook, considered this question and found that workers making between $15.16 and $18.76 per hour did not experience fewer hardships than workers making less per hour across many measures (**Is $15 Enough? Understanding the Struggles of Low-Wage Workers**). In another analysis, the Pittsburgh Wage Study team used a basic needs budgeting calculator to assess the extent that hardships existed for families making above a basic needs budget and found that significant hardships remained (**Can Healthcare Workers' Family Incomes Support Their Families?**). This newest project extends those prior analyses to address a another question: Is $20 an hour enough? In the study, *Moving Beyond $15: Comparing Hardships among Healthcare Workers Earning Below and Above $20/hour*, they focused on differences in hardships among a sample of healthcare workers, comparing those making above and below $20/hour.

The research uses data from the Healthcare COVID Survey, which was conducted from March 2021 through May 2021. The sample consists of 538 unionized healthcare workers, including nurses as well as service, clerical, and technical workers, from four Pittsburgh-area hospitals. The survey asked a series of questions regarding experiences of hardship during the last three months across multiple domains, such as finance, utility, medical care, housing, and essential expenses.

The study led to some key findings: compared with those earning above $20/hour, workers earning below $20/hour are more likely to be Black, tend to be younger, and are less likely to have a college degree; workers below $20/hour experience more hardships than those above $20/hour; food insecurity among workers below $20/hour is almost 3 times that of workers above $20/hour; and almost 90% of workers earning below $20/hour are financially insecure.

The Pittsburgh Wage Study team came to following conclusions:

1. **$20/hour is a better goal if we want to alleviate material hardships:** Workers earning above $20/hour had much lower levels of food insecurity, housing hardships, and essential expense hardships than those earning below $20/hour, suggesting that $20/hour is a better goal than $15/hour to alleviate material hardships among workers. Reducing hardships is essential because hardships are related to stress, as well as physical and mental health (**Pathways from Hardships to Health among Low-wage Workers**).

2. **We need to help struggling workers put food on the table:** Nearly half of workers earning below $20 were concerned about food and/or cut the size of their meals or skipped meals. We need to do more to make sure that food insecure workers have access to healthy food by increasing access to food assistance programs such as SNAP.

3. **We need to do more to ensure access to quality medical care:** Ironically, healthcare workers are often unable to afford medical care, with one-third of those earning below $20/hour and one-fifth of those earning above $20/hour reporting medical debt. Disturbingly large proportions of both groups have delayed or postponed needed medical treatment because of cost.

4. **We need policies to promote workers' long-term financial security:** With 80% of the workers they surveyed who earn below $20/hour — and over half of those who above $20/hour — reporting living paycheck to paycheck, we need to continue to develop and advocate for social policies that provide long-term financial security for everyone and that ensure minimum wages are livable wages. ■

Dr. Ray Engel

Dr. Sara Goodkind

Dr, Jeff Shook

Achieve equal opportunity and justice

- LCSW Training Institute & LSW Supervision Matching Program, Molly Allwein, Director of Professional Education

- From Data Literacy to Collective Data Stewardship: Technology-Supported Community-Driven Solutions for Urban Youth, Jaime Booth, Associate Professor

- Get Safe: Youth Social Networks and Activity Spaces, Jaime Booth, Associate Professor

- The SPIN Project: Spaces and People in Neighborhoods for Positive Youth Development, Jaime Booth, Associate Professor

- Browne Leadership Fellows Program, Aliya Durham, Assistant Professor and Director of Community Engagement

- Factors of Racial Self-Classification Among Ethnically Diverse Latinx Adults, Victor Figuereo, Assistant Professor

- Countywide Mental Health Literacy Survey Project, Dashawna Fussell-Ware, Doctoral student

- African American Students' Sociocultural Experiences, Motivation, Identity and Performance in Math, James Huguley, Assistant Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- In Spite of Parents? Examining the Value of Family Involvement in Educating African American Adolescents, James Huguley, Assistant Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Just Discipline Initiative and Just Discipline Regional Impact Model, James Huguley, Assistant Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

▶ SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 24

- Hill House Fellowship Program (Community Engagement Fellowship), Alicia Melnick, Field Education Coordinator and Lecturer and Aliya Durham, Assistant Professor and Director of Community Engagement

- Strengthening Resident Civic Engagement on Behalf of Equitable Development: Partnering for Community-Based Participatory Research in Homewood (Research for Equity and Power), Mary Ohmer, COSA Chair and Associate Professor

- Research on Barriers to Fair Housing Choice in the City of Pittsburgh, Mary Ohmer, COSA Chair and Associate Professor and Co-PI: Jaime Booth, Associate Professor

Promoting trustworthiness of the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine among Black and Latinx communities, Daniel Rosen, Professor

▶ SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 25

- Pitt Assisted Communities and Schools Program in Homewood — Program Operational Support, John Wallace, Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development, David E. Epperson Chair and Professor, Center on Race and Social Problems Interim Director and James Huguley, Assistant Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Homewood Children's Village Full-Service Community School Education Pipeline, John Wallace, Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development, David E. Epperson Chair and Professor, Center on Race and Social Problems Senior Fellow for Research and Community Engagement and Aliya Durham, Assistant Professor and Director of Community Engagement

Eliminate racism

Center on Race and Social Problems:
- *Center on Race and Social Problems Speaker Series*
- *Center on Race and Social Problems Summer Institutes*
- *Center on Race and Social Problems Fellows*

▶ SEE GRAND CHALLENGE STORY ON PG. 26

- Community Thriving: Enhancing Resiliency of Communities after Stress and Trauma, Mary Ohmer, COSA Chair and Associate Professor

- Research on Barriers to Fair Housing Choice in the City of Pittsburgh, Mary Ohmer, COSA Chair and Associate Professor and Co-PI: Jaime Booth, Associate Professor

- Strengthening Resident Civic Engagement on Behalf of Equitable Development: Partnering for Community-Based Participatory Research in Homewood (Research for Equity and Power), Mary Ohmer, COSA Chair and Associate Professor

Just Discipline Project: Implementation Study and Regional Impact Model

Dr. James Huguley

The *Just Discipline Project: Implementation Study and Regional Impact Model* (JDP) sheds much needed light on the dramatic inequalities in school discipline in the Pittsburgh region, and offers remedies aimed to serve as a national model. While local districts have begun relaxing zero-tolerance suspension policies and implementing stand-alone restorative practice programs, these shifts alone do not equip teachers and administrators with the resources and training necessary to take on the issues that tend to cause overreliance on exclusionary practices in the first place. Reforms like restorative practices have been attempted nationwide with the goal of reducing suspensions and mitigating the disparate impacts of exclusionary discipline on Black and Latinx youth, but no large-scale studies have been attempted with fully staffed programs. In response, this project evaluates the implementation and performs a cost-benefit analysis of restorative practices in urban school contexts, as well as building regional capacity and buy-in for future restorative practices work.

Led by Dr. James Huguley, and funded by the Institute for Educational Sciences, The Heinz Endowments and Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh (*The Pittsburgh Study*), JDP looks at the impact of restorative practices on student disciplinary and academic outcomes; how treatment effects vary by student- and school-level characteristics; the impact of restorative practices on students' engagement and perceptions of school climate; and the barriers to and supports for successful JDP implementation across schools, among other areas. Support from The Heinz Endowments specifically also facilitates JDP's work around regional and national advocacy for best practices in school discipline and climate.

This project includes a mixed-methods, randomized controlled trial as well as formative partnerships with local school districts to build buy-in and capacity for future work. School climate is assessed in student and teacher surveys to capture perceptions of the racial, disciplinary, academic, and relational aspects of the school. Student distal outcome analysis includes long-term effects like attendance, office referrals, suspensions, and school-based arrests. School-level racial disparities in discipline rates and academic performance data are also assessed using PA Department of Education data. This study will take place from the 2021-2022 school year through the 2023-2024 school year. Simultaneously, Huguley and his team are leveraging knowledge gained to undertake a regional initiative to change school policies. This includes capacity-building professional development supports for schools, districts, and programs in the area, such as one-off trainings, summer institutes, and recurring partnerships. This also includes publishing content like briefs, papers, and social media posts to shift policymakers' and community members' understandings of discipline toward necessary changes.

Results from the JDP pilot school showed a 22% reduction in suspensions over two years of work, as well as a 30% reduction in office referrals. These changes occurred alongside improvements in state test scores in science, math, and English language arts (ELA). These math and ELA gains reversed previous negative trends at the pilot school.

The *Just Discipline Regional Impact Model* integrates in-school implementation of restorative practices with regional capacity building and policy advocacy. The first of its kind to evaluate the implementation and cost/benefits of a fully-staffed restorative practices intervention in order to assess its potential for changing school culture and decreasing racial disparities in school suspensions. Simultaneously, professional development builds the capacity of school leaders and practitioners to conduct restorative practice work, and advocacy to policymakers will enhance the visibility of the project. Finally, the program schools serve as a beacon for others seeking to observe restorative practices in action. ■

Promoting trustworthiness of the SARS–CoV–2 vaccine among Black and Latinx communities

Black and Latinx individuals are disproportionately burdened by COVID-19 morbidity and mortality, as well as the economic ramifications of COVID-19, due to structural inequities. Mistrust of the medical and research establishments, particularly vaccines, are well-documented in minoritized communities and are grounded in centuries of historical trauma at the hands of academic medicine.

Along with colleagues in the Department of Medicine, the Graduate School of Public Health, the Center for Vaccine Research, the Neighborhood Resilience Project, and the UrbanKind Institute, Dr. Daniel Rosen's new study, *Promoting trustworthiness of the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine among Black and Latinx communities*, aims to ascertain where Black and Latinx communities in Pittsburgh get trusted information about SARS-CoV-2 vaccines, and their perspectives on how to promote trustworthiness of the vaccine. Rather than focusing on changing perceptions and addressing 'mistrust' as a problem within minoritized communities, they propose that trust needs to be earned, through health care delivery systems and research institutions attending to practices that increase their trustworthiness.
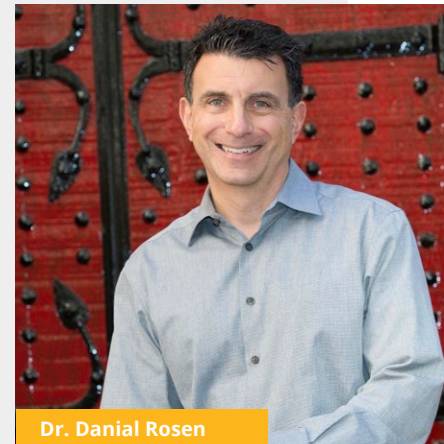
The project is centered on drawing from the wisdom and lived experiences of member of the multidisciplinary Community Vaccine Collaborative. The Community Vaccine Collaborative is an innovative community-academic partnership, centered on mitigating the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and Latinx families, and, more distally, improving trustworthiness of research among minoritized communities. The Collaborative was co-developed by four community-based organization in Pittsburgh (Urbankind Institute, Casa San Jose, Urban League, and Neighborhood Resilience Project) as well as researchers from the University of Pittsburgh.

Dr. Danial Rosen

To identify trusted sources of information about SARS-CoV-2 vaccines and vaccine clinical trials, surveys will be distributed to 1,200 Black and Latinx adults who reside in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage in Pittsburgh.

The Community Engagement Core of the Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI), of which Co-PI Dr. Liz Miller is the Co-Director, has been involved in this work from its inception. This grant also benefits from the resources and support of the Center for Race and Social Problems (Dr. Rosen) and the Center for Health Equity (Dr. Patricia Documet).

The results of the study will inform future grants to develop strategy bundles to promote vaccine trustworthiness on multiple levels, including health care, research institutions, and government. Identification of practices to enhance trustworthiness may help mitigate potential disparities in SARS-CoV-2 vaccine acceptance and distribution, thereby improving the health and wellness of families living in Allegheny County.

Rosen's co-investigators include Drs. Elizabeth "Liz" Miller, Maya Ragavani, Patricia Documet, Jamil Bey, Paul Abernathy, and Judy Martin. ■

Center on Race and Social Problems affiliated faculty members explore issues related to race

Since its founding by Dean Emeritus Larry Davis in 2002, the University of Pittsburgh Center on Race and Social Problems (CRSP) has helped lead America further along the path to social justice in areas related to racial equity. CRSP conducts applied social science research on race, ethnicity, and color and their influence on the quality of life for all Americans. The goals of the center are to foster high-quality multidisciplinary research on racial issues, mentor scholars who focus on race-related research, and disseminate race-related knowledge and information.

Dr. Utibe Essien

The center focuses on race-related social problems in eight areas: economics, education, health, law, mental health, older adults, race relations, and youth development.

Consistent with their mission, CRSP funds, initiates, and collaborates to design, implement and evaluate applied research-to-practice interventions, nested in communities of color. Unlike traditional research done on communities, CRSP faculty develop and conduct research and intervention projects in partnership with communities. CRSP partners include young people, parents, schools, congregations, youth serving organizations, and community development agencies. Projects include: the Just Discipline Project; Pitt-Assisted Communities & Schools (PACS); the Pittsburgh Parenting Project; Research for Equity & Power (REP); and the SPIN Project.

Faculty from other institutions are welcome to collaborate with the center, apply for pilot funding in collaboration with Pitt scholars, and join the Research Advisory Panels. Recently, affiliated faculty have done outstanding work in the areas of health, mental health, and law. One of those faculty members is Dr. Utibe Essien, 2020 Larry Davis Award Winner for excellence in race research. Utibe R. Essien, MD, MPH is a national award-winning, board-certified, internal medicine physician, an Assistant Professor of Medicine and health disparities researcher at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Essien's research focuses on racial and ethnic disparities in the use of novel medications and technologies in the management of cardiovascular diseases. He has applied his health equity framework to the COVID-19 pandemic, rapidly becoming an expert in examining the disparities that disproportionately affect minority communities with COVID-19. His work has been featured in leading medical journals including JAMA and the NEJM and he has been interviewed by national news outlets including the New York Times, Washington Post, and NPR. Dr. Essien has also received nearly $2 million in research funding from the National Institutes of Health, Department of Veterans Affairs, American Heart Association, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Dr. Essien is a faculty affiliate in the area of health and medicine and is a member of the CRSP health disparities research advisory panel. ■

Center on Race and Social Problems Speaker Series attracts scholars from across the country

For over 15 years, the Center on Race and Social Problems has provided monthly in-person lectures on topics of Race and Social Problems from outstanding scholars in the field of social science and other disciplines. Although in-person lectures were canceled due to the pandemic in 2020–2021, holding the talks over Zoom allowed for a record number of attendees over the past year.

Spring 2021

Eddie S. Glaude, James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor of African American Studies, Princeton University. *"For Such a Time as This: Acknowledging and Leveraging African American Resilience, Fortitude, and Vibrancy for Local and National Change."* Cosponsored by the African American Strategic Partnership. View Video of Lecture >>

"What Just Happened? Race, Justice, and Politics after the Capitol Siege." Panel discussion with Clyde Pickett - Vice Chancellor, Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Kristin Kanthak - Associate Professor, Department of Political Science; Thomas Farmer - Professor and Department Chair for Health and Human Development, School of Education; Tomar Pierson-Brown — Associate Dean for Equity and Inclusive Excellence, School of Law. Cosponsored by the Center on Race & Social Problems and the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. View Video of Lecture >>

Rachel Hardeman, Blue Cross Endowed Professor of Heath and Racial Equity, University of Minnesota. *"Black Babies Matter: Physician-Patient Race Matches and Disparities in Birthing Mortality for Newborns."* View Video of Lecture >>

John Diamond, Kellner Family Distinguished Chair in Urban Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. *"Reframing Suburbs: Understanding Issues of Racial Equity in Suburban Schools."* View Video of Lecture >>

Fall 2020

Riana Elyse Anderson, Assistant Professor, Health Behavior & Health Education, University of Michigan. *"Healing Racial Trauma: Racial Socialization as a Clinical Strategy for Black Youth."* View Video of Lecture >>

Jhacova Williams, RAND Corporation. *"Historical Lynchings and the Black Vote Today."* View Video of Lecture >>

Clare Malone, FiveThirtyEight.com, senior writer. *"Race, Voting, and the Major Political Parties."* View Video of Lecture >>

Dr. Gena Gunn McClendon, Director, Voter Access and Engagement and the Financial Capability and Asset Building initiatives at the Center for Social Development, Washington University in St. Louis; Bhavini Patel, CEO & Founder, Beam Data, Be the Change; and Ron Bandes, Election Integrity Director, League of Women Voters, President, VoteAllegheny. *"Voting Rights Panel."* View Video of Lecture >>

Larry E. Davis, Dean Emeritus and Founder of the Center on Race & Social Problems. *"Will Race Always Matter?"* This American Experience Distinguished Lecture is sponsored by: The Dick Thornburgh Forum for Law & Public Policy and the University Honors College. Co-sponsored by the Institute of Politics, the School of Social Work, and The Center on Race and Social Problems at the University of Pittsburgh. View Video of Lecture >>