

– University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work –

SCIENCE^{FOR} ACTION

IMPACT REPORT



UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

”

“Now is not the time for social workers to sit on the sidelines. We are called to summon our courage, marshal our intellect, and lead the charge for social change. We have the knowledge, the skills, and the commitment to create a more just and equitable world for all. Now is the time to transform science into action.”

Amanda Moore McBride, PhD, MSW
Morris Endowed Dean and Professor

“

At the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW), 2017–18 was our first year of collective impact guided by a new strategic plan and mobilized by our vision to achieve thriving, sustainable communities, actualized

human potential and embodiment of equity across all communities. In the classroom and in the community, our faculty have embraced the charge to advance equity through courageous ideas and bold action—science for action.

CONTENTS

2
Research by
the Numbers

3
Science
for Action

4
The Dean's
Perspective

5 RESHAPING THE SOCIAL & COMMUNITY CONTEXT

14 IMPROVING ECONOMIC STABILITY

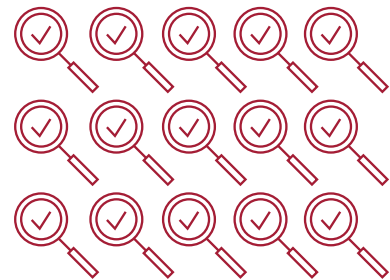
18 PROMOTING PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

30 ENSURING HEALTHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

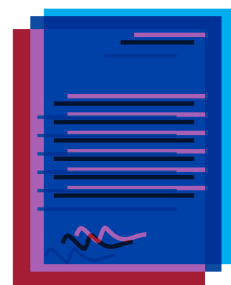
RESEARCH BY THE NUMBERS 2017-2018

\$9,900,000

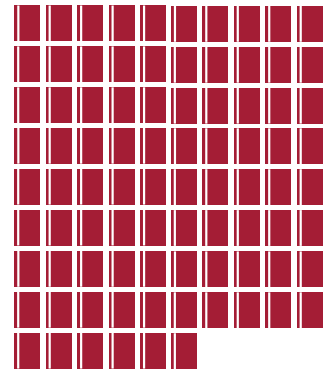
ANNUAL RESEARCH EXPENDITURES



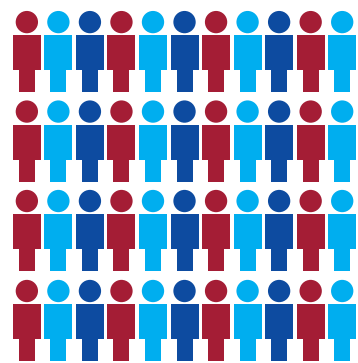
15 INTERVENTION RESEARCH STUDIES UNDERWAY



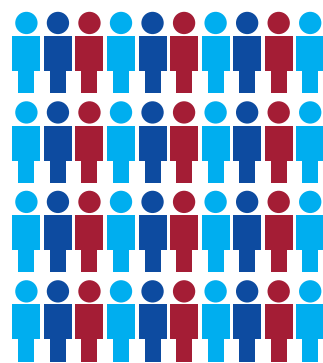
82 EXTERNAL GRANTS & CONTRACTS



86 FACULTY BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS



128 ACTIVE COMMUNITY RESEARCH PARTNERS



SCIENCE FOR ACTION

In fall 2017, GSSW brought together policymakers, community members, researchers and national leaders in prevention science, practice and policy to make headway on addressing the Grand Challenge to Ensure Healthy Development for All Youth through the power of prevention. The occasion was GSSW's inaugural session of the Science for Action Series, which continued with sessions on smart decarceration and ending homelessness.

The series is intended to address the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare's 12 Grand Challenges for Social Work by sharing the relevant knowledge that has been developed and then aligning the evidence with policy responses needed at the local, state and federal level. But the series also is doing more, igniting a collaborative movement to effect systemic change.

As an outgrowth of that initial Science for Action event, GSSW, the University of Colorado Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence and the Colorado State University (CSU) Prevention Research Center have initiated a tri-institutional partnership that is working on prevention and healthy youth development initiatives in Colorado. The group is exploring research and policy opportunities aimed at promoting tested and effective preventive interventions for children and families in Colorado.

"Science for Action brought everybody into the room together for a day, and this is the kind of thing we wanted to see happen—for people to connect around grand challenges topics and further the work," says **Jeff Jenson**, Philip D. and Eleanor G. Winn Endowed Professor for Children and Youth and chair of the national Coalition for the Promotion of Behavioral Health, an interdisciplinary group of researchers, policymakers and practitioners working to advance grand challenges prevention action steps. GSSW is one of the coalition's five university partners.

More than 1,650 people have directly participated in Science for Action either in person or live online, and the series continues in 2018-19.

Although many schools are addressing the grand challenges, Jenson says, what makes the Science for Action approach distinct is that it pairs evidence and knowledge with policy and advocacy.

"GSSW's Science for Action has been a leader in the effort to bring the grand challenges into the practice world and to bring the practice world into the grand challenges," says Grand Challenges Executive Committee member Richard Barth, dean of the University of Maryland School of Social Work and past president of the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare. "Science for Action has created a strategy for engaging Coloradans and others who seek to roll out science-informed practices. The continuation of the Science for Action events offers a nation-leading approach to realizing the possibilities of the Grand Challenges for Social Work."

SOCIAL WORK GRAND CHALLENGES
SCIENCE FOR ACTION SERIES

October 25, 2018
Economic Equality and Financial Capability
Featuring Michael Sherraden, Washington University in St. Louis | Margaret Sherraden, Washington University in St. Louis | Trina Shanks, University of Michigan | Amanda Moore McBride, University of Denver

February 27, 2019
Closing the Health Gap
Featuring Michael Spencer, University of Washington | Michael Talamantes, University of Denver

April 4, 2019
Advancing Long and Productive Lives
Featuring Nancy Morrow-Howell, Washington University in St. Louis | Ernest Gonzales, Columbia University | Leslie Hasche, University of Denver | Jennifer Greenfield, University of Denver

REGISTER TO JOIN THE ACTION IN DENVER OR PARTICIPATE LIVE ONLINE:
socialwork.du.edu/science4action



THE DEAN'S PERSPECTIVE

By Amanda Moore McBride, Morris Endowed Dean and Professor

At the Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW), we define health in terms of thriving, sustainable communities, actualized human potential, and equity across all communities. Whether at the macro or micro level, in clinical or community practice, health is a common thread tying together all of social work.

The social determinants of health are interwoven in the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare's 12 Grand Challenges for Social Work, and our core mission as social workers is to better understand health, to ensure people achieve or regain health, and to right inequities and remove barriers to health and well-being.

GSSW faculty members are living that mission through their research and scholarship. Our work is science with intent—science for action. Science that is actualizing social work's transformative potential to provide better health and well-being for all.

This impact report demonstrates how GSSW is delivering on this mission, offering examples of faculty research and scholarship organized in a social determinants of health framework that captures what is unique about a social work lens when it is applied to issues of health and well-being.

The social determinants of health emphasize the contexts and conditions in which individuals and families live and work—those contexts that influence their ability to live healthy, productive lives. Insurance coverage and access to care are often the focus of health discussions, but social work

as a discipline and profession demands that we move the conversation upstream to inform preventative efforts and mediators of health outcomes.

As illustration, *housing is health*. This powerful phrase captures that housing is critical for community building, family stability, and an individual's ability to focus beyond the basic need for shelter. Yet, housing costs continue to outpace inflation, and housing insecurity haunts renters and owners alike. Those who are housing insecure are more likely to report negative health outcomes than those who are housing secure. As such, development of affordable housing is a health priority.

Consistent with the action-oriented approach that GSSW faculty and staff apply to their research and scholarship, we offer these four social determinants and calls to action as paramount for positively influencing health outcomes:

- + Improving economic stability
- + Reshaping the social and community context
- + Promoting physical and mental health
- + Ensuring healthy youth development

The Graduate School of Social Work aims to advance brave ideas and bold actions. The ultimate standard to which we hold ourselves is that our scholarship has public impact. I invite you to learn more about our impact here and on our new website (socialwork.du.edu), to follow our faculty on social media, and to join us in shaping and advancing the national conversation about health and well-being.

OUR WORK IS SCIENCE WITH INTENT—SCIENCE FOR ACTION. SCIENCE THAT IS DELIVERING ON SOCIAL WORK'S TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL TO DELIVER BETTER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL.

RESHAPING THE SOCIAL & COMMUNITY CONTEXT



6

Reducing Juvenile Crime

9

Making a Public Impact

7

Tackling Systematic Racism

10

Evaluating a Tiny-Home Village

8

Building Humane Communities

REDUCING JUVENILE CRIME

GSSW center is expanding Multi-Systemic Therapy to underserved Colorado communities

When Colorado's governor signed the state's 2018 budget into law, it included \$800,000 for the GSSW Center for Effective Interventions (CEI) to help expand Multi-Systemic Therapy statewide and reduce juvenile crime and substance use.

The three-year funding is part of a \$2.37 million investment in Multi-Systemic Therapy expansion—one of three pilot projects included in the governor's Youth Pay for Success 2018 Initiative. In the Pay for Success model, upfront private or philanthropic capital funds prevention programs; the government pays later for successful outcomes when services produce high downstream benefits to taxpayers and society.

"We conservatively estimate that this program will save Colorado taxpayers \$7.66 million by keeping youth in their homes and out of the juvenile justice system. That is \$3.31 in taxpayer savings for every dollar spent," says CEI Executive Director and Research Associate Professor **Suzanne Kerns**, who is working on a book about evidence-based interventions and implementation.

Multi-Systemic Therapy reduces out-of-home placements, keeps kids in school and out of trouble, improves family function, decreases adolescent psychiatric symptoms and decreases adolescent drug and alcohol use. But that is only if implementation closely adheres to the Multi-Systemic Therapy model.

That is where CEI comes in. The center helps agencies, communities, tribes and government programs in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas to effectively implement Multi-Systemic Therapy for chronic and violent juvenile offenders and their families. Only a handful of Colorado communities offer the intervention, and even in places like Denver where it is available, there is unmet need.

CEI has been soliciting applications from community mental health centers that wish to provide Multi-Systemic Therapy. Once it is fully implemented, the pilot program will fund six Multi-Systemic Therapy teams that together will serve more

than 600 youth during the project period. CEI will train the provider teams in the intervention and will continue to support them with technical assistance and quality assurance. Service providers also will be embedded into local and regional stakeholder groups that will help to tailor the intervention to the unique culture, challenges and needs of individual communities, says

Kerns, who is research conference co-chair for the Society for Implementation Research Collaboration and a member of the Child & Family Evidence Based Practices Consortium leadership group.

Among Colorado Multi-Systemic Therapy participants, CEI expects to see lower recidivism rates, decreases in substance use and more youth living at home instead of in juvenile detention or foster care. And, Kerns notes, they are aiming for 90 percent of participants to be in school or working by the end of their treatment.

"Multi-Systemic Therapy has been proven to work," Kerns says. "The tragedy of it is that it hasn't been widely available in Colorado communities. We're working to change that."

PROJECT IMPACT

Through expansion of Multi-Systemic Therapy in Colorado, the GSSW Center for Effective Interventions expects to see lower recidivism rates, decreases in substance use and more youth living at home instead of in juvenile detention or foster care.

- + \$800,000 to support intervention in underserved communities
- + Intervention tailored to unique community culture, challenges and needs
- + 600 additional youth served
- + \$7.66 million estimated taxpayer savings



TACKLING SYSTEMATIC RACISM

Professor Debora Ortega is applying critical race theory to expand social work's view of its grand challenges

In her teaching and research, Professor **Debora Ortega** uses critical race theory to understand the way that social structures—and even social work research, education and practice—sustain racism and inequity.

Ortega was part of a two-day think tank convened in 2017 by University of Washington Dean Edwina Uehara. Ortega and other participating scholars recognized that social work's grand challenges did not adequately address racism and bias that are fundamental to social ills. "What grew out of the conveying was agreement that the grandest challenge of all was not being addressed: racism, white supremacy, neoliberalism and colonization," Ortega says.

Think tank discussions resulted in three panel presentations, including Ortega's presentation entitled "Maintaining Domination: Whitesplaining Social Problems and Solutions." That presentation focused on the grand challenge of smart decarceration as an example of the mismatch between social work's recognition of the overrepresentation of people of color in jails and prisons, the structural issues that create this inequity, and social work's continued focus on individual factors as intervention targets. "In this way, social work ignores structures such as racial profiling and bias in the court process that creates race-based discrimination," says Ortega, director of the University of Denver Latino Center for Community Engagement and Scholarship.

This is just one example of how Ortega uses critical race theory to better understand the ways that social systems and social work sustain inequity. Another, Ortega says, is that academic careers are built on the number of articles published rather than the quality of articles and their impact on ameliorating social ills. Ortega attributes some of this to a doctoral education that devalues the racial identities of students of color and reproduces research devoid of deep analysis about discriminatory policies and practices. Ultimately, this creates a social work research literature that is based on interventions designed by white researchers and participants who are predominantly white—"not the people we serve." According to Ortega, by negating or obfuscating the link between race



"We teach students to dig beneath and deep — to challenge their belief systems and critically look at social structures, policies, behaviors, beliefs and thought processes."

– Debora Ortega

and poverty and treating race as just a demographic variable, social sciences research can perpetuate and even promote white supremacy.

On campus and online in the MSW@ Denver program, Ortega is the faculty lead

and course content developer for the course Power, Privilege and Oppression, for which she created a 6-minute animated video about identity and social structural inequality.

The video is an easy entry into a particularly difficult topic, Ortega says. "As a graduate school of social work, we help people learn how to think about things more deeply than what they read or see in their everyday lives," she says. "We teach students to dig beneath and deep—to challenge their belief systems and critically look at social structures, policies, behaviors, beliefs and thought processes."



WATCH THE VIDEO:
socialwork.du.edu/racetheory

BUILDING HUMANE COMMUNITIES

A GSSW team is studying whether an animal-welfare program also has community, human and environmental health impacts

When the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) launched its Denver Pets for Life program in 2016, it started with a vaccination clinic held at a local school. It was a snowy Saturday morning, and even an hour before the clinic opened, the line stretched around the block, recalls **Kevin Morris**, a research associate professor in the GSSW Institute for Human-Animal Connection.

People from marginalized populations and living in underserved communities often encounter barriers to accessing health care not only for themselves, but also their pets, Morris notes. Pets for Life breaks down barriers to pet care. "These people don't have any less of a bond with their pets; if you provide the services, they'll stand in the snow for two hours waiting."

In a new 4-year research partnership with HSUS, Maddie's Fund and the Watershed Animal Fund, Morris is studying the impacts of Pets for Life, which aims to build humane communities by extending the reach of animal services, resources and information to underserved areas and addressing the need for accessible, affordable pet care. The goal of the study, he says, is to determine whether this type of intensive, focused animal-welfare program translates to broader community-level human and environmental health impacts.

HSUS is implementing Pets for Life in four new communities and has hired community-based research assistants, who are collecting baseline data now. The GSSW research team—including Clinical Professor **Philip Tedeschi**; Jessica Decker Sparks, GSSW PhD '18; Research Fellows **Sloane Hawes** and **Erin Flynn**; and two dozen or so other graduate students—is collecting data at three levels, including ZIP-code-level public health, crime, graduation, vaccination and other similar data. At the second level, they are conducting qualitative interviews with residents in target communities, who will be asked to share perspectives on topics related to community cohesion, safety and social capital.

The third level uses a 115-question survey covering themes related to animal, human, community and environmental health and the interconnections between those domains. Because Pets for Life focuses on improving access to veterinary care and pet services, it offers a unique opportunity to test this One Health concept, Morris says. Two of the new sites will get Pets for Life

for two years, while the other two communities will initially be comparison sites. After the first two years, all sites will have Pets for Life. Researchers will be looking for differences in things like child vaccination rates between the Pets for Life and comparison communities.

Nationwide, tens of millions of people live in poverty with their pets, says HSUS. Pets for Life breaks down cultural and socioeconomic barriers by bringing services—everything from free dog training to pet supplies, wellness information and even transportation—into communities that may be pet-services deserts in addition to being underserved in other ways. Pets for Life representatives systematically go door-to-door in a community, making multiple contacts and building trust one household at a time. "They do this in a way that is incredibly culturally responsive," Morris says.

"They have an approach where they are providing a voucher for a free spay/neuter, but they also talk about the general health of the pet and emphasize strengthening the human-animal bond."

Often when Pets for Life enters a community, Morris says, the spay/neuter rate for dogs and cats is below 10 percent; within a couple of years, that rate is above 80 percent. There has been a misconception that people in low-income

communities or communities of color are opposed to spaying and neutering, but in study findings published last year in the *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, the GSSW research team concluded that race and ethnicity are not primary determinants in use of veterinary services, but access to care is.

"Helping maintain animals in people's homes means maintaining a healthy social fabric," Morris says.

"Helping maintain animals in people's homes means maintaining a healthy social fabric."

— Kevin Morris



Pets for Life participant

MAKING A PUBLIC IMPACT

From mass media to public policy, GSSW has become a hub for public impact scholarship

"Thanks for your blog, your book, and your work on such an important issue ... You have continued to speak to me in a manner that reaches me and makes sense and helps me fight to stay alive." This reader comment is one of nearly 5,000 on Speaking of Suicide, a website authored by Associate Professor **Stacey Freedenthal**.

Since Freedenthal launched it in 2014, the suicide-prevention website has had more than 2.2 million visitors, and more than 5,000 people follow the Speaking of Suicide Facebook group. Writing and managing all that content, moderating comments and even finding emergency help for people who appear to be at imminent risk for suicide is, essentially, unpaid work done on nights and weekends and in spare moments because Freedenthal is passionate about helping and sharing her knowledge.

GSSW has become a hub for such activity—public impact scholarship. Assistant Professor **Jennifer Greenfield** monitors and comments on social policy via Twitter and shares her knowledge in legislative hearings and with the news media. Assistant Professor **Shannon Sliva's** community-engaged research often culminates in the creation of public-facing reports, videos and other materials that help guide policy and practice.

Professor and Associate Dean for Doctoral Education **Kimberly Bender** has introduced the concept of public impact scholarship in the GSSW doctoral curriculum. Bender and Assistant Professor **Anamika Barman-Adhikari** also are members of REALYST, a national collaborative of academic and community partners that uses research to inform innovative policies, programs and services aimed at ending homelessness and housing instability among young people. Bender says the collaborative is grappling with

issues such as identifying its audience and key messages—issues that used to be the purview of public relations and marketing professionals, not social work scholars.

"Public impact scholarship pushes faculty to not just engage with the community to ensure they're answering questions that are meaningful," says Dean **Amanda Moore McBride**. "They also must share their findings, explaining their research in clear terms by considering the general public as the target of their work."

That's a tall order for many researchers, who are trained in an entirely different way of communicating. To fill that gap, the University of Denver is training scholars to disseminate research and scholarship to the public through its new Public Impact Fellows program. Five GSSW faculty members—Greenfield, Bender, Freedenthal, Sliva and Associate Professor **Yolanda Anyon**—are among the first cohort learning how to best use media such as blogs, radio, television, op-eds and social media to share their work.

A GSSW faculty work group is focused on public impact scholarship, leading trainings and facilitating dialogue within the school. In 2019, they'll advance this conversation by convening leading scholars from across the United States to think about and discuss public impact scholarship and ways to help the social work field embrace it.

"We need to have a conversation as a field about making our value known to the public, and in turn making this kind of work valuable to ourselves," Freedenthal says. "The currency in academia is peer-reviewed journal articles, but public impact scholarship is important, too."

There is value in helping the public, practitioners and policymakers to discover relevant scholarship, Freedenthal notes, but there also is value to the researcher in receiving real-time, real-world feedback that can influence teaching and research. There's also value in simply helping someone. As another of Freedenthal's blog readers wrote, "I think this article saved my life."

IN 2019, GSSW WILL CONVENE LEADING SCHOLARS TO THINK ABOUT AND DISCUSS PUBLIC IMPACT SCHOLARSHIP AND WAYS TO HELP THE SOCIAL WORK FIELD EMBRACE IT.



LEARN MORE:
socialwork.du.edu/publicimpact

EVALUATING A TINY-HOME VILLAGE

GSSW completes study of Denver's first tiny-home community for people experiencing homelessness

When Beloved Community Village (BCV) opened in a trendy Denver neighborhood in July 2017, no one knew how long the tiny-home community would last, or whether it would successfully support people experiencing homelessness.

The answer is in: The village is a success.

That's the finding of the GSSW Burnes Center on Poverty and Homelessness, which completed a nine-month evaluation of the village.

"Across the methods and participants, the message is consistent: The village is welcome, villagers are succeeding and are an important part of the community," says Associate Professor **Daniel Brisson**, executive director of the Burnes Center.

Launched as a 180-day pilot project, BCV is Denver's first tiny-home community. It is a democratically self-governed "intentional community" of 11 tiny homes for up to 22 people experiencing homelessness. The village provides shelter, of course, but it's also intended to cultivate self-empowerment and a shared sense of community.

The University of Denver Barton Institute for Philanthropy and Social Enterprise provided financial support for BCV and enlisted the Burnes Center to evaluate the project. Villagers reviewed and approved the research plan, which included quantitative and qualitative analysis of surveys, interviews and BCV administrative records over three time periods. The researchers, including PhD student **Jennifer Wilson**, assessed results at individual, neighborhood and organizational levels.

At an individual level, the team looked at whether living in BCV resulted in changes to employment and education, financial



capabilities, and health and well-being. Among the findings were improvements in employment outcomes and health and well-being indicators. For instance, villagers reported increased satisfaction and decreased anxiety after moving into the village. Villagers also reported a significant decrease in how often their belongings were stolen after moving into BCV. And, they reported making "moderate progress" in meeting their own personal goals in areas such as securing long-term housing and managing their finances.

The team also examined broader community impacts, such as traffic, noise and safety, finding few challenges associated with the village. At the organizational level, they assessed development of a sense of community within the village and determined that a sense of community had developed—social capital that contributes to better health and well-being.

The evaluation also documented infrastructure challenges, such as food storage and preparation limitations, and difficulties inherent in the intentional community model, such as a lack of full participation by all members.

Despite the evidence that Denver's BCV is working, Brisson says, "This doesn't mean that tiny homes anywhere will be a success. This approach is novel. We need to know a lot more."

To that end, the Burnes Center, funders and community partners are discussing ongoing evaluation of tiny homes as a viable alternative for people experiencing homelessness. And, Brisson says, the center continues to pursue questions around homelessness and other issues that people experiencing poverty face. "We want to serve as a community resource so those living in poverty or without a home can improve their health and well-being."

 **READ THE SUMMARY EVALUATION:**
socialwork.du.edu/tinyhomes



Beloved Community Village

IN BRIEF

Books for Public Impact

GSSW faculty published 86 books and other publications in 2017–18. A selection of new and forthcoming books are featured here.

 **LEARN MORE ABOUT GSSW FACULTY RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP ACTIVITIES:**
socialwork.du.edu/research



Transforming Trauma: Resilience and Healing through Our Connections with Animals

By Clinical Professor Philip Tedeschi and Molly Jenkins, GSSW MSW '08
Purdue Press, 2019



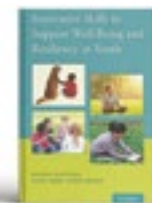
Interviewing for the Helping Professions: A Comprehensive Relational Approach (Second Edition)

By Fred McKenzie and GSSW Professor Nicole Nicotera
Oxford University Press, 2018



Essential Interviewing Skills for the Helping Professions: A Social Justice and Wellness Approach

By Professor Nicole Nicotera
Oxford University Press, 2018



Innovative Skills to Support Well-Being and Resiliency in Youth

By Professor Nicole Nicotera and Associate Professor Julie Anne Laser-Maira
Oxford University Press, 2017



Solution-Focused Brief Therapy with Clients Managing Trauma

Edited by Adam Froerer, Jacqui von Cziffra-Bergs, GSSW Associate Professor Johnny Kim, and Elliott Connie
Oxford University Press, 2018



Screening, Assessment, and Treatment of Substance Use Disorders

By GSSW Professor Lena Lundgren and Ivy Krull
Purdue Press, 2019



Solution-Focused Brief Therapy in Schools: A 360-Degree View of the Research and Practice Principles

By GSSW Associate Professor Johnny Kim, Michael Kelly, and Cynthia Franklin
Oxford University Press, 2017



PHD CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT: JONAH DECHANTS, PHD '19

Dissertation:
"Between a Rock and a Hard Place: A Grounded Theory Exploration of Queer and Trans Young Adults Navigating Family Rejection and Housing Instability"

Specializations:
children and youth, culturally responsive practice, gender, housing and homelessness, LGBTQIA, marginalized populations, poverty, social justice

Research Interests:
experiences of homeless youth; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth; and youth-empowerment approaches

 **LEARN MORE:**
portfolio.du.edu/jdechants

Incorporating Social Justice in the Curriculum

Social justice is interwoven into all GSSW degree programs. For example, the MSW concentration in Family Systems Practice includes preparation to evaluate social systems for bias and cultural responsiveness. Students develop an awareness of the systems that create power imbalances and oppression, and they reflect on their own personal bias and positionality, cultural bias, assumptions, values and affective reactions that may influence their relationship with families.

Recently, Family Systems Practice students' education has also included working with organizations such as the Colorado People's Alliance, Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network, American Friends Service Committee, Colorado Immigrant Rights Collation and the ACLU of Colorado to advocate for families as they rallied against separation and prolonged detention of families seeking asylum in the U.S., supported the



Putting Anti-Oppression into Practice

In her private practice, Clinical Assistant Professor **Heather Arnold-Renicker**, MSW '07, offers anti-oppressive trainings and helps nonprofits to better support staff from marginalized identity groups and be more culturally competent and responsive to community needs. She brings that experience to the classroom as coordinator of the school's

Quotes from the Classroom

"My work with the Latinx certificate includes building bridges between the community and the academy and making the certificate as experiential as possible. I challenge students to go into a part of the community they don't know and have an experience where they are not the experts, where they learn from community members themselves. That cultural humility lens is something I want students to learn and practice."

Lorena Gaibor

Clinical Assistant Professor

Program Coordinator, Latinx Social Work Certificate

barring of Colorado resources from being used to separate immigrant families, and denounced the U.S. Attorney General's decision to limit asylum protections for victims of domestic violence.

And, through a partnership with the University of Denver Sturm College of Law, MSW and law students worked together to help prepare women and children in family detention for immigration asylum hearings.

Organizational Leadership and Policy Practice concentration.

"Most nonprofit organizations were founded on values that are predominately white, and those white-dominant norms are embedded in policies and practices," Arnold-Renicker says, noting that those norms show up in everything from program design to staff hiring and promotion practices. "Those of us with dominant identities often aren't aware of the dominant norms we perpetuate—norms held up as the standard by which everyone is measured, so when people function along other cultural lines, they may be penalized."

The ways that organizations are funded also upholds white supremacy, Arnold-Renicker says, and fails to address the "radical change needed to address injustice."

Social work faces some of the same challenges, she observes. "I want my students to have a clear picture of how they could perpetuate harms, and also how they can create change."

"I am committed to helping students create meaningful and sustainable change where liberty and justice for all has yet to become reality," says Clinical Associate Professor **Stephen von Merz**, who chairs the concentration. "For me, this includes educating future social workers on the knowledge, skills and values critical to establishing equity and access for all."

Measuring the Impacts of Public Perception

In August, *The Journal of Public Child Welfare* published "Measuring the Impact of Public Perceptions on Child Welfare Workers," an article coauthored by Research Assistant Professor **Shauna Rienks**, a research analyst at the Butler Institute for Families. The Public Perceptions of Child Welfare Scale measures how the social environment influences child welfare workers, including their job satisfaction and intent to leave. Psychometric studies have validated the scale for private child welfare workers, but there are no validation studies with public agency staff. This study fills that gap, showing stigma and respect are important constructs that also predict worker intent to leave. This research found an additional construct, blame, which was not present in private worker validation studies. The scale provides an important tool for the field as it continues to build evidence for effective recruitment and retention.

Understanding Genocide, Trauma and Resilience

Nationalist rhetoric. Banning groups of people. Dehumanizing, othering language. These dynamics have preceded every documented case of genocide, including in Bosnia, and they're present in today's America, says Professor of the Practice **Ann Petrla**.

She and coauthor Hasan Hasanović are documenting Bosnian genocide in a book in progress, *11 Days in July*. The book will be the first comprehensive published history of the genocide in which more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys were killed in Srebrenica, Bosnia, over 11 days in July 1995.

Now curator at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery, Hasanović is one of the survivors of the atrocity. The book draws on facts and testimony gathered by the Inter-

national Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, along with first-hand accounts of survivors interviewed by Petrla and Hasanović.

Documenting the atrocity and sharing stories of resilience is particularly important now, says Petrla, who received a grant from the Council on Social Work Education to capture survivor stories on video. "This book and the programs I run in Bosnia are focused on the ultimate human rights violation—the ultimate outcome of things such as othering, nationalism, all the things that social work tries to combat in society, including ours," says Petrla, director of Global Practice Bosnia and GSSW's international initiatives. "How is it that this sort of thing is able to happen, and what is our individual and collective responsibility for it?"

The book explores these questions and makes recommendations for in-

dividual and collective action. But the "real story," says Petrla, is the people who survived the Srebrenica genocide. "It is through their stories and getting to know them as people that we can begin to share their horror and their courage, their trauma and their resilience."



READ ABOUT STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN GLOBAL PRACTICE BOSNIA:

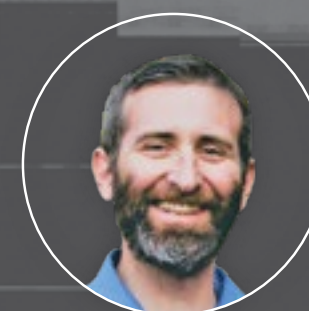
bit.ly/GSSWBosnia

TRACKING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE LEGISLATION

Assistant Professor **Shannon Sliva** tracks the adoption and implementation of restorative justice legislation in Colorado and across the U.S. Student researchers conduct regular systematic reviews of statutory databases, and the research team documents restorative justice policy innovations at the state level. Using the database, Sliva investigates the implementation of restorative justice policies using case study methods that synthesize key informant interviews, surveys and system-level indicators. She makes this comprehensive data set available to researchers upon request, and she is working to make a searchable database available to the public by May 2019.



Ann Petrla, center



PHD CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT: MARK PLASMEYER, PHD '19

Specializations: civic and community engagement, community organizing and community development, criminal justice, housing and homelessness, mental and behavioral health, public policy, social justice

Dissertation: "Can General Strain Theory Help Explain the Relationship Between Housing Instability and Recidivism for People with Criminal Drug Records?"

Research Interests: Social and economic outcomes for people with criminal drug records; the impact of drug policies on the criminal justice system; affordable housing; and the role of social workers in politics



LEARN MORE:
[portfolio.du.edu/
Mark.Plasmeyer](https://portfolio.du.edu/Mark.Plasmeyer)

IMPROVING ECONOMIC STABILITY

15 Advocating for Paid Family Leave

16 Advancing Colorado's Early Childhood Workforce



ADVOCATING FOR PAID FAMILY LEAVE

Professor Jennifer Greenfield is developing evidence to inform paid-leave policy

Assistant Professor **Jennifer Greenfield** does not just teach about policymaking. She lives it.

That has meant making multiple treks to the Colorado State Capitol to testify in support of a state insurance program to provide partial wage-replacement benefits to individuals who have to take leave from work to care for a new child or a sick family member, or for their own serious health condition.

Paid family and medical leave is a professional crusade for Greenfield, whose research focuses on the intersections of health and wealth disparities among women, especially through the mechanism of caregiving. But the issue is personal, too. In 2013, Greenfield's twin sons were born seven weeks early and spent the first month of their lives in the NICU.

Although Greenfield had access to paid leave that allowed her to participate in her kids' care, only 13 percent of Colorado workers have access to such leave, Greenfield says, and the resulting financial burden for individuals, families, employers, the medical system and the economy is enormous.

Greenfield is developing evidence to inform state and national paid-leave policy. She and Associate Professor **Leslie Hasche** are examining how public policies such as public health insurance coverage and workplace policies such as paid family leave and flexible work schedules may mitigate financial insecurity and overall caregiver strain among Coloradans caring for older adults (see Page 17 for more).

Greenfield also is studying whether there is an association between better health outcomes for preterm infants whose mothers have access to paid leave. She is collaborating on the research with faculty at the University of Colorado School

of Medicine and College of Nursing, and Susanne Klawetter, GSSW PhD '17, a Portland State University assistant professor.

Data collection (in both English and Spanish) is underway in four Colorado hospitals, where the research team—including doctoral student **Kristi Roybal**—is interviewing the mothers of preterm infants about their employment status, access to parental leave, family support, mental health, substance use and other variables. Mothers take surveys at baseline and six weeks after discharge, and they complete daily diaries, documenting the time they spend

in the NICU and the types of activities they engage in there. The research team also is tracking the health of the preterm infants until six weeks after discharge. "We hope to get some good information about how experiences may differ by primary language used, by race and ethnicity, and area of residence," Greenfield explains.

Greenfield says more than half of mothers interviewed thus far have no paid leave available to them, and less than 25 percent have 30 days of leave or more, although their preterm infants have average hospital stays of more than two months.

"We don't have a system of policies in place to support being a working mother or a caregiver," Greenfield says, "but I'm incredibly motivated to get some change in place."

13%

OF COLORADO WORKERS HAVE ACCESS TO PAID LEAVE FROM WORK TO CARE FOR A NEW CHILD OR SICK FAMILY MEMBER, OR FOR THEIR OWN SERIOUS HEALTH CONDITION.

Jennifer Greenfield isn't just sharing her knowledge with local lawmakers; she's also taking her work to Washington, D.C. She was appointed to the Advisory Council for the Bipartisan Policy Center Task Force on Paid Family Leave this year, and in July, the center hosted a national policy conversation featuring Greenfield, Senior Advisor to the President Ivanka Trump, former Sens. Chris Dodd and Rick Santorum, and others. She also regularly shares her perspective with the news media, including CNN, *The Hill* and *The Denver Post*.

FIND THESE STORIES & MORE:
socialwork.du.edu/jennifer.greenfield

ADVANCING COLORADO'S EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE

Report proposes solutions for economic instability in early childhood education

An economic impact study by the GSSW Butler Institute for Families has found that Colorado's early childhood education (ECE) industry serves more than 100,000 children, generates \$1.4 billion in annual sales and services, creates over 32,000 jobs, and results in more than \$619 million in related statewide earnings annually. Yet, ECE programs and their employees struggle to survive financially.

The findings are detailed in a report, "Bearing the Cost of Early Care and Education in Colorado," commissioned by Early Milestones Colorado as part of a public-private partnership with the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Department of Human Services to advance the early childhood workforce in Colorado. Background research and secondary data collection was conducted by the Butler Institute, whose mission includes research, program assessment, evaluation, planning and implementation, and training and coaching for human services workers and supervisors. Brodsky Research and Consulting did the study's economic modeling.

The numbers are startling. The average salary for child care workers in Colorado is just \$25,065, placing those workers at the poverty level for a family of four. Many ECE employees receive some public subsidy, and the industry's turnover rates are high. The result is a shortage of high-quality programs, especially for infant-toddler care, where demand has outstripped supply.

Ultimately, the report concludes, it is children who pay the price: When quality care is too expensive for families and when businesses cannot afford to provide quality early care and education, "children spend their earliest, formative years in environments that do not adequately prepare them for school and life."

Among the report's recommendations are increasing salary subsidies and providing tax credits for early care and education professionals.

"We subsidize industries like energy and agriculture because we know it's for the public good. Why won't we do the same thing for early care and education when we know the societal benefit?" says Butler Institute Director of Research and Evaluation **Meg Franko**. "It's an investment that pays off in so many ways."

Due in part to the report's findings, the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment's Workforce Development Council has selected the education sector—and early childhood education specifically—as its industry of focus for 2018–19.



READ THE REPORT:
socialwork.du.edu/ece

NEW FACULTY

Meg Franko has been director of research and evaluation at the Butler Institute since 2016 and a senior research associate prior, but she recently joined the GSSW faculty as a research associate professor as well. The appointment will expand collaboration opportunities within GSSW and the community, and it will further incorporate Franko's

expertise in evaluation and evaluation capacity-building into GSSW's education and research programs. Franko will continue in her role at the Butler Institute, where she serves as a PI for grants and contracts averaging \$1 million annually and manages a 20-person research and evaluation team dedicated to improving the effectiveness and demonstrating the impact of programs, organizations and systems that directly serve

families. Prior to joining Butler in 2012, Franko was a senior consultant for the Colorado Department of Education Office of Early Childhood, operated her own evaluation consulting firm and directed the Denver Early Childhood Council for Denver Public Schools. She has a PhD in education leadership and policy from the University of Denver Morgridge College of Education.



PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Colorado's early care and education industry makes a substantial impact on the state economy, but low public funding, high worker turnover and market prices that do not reflect the true costs of care pose serious problems. Recommended solutions include:

- + Increasing public funding at least to the national average
- + Incentivizing quality and the provision of care by improving counties' tiered reimbursement structures
- + Establishing subsidies for businesses to increase the wages of early care and education workers
- + Offering refundable tax credits for early learning professionals and incentivizing higher levels of education and credentials

IN BRIEF

Quotes from the Classroom

"One can't do effective community-based trauma work without properly meeting people's basic needs and helping to address socioeconomic issues that contribute to maltreatment. Females tend to be disproportionately affected due to child care, low wages, lack of access to health care, and dependency on others for financial support, housing and transportation. Trauma-informed care includes broader organizational and systemic efforts to address these issues."

Kerry Causey

Clinical Assistant Professor
Mental Health and Trauma Concentration,
MSW@Denver

Calculating the Costs of Caregiving

Although informal caregiving is a cornerstone of the U.S. long-term care system, little is known about caregivers' experience of financial strain or the extent to which organizational and public policies help alleviate strain among caregivers who are employed outside the home.

Assistant Professor **Jennifer Greenfield** and **Leslie Hasche**, associate

professor and associate dean for academic affairs, set out to answer these questions through a recent pilot study of informal caregivers of older adults in Colorado. Funded by the University of Denver Knoebel Institute for Healthy Aging, the study identified factors associated with caregiver financial strain, tested whether factors related to financial strain differed from those related to overall caregiver



strain and positive aspects of caregiving, and assessed whether caregivers with access to workplace benefits and social programs report less financial strain than caregivers without access to these supports.

Just over half of respondents (N = 95) reported working, and 33 percent had either left the workforce or reduced their work hours to accommodate caregiving. Predictors of financial strain included the care recipient's financial strain and the caregiver reducing or ceasing work. Caregivers who left work or reduced work hours reported higher overall caregiving strain and worse mental health than those whose employment status had not changed. Medicare may be protective to minimize caregivers' need to reduce or cease work.

Cultivating a Culture of Health

Second-year PhD student **Kristi Roybal** has been selected as one of 40 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Research Scholars for 2018. The program aims to create a cadre of diverse, multidisciplinary doctoral students who will inform and influence policy to create a culture of health.

Health Policy Research Scholars learn to translate their research into health policy through online courses, in-person institutes, leadership training, mentoring and coaching, and dissertation support. Each scholar receives an annual stipend of \$30,000 for up to four years.

Roybal's research interest is understanding how low-income urban neighborhood environments impact maternal health, birth outcomes, and early childhood development. She serves as project manager for Assistant Professor **Jennifer Greenfield's** study of mothers in the NICU; Greenfield also mentors Roybal.

Roybal holds an MSW from GSSW and an MA in international human rights from the University of Denver Korbel School of International studies—one of GSSW's dual-degree offerings. Previously, she worked as a health program specialist for the Spokane Regional Health District.

"I imagine healthy, thriving neighborhoods where all Americans are supported to achieve their highest potential through equal access to health-promoting neighborhood environments," Roybal says. "This vision drives my educational and personal ambitions to become a community-engaged researcher committed to improving the health opportunities of women and children living in low-income neighborhoods. The Health Policy Research Scholars program will equip me with the skills to critically assess complex neighborhood-level determinants of health and work collaboratively with interdisciplinary researchers to advance policies that contribute to sustainable community change."

PROMOTING PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

19 Transforming Colorado Health Care

20 Preventing Substance Abuse

21 Educating Faculty About Evidence-Based Treatment

22 Strengthening Indigenous Identities

23 Studying HIV Risk

24 Focusing on Solutions

25 Reflecting on Recovery Capital

TRANSFORMING COLORADO HEALTH CARE

GSSW is helping to guide a Colorado initiative to improve health outcomes through integrated care

To improve health and lower costs, a State of Colorado initiative aims to increase access to integrated behavioral health and primary care for 80 percent of the state's residents by 2019. Clinical Associate Professor **Michael Talamantes** is part of the team guiding the initiative, known as the Colorado State Innovation Model (SIM).

Talamantes co-chairs the SIM Workforce Workgroup—one of seven workgroups reporting to Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper. Talamantes also is a member of the steering committee for SIM, which will impact up to 350 primary care practices and more than 4 million residents when it is fully implemented.

The Workforce Workgroup is charged with assessing the needs of practices regarding workforce issues; offering guidance on how to best deliver training to existing providers; and proposing strategies to standardize the way that existing—but largely unregulated—positions interact with health care integration efforts statewide. The group also has developed core competencies for licensed behavioral health providers working in integrated health care settings.

WHEN FULLY IMPLEMENTED, THE COLORADO STATE INNOVATION MODEL WILL IMPACT UP TO 350 PRIMARY CARE PRACTICES AND MORE THAN 4 MILLION RESIDENTS.

GSSW hosted two SIM Integrated Behavioral Health Training Consortiums that brought together participants from across Colorado to discuss community needs, barriers, and the training and education needs of providers. In November 2018, GSSW and Colorado's Office of Behavioral Health will

host a symposium where experts in behavioral health, practice transformation and integrative teaming will present the content of integrated behavioral health learning modules.

Launched in 2014 and funded by up to \$65 million from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Colorado's SIM grant will end in 2019. Results so far have been positive. Within the first two cohorts of SIM practices, for example, more patients are

being screened for depression, and patients with diabetes have improved A1c control.

"Since we're committed to the integration of behavioral health in primary care," Talamantes says, "these best practices will continue to succeed in producing the best outcomes for Colorado residents."



CLIMB@DU: MEETING A WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

In Colorado, 56 of the state's 64 counties have a shortage of mental health professionals. GSSW is working to meet that shortfall and make culturally and linguistically competent behavioral health services more accessible to more people.

With a \$1.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, GSSW established CLIMB@DU, a four-year initiative with

more than 10 public and private partners.

In its first year, CLIMB@DU provided \$10,000 stipends for 27 MSW students; 30 more are enrolled this year.

Colorado's underserved areas include southwestern Colorado, home to GSSW's Four Corners MSW Program, directed by Professor of the Practice **Wanda Ellingson**. Last year, 11 Four Corners students received the stipend and have joined the region's behavioral health workforce. This year, eight students in the Western Colorado MSW Program are

part of CLIMB@DU and will graduate in 2019 ready to serve the state's western and mountain communities, says Program Director and Assistant Professor of the Practice **Rachel Forbes**. Denver campus and MSW@Denver students also participate in the program, and by 2021 GSSW will have trained 115 social workers to provide culturally and linguistically competent behavioral health service in underserved areas.

CLIMB@DU is just the sort of solution to workforce challenges that Colorado's

SIM initiative aims to support statewide, says Clinical Associate Professor **Michael Talamantes**, who leads the effort with Associate Professor **Michele Hanna**.

"I'm thrilled that we'll be training a workforce that can serve in an integrated-care setting," says Ross Brooks, CEO of western Colorado-based Mountain Family Health Centers. "What I love about the DU program is it helps to grow people from our own communities, which is better for [workforce] recruitment and retention."

PREVENTING SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Professor Anamika Barman-Adhikari is using artificial intelligence to improve substance abuse interventions for homeless youth

Group interventions are a common approach to substance abuse treatment for youth. The aim is to reduce high-risk behaviors through positive social influence. Sometimes, though, abusive behaviors actually increase when at-risk individuals come together to discuss risky behaviors, derive status from those behaviors and then engage in more of them.

Social science has been trying to solve this problem of deviancy training for more than 20 years, says Assistant Professor **Anamika Barman-Adhikari**. But, she may have a solution.

Instead of randomly assigning youth to treatment groups—the typical practice—what if they were assigned in such a way that positive influences were maximized and negative influences were minimized? Using an artificial intelligence (AI) algorithm that considers factors such as how often individuals engage in substance use and other risky behaviors, Barman-Adhikari is partitioning groups to promote positive outcomes.

“We try to put a high-risk individual into a group that is less risk-taking and has more positive behaviors,” she explains. “They will be more likely to change their behaviors if they’re influenced by positive forces.”

Barman-Adhikari, GSSW doctoral student **Daphne Brydon**, two MSW students, and colleagues at the University of Southern California Center for Artificial Intelligence in Society designed the algorithm using data collected in Los Angeles in 2013. The calculus is relatively simple, says Barman-Adhikari. “What are your social networks, and what risk behaviors do you engage in?”

When the research team tested the algorithm against the data, the simulation results were striking: Compared to randomly assigned groups, deviance training was reduced by almost 60 percent in AI-assigned groups.

The team is running a randomized controlled trial in collaboration with Urban Peak, a Denver-based nonprofit serving youth experiencing homelessness. Participants complete an initial computer-based survey that asks them to identify their most consequential personal relationships over the last 30 days and then asks questions about each of those friends. Participants in the AI-composed treatment condition and in the control condition receive the Project Towards No Drug Abuse intervention, which uses peer leaders to disseminate positive norms about substance abuse.

Clinical testing will wrap up in November, and the research team is discussing how to take an AI-informed intervention to scale so organizations can use it without additional burden.

“AI will help social science intervention research by giving us very precise predictive tools so we can avoid mistakes we’ve made in the past,” Adhikari says, but it won’t be taking on the role of social workers. “Even when we get group configuration, we take that back to Urban Peak social workers and validate those groups with human beings. We are giving algorithm parameters to decide the most effective outcome given those parameters. Human beings still decide what’s important.”



Anamika Barman-Adhikari

IN A DATA SIMULATION, DEVIANCE TRAINING WAS REDUCED BY ALMOST 60 PERCENT IN AI-ASSIGNED GROUPS COMPARED TO RANDOMLY ASSIGNED GROUPS.



EDUCATING FACULTY ABOUT EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENT

A GSSW program has trained faculty from schools nationwide to teach evidence-based treatment methods for substance abuse and dependence

Although 70 percent of social workers encounter clients with risky substance use or substance use disorder (SUD), says Professor **Lena Lundgren**, fewer than 10 percent of social work graduate programs include evidence-based content about alcohol and drugs in their core curriculum.

Lundgren is working to change that. She is the principal investigator for a National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism grant to train U.S. social work faculty to teach evidence-based treatment methods for alcohol and drug dependence. The aim, Lundgren says, is to create a social work workforce prepared to effectively treat SUDs.

The Alcohol and other Drugs Social Work Faculty Education Program (ADEP) trains social work faculty to teach social work graduate students about empirically supported screening, assessment and treatment for SUDs. So far, 100 faculty from more than 80 schools of social work have participated in ADEP in the past two years, and pre-post surveys have shown significant increases in faculty knowledge and a boost in their confidence regarding teaching the content, says Lundgren, executive director of the GSSW Butler Institute for Families.

ADEP training is delivered in four-day intensive immersion programs taught by leading addiction experts from a range of disciplines, including public health, medicine, psychology and social work. GSSW Professors **Jeff Jenson** and **Kimberly Bender**, Clinical Assistant Professor **Brian Gonzales**, and Research Associate Professors **Suzanne Kerns** and **Nancy Lucero** were among the instructors at the June 2018 session.

Why train faculty in evidence-based practices instead of students? “If you bring in one faculty member, you train many cohorts of students,” says Lundgren, noting that the research team is assessing knowledge transfer in the schools where ADEP faculty teach. “We want to see a transfer of knowledge so students—future social workers—can better respond in the field to the alcohol and drug epidemic.”

TRANSFORMING TREATMENT OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

Professor **Lena Lundgren**, a guest professor at Umeå University in Sweden, is the principal investigator of STANCE, a research program that includes several studies and the implementation of a new national data system to help Swedish social services to better identify and examine the effectiveness of services received by individuals with

or at risk for a substance use disorder (SUD).

Sweden hosts some of the world’s most comprehensive health registries, and one STANCE component is an epidemiological study looking at a decade of Swedish registry data collected on 15,000 people who were assessed for a SUD. The goal is to understand the range of health, employment and treatment interventions they received and identify which groups are most vulnerable to negative outcomes.

“We need to be able to identify which clusters of

services provide the best outcomes,” Lundgren explains. “The Swedish data is unique because it collects a range of services so we can actually look at real outcomes.”

Assistant Professor and co-investigator **Amy He** is developing a study on child welfare outcomes, and Associate Professor and co-investigator **Stacey Freedenthal** is examining the relationship between suicidal intent, suicidal attempt and patterns of psychiatric hospitalization. Lundgren also hopes to compare SUD treatment

outcomes in Sweden and the U.S.

STANCE started in 2016, and Lundgren aims to continue the program through 2022 supported by approximately \$3 million in funding from the Swedish Council for Health and Work Life. The STANCE research team spans social work, medicine, psychology and statistics, and GSSW-Umeå research collaborations and faculty and student exchanges are planned.

STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES

New HIV/AIDS prevention program uses culture-centered practices to increase awareness among Indigenous youth

Through storytelling, we can develop understanding about ourselves and our relationships with other people and the planet. But can storytelling help improve human health?

Associate Professor **Ramona Beltrán** believes so.

Culture-centered practices like storytelling can interrupt the intergenerational process of trauma and aid in healing, says Beltrán, a Xicana of Yaqui descent. This perspective infuses and informs all of Beltrán's work, including the Indigenous Youth RiseUp! Culture-Centered HIV/AIDS Prevention Program.

In partnership with community organizations serving Latinx and Indigenous youth in Colorado, Beltrán developed and evaluated a culture-centered HIV/AIDS prevention curriculum for Indigenous youth that aimed to increase knowledge and decrease HIV risk behaviors and stigma. The pilot project included a four-day workshop that used a Medicine Wheel framework for talking about physical, mental, social-relational and spiritual aspects of health. Storytelling was woven into the curriculum, including a poetry-writing exercise synthesizing the workshop content. Beltrán, doctoral candidate **Antonia Alvarez** and doctoral student **Xochilt Alamillo**, GSSW MSW '16, conducted pre- and post-test surveys as well as individual interviews with participants: 23 Indigenous youth ages 14–22.

The curriculum included experiential modules on historical trauma, alcohol and other drug use, interpersonal violence and healthy relationships, and HIV and sexually transmitted infections. It "indigenized" HIV harm reduction approaches



Ramona Beltrán (right)

by integrating cultural beliefs, customs and practices, and by infusing teachings by Indigenous elders, leaders and writers.

This type of culture-centered approach is particularly important, Beltrán says, because although Indigenous communities are tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections at relatively low rates and Indigenous LGBTQ/Two Spirit youth are at increased risk for substance use and suicidality, there are few evidence-based HIV prevention curricula for Indigenous youth.

For participants, the approach was effective. For example, at the start of the intervention, only 50 percent of participants knew that you cannot contract HIV from a mosquito bite; that increased to 95 percent after the program. The study also saw a 30-percent increase in youth who reported that they know how to use a condom and how to check if it is safe to use.

Participants also strengthened their Indigenous identities, reporting more specificity about their tribal heritage or including more aspects of their racial/ethnic identity. Such changes indicate an increased understanding of cultural history and tribal heritage, Beltrán explains.

"That to us was a really important finding, and that was the thing the community was most excited about," Beltrán says. "Our community members understand that when our youth know who they are and where they come from and have a sense of pride, it's easier to navigate challenges. Finding positivity in one's identity is an important health protective factor."

PARTICIPANTS IN THE INDIGENOUS YOUTH RISEUP! CULTURE-CENTERED HIV/AIDS PREVENTION PROGRAM DEMONSTRATED INCREASED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HIV PREVENTION, AND THEY REPORTED STRENGTHENED INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES.

STUDYING HIV RISK

Professor N. Eugene Walls helps design National HIV Behavioral Surveillance Study of men who have sex with men

Every three years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducts the National HIV Behavioral Surveillance Study of men who have sex with men (MSM). Denver is one of 22 study locations nationwide, and since 2011, Professor **N. Eugene Walls** has been part of the city's research team.

Walls' role is to conduct an ethnographic scan that informs survey design. He meets with dozens of stakeholders in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention and services as well as MSM who have unique perspectives on HIV/AIDS and related risk behaviors—people such as MSM sex workers. Walls also conducts focus groups targeting segments of the MSM population, such as injection drug users, HIV-positive MSM and Latino MSM.

"The scan takes the pulse of the target population," says Walls, who collaborates with Denver Health on the study. "We want to know, has anything changed? Are there any new emerging issues or trends? This approach allows us to shape and contextualize the survey to be the most benefit to the Denver area."

Insights gained through the ethnographic scan and secondary analysis of past surveys shape each new survey,

"GSSW produces a significant amount of research on the LGBT community, and a lot of what is published about the trans community comes from GSSW. We're the place for research into understudied populations"

– N. Eugene Walls



which includes a set of questions used in all cities and questions specific to the local area as well.

When the survey was conducted in 2014, for example, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) was just hitting the MSM community. "We were really curious about what MSM were thinking about PrEP and what the barriers to access were," Walls says. In 2017, the survey included questions about the human papillomavirus vaccine, which the CDC had begun recommending for MSM under age 25. In Denver, where marijuana is legal, the survey includes questions related to marijuana use and HIV risk.

Ultimately, data from the study are used to inform national HIV/AIDS strategy aimed at decreasing incidence, improving care and reducing disparities. Locally, study findings shape policy, identify priority funding areas and inform providers about new directions or areas of need. "It shapes how we do prevention and treatment," Walls says.

NEW FACULTY



GSSW welcomes **Donny Gerke** as a new assistant professor. Gerke holds a PhD and MSW from the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. His research and scholarship are focused on HIV prevention and health disparities in sexual and gender minority populations. Before starting his doctoral education, Gerke worked at the Lifelong AIDS Alliance in Seattle, Washington.

UNDERSTANDING TRANS HEALTH LITERACY

Health risks—from substance use to HIV to depression and suicidality—are elevated among transgender people. "That's predominantly because they are living in a world that is transphobic and the consequences of that," says Professor **N. Eugene Walls**.

And, Walls says, trans people face significant barriers to health care, including a limited number of physicians who are trans-competent. Yet, there is no literature describing trans health literacy from either a patient or a provider perspective.

In collaboration with LGBTQ advocacy organization One Colorado, Walls, Assistant Professors **Donny Gerke**

and **Jennifer Greenfield**, and doctoral student **Brittanie Atteberry-Ash** have embarked on a new study to examine trans health literacy. They're conducting focus groups statewide with trans-identified individuals to gain a better sense of their health-related struggles and how they define their needs. The focus groups will then inform a survey to be administered statewide in 2019.

Ultimately, the data gathered will inform interventions to educate health care providers and help One Colorado to better serve its constituents.

"We want to provide opportunities for providers and trans individuals to have more inclusive and positive health care experiences," Gerke says.

FOCUSING ON SOLUTIONS

Professor Johnny Kim is studying the effectiveness of solution-focused brief therapy

Most individual, couples and family therapy takes a problem-focused approach—delving deep to understand a problem over many sessions before beginning to address solutions. Associate Professor **Johnny Kim** advocates for a different approach for many clients: solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT), which moves directly to solutions for a wide range of issues, including depression, addiction and trauma.

Kim is putting the effectiveness of SFBT to the test. In partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and funded by a U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Regional Partnership Grant, Kim and co-investigators at the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare are using a randomized controlled trial to investigate whether parents who received SFBT improved on both substance abuse and trauma outcomes compared to treatment as usual (cognitive-behavioral therapy, or CBT). For the study, they trained substance abuse and mental health counselors in SFBT. These clinicians had been using CBT and motivational interviewing, but in working with families who were involved in the child welfare system and whose children had been removed from the home, clinicians often felt “stuck” when clients didn’t want to talk about problems.

The trial followed 180 families involved in the child welfare system over three months as half received SFBT and half received CBT. Although data analysis is still underway, Kim says initial results show that SFBT is as effective as CBT for treating substance abuse, trauma, child well-being, parental stress and parental depression.

In a second study, Kim is serving as co-investigator to Carrie Pettus-Davis, director of the Institute for Justice Research and Development and associate professor at the Florida State University College of Social Work. The 5 Key Model for Reentry Program Demonstration Project aims to study and

establish a model of reentry services that are individualized and effective at reducing recidivism, decreasing cost and fostering productive citizenship through improved occupational status, interpersonal relationships, thinking patterns, coping skills and social activities. The study includes a randomized controlled trial involving 1,100 participants in a mix of urban and rural communities in Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania and Kentucky.



Johnny Kim

Several key ingredients help prisoners stay out of jail—healthy thinking patterns, meaningful work, effective coping,

INITIAL RESULTS SHOW THAT SOLUTION-FOCUSED BRIEF THERAPY IS AS EFFECTIVE AS COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR TREATING SUBSTANCE ABUSE, TRAUMA, CHILD WELL-BEING, PARENTAL STRESS AND PARENTAL DEPRESSION.

developing positive social engagement, and positive relationships—and four evidence-based interventions are being used to target those five keys. SFBT targets two of them: finding effective coping strategies and developing positive relationships with family, friends and coworkers.

The two-year study got underway in January, and the first group of prisoners has been released and began receiving treatment. Kim has been hiring and training counselors to use SFBT to help prisoners come up with positive coping strategies and positive relationships; the SFBT-trained clinicians are embedded in agencies that

provide re-entry services in local communities.

“The more tools we can give our clinicians, the better,” says Kim, chair of the Solution Focused Brief Therapy Association research committee. “I want to train social workers to provide the most effective intervention out there to help their clients in the quickest amount of time.”

REFLECTING ON RECOVERY CAPITAL

Professor William Cloud discusses his concept of recovery capital, which has reframed the addiction treatment field

In July 2018, Professor **William Cloud**, GSSW PhD '87, received an email from a multi-billion-dollar health care technology company seeking to include the Recovery Capital Scale in its behavioral health electronic workflow. Cloud didn't develop the instrument, but he and former University of Denver Associate Professor of Sociology Robert Granfield did introduce the recovery capital construct a decade ago. The idea has since taken root in the study and treatment of addiction, and recovery capital has been the subject of countless papers, presentations and dissertations by other scholars. It's even the focus of an annual conference.

“Recovery capital’ is the sum of personal and social resources at one’s disposal for addressing drug dependence and, chiefly, bolstering one’s capacity and opportunities for recovery,” Cloud and Granfield wrote in their seminal paper, “Conceptualizing recovery capital: Expansions of a theoretical construct,” published in *The International Journal of the Addictions* in 2008. Treatment practitioners use the strengths-based recovery capital approach to identify clients’ internal and external resources—everything from physical health to family relationships to recovery role models—that can support them in recovery.

The recovery capital concept was central to a paradigm shift in the addictions field, which moved from a focus on pathology and intervention to a focus on recovery. But Cloud

and Granfield's big idea had humble beginnings: They honed the concept over a backyard barbeque, Cloud recalls.

“We had experienced this in our own practice careers,” Cloud says. “How is it that some people are able to get over addiction and others aren't? Some people enter treatment four or five times and still struggle with it; others never enter treatment and they're doing fine.”

In the early 1990s, Cloud and Granfield had been interviewing people about their addiction and recovery experiences. “There were some common themes that led us to our first idea that these folks had social capital—relationships, friendships, supportive families, people who assisted them with their recovery efforts,” Cloud says. “Many also had a ‘stake in conventional life’—they weren't entirely encapsulated in drug culture, and they had a lot of networks and support systems.”

But as they interviewed more and more people, Cloud and Granfield realized there was more than social capital at work in recovery success or relapse. As they “tossed ideas around” over grilled hamburgers one summer day, they landed on recovery capital as a concept that combined not only social capital but also personal, community and cultural capital, which all impact an individual's recovery.

“Poverty is tough. It creates barriers for all sorts of things, including getting off drugs,” says Cloud, who has been working in, studying and teaching about addiction and treatment for more than 40 years and authored three books about recovery. “People with recovery capital often have physical capital—assets and financial ability. People with less recovery capital need more resources. Treatment should be building recovery capital.”

There's still plenty to learn, Cloud says, including how domains such as culture and community affect recovery. “The addiction and recovery field continues to evolve as people deconstruct the process of recovery. What's common about people that allows them to get off drugs? This question has perplexed researchers for a century,” he says. “There continues to be an interest in solving this.”



IN BRIEF

Considering the Community when Planning Families

How do young adults choose when and if they will have children, and how do they navigate this decision process? Funded by the nonprofit organization Having Kids, Visiting Clinical Associate Professor **Sarah Bexell** is investigating that question. Bexell and MSW student Kat Hughey have interviewed couples in Denver, Colorado, and Chengdu, China, where Bexell conducts conservation social work research each year.

While exploring the family-planning decision-making process with participants, the researchers also collected feedback on a new family planning framework advocated by Having Kids: the fair start model.

In both the U.S. and China, Bexell explains, most people make a decision about whether and when to have kids—and how many—in isolation from their local and global community, and without full consideration of the prospective



Sarah Bexell (center)

children themselves. The fair start model proposes that in addition to parents, the family-planning process should include the community because each child born brings more stresses and/or positive impacts to a community. The future rights of the child should also be considered—even before that child is conceived.

Those rights include having a safe, nurturing home, as well as access to education and jobs. And, Bexell says, the child-rights approach considers what environmental changes and level of democracy children will face. Future

inquiries will explore whether equity should play a role in decision-making, and whether family planning is a smart place for reallocation of societal resources.

Although data analysis is ongoing, participants in both countries were excited about the fair start idea and wanted more information, Bexell says. "As the human population grows, there are exponential stresses," she says. "Can we think these things through and make good choices for the child, the parents and the global community?"

Improving Suicide Prevention Training

Assistant Professor **Anthony Fulginiti** wants to harness the power of social networks to inform more effective and sustainable suicide intervention and prevention—an approach that may be particularly relevant on college campuses. Colleges often use gatekeeper training for resident assistants (RAs) and staff as a prevention approach. However, Fulginiti says, peers tend to disclose suicidal thoughts to other peers—not to people in positions of power, such as RAs and teachers. And, the standard approach cannot guarantee that all students are connected to someone who has received training, he says.

An alternative network-driven approach would collect information about

student social networks—such as friends and group memberships—and then recruit people from those networks for training. That approach can provide a blueprint of the social landscape, guiding training so that everyone in the network is connected to someone trained in suicide prevention; it also can identify service and outreach blind spots to address.

Fulginiti aims to map the complex web of student relationships on a larger scale than has been previously attempted. He surveyed nearly 500 first-year University of Denver students and developed residence-hall network maps based on self-report friendship ties and affiliations.

Fulginiti demonstrated that it was feasible to collect the network data needed to plan gatekeeper training. The next step will be to show that a successful

computer algorithm can be developed to guide gatekeeper training recruitment. Fulginiti is collaborating with colleagues at the University of Southern California Center for Artificial Intelligence in Society to develop a computer program to help identify a subset of people who can maximize training coverage in the student network. An efficacy study will then compare the standard and network-driven approaches to gatekeeper training to determine how these different training approaches affect student help-seeking and service use.

The work also will provide descriptive data to test assumptions about where RAs are situated in peer networks, Fulginiti says. The ultimate goal is to see more help-seeking behavior as a result of the new training approach.

Moving to Health through Experiential Therapy

Therapy doesn't just have to include sitting in a chair across from a therapist for 50 minutes, says Associate Professor **Julie Anne Laser-Maira**, an advocate for treatment options that may include sports, games and other experiential activities. For some clients, going on a hike with a therapist can provide a more natural and comfortable opportunity for a meaningful conversation, she says.

Laser-Maira has written extensively about experiential therapy and is studying its efficacy. In one recent study with Denver Health social worker Robin List, GSSW MSW '06, Laser-Maira has examined the effectiveness of the Nia Technique, a mind/body physical conditioning program that combines martial, dance and healing arts in a workout set to music. Laser-Maira found that the sample was positively influenced by the Nia activities, with most participants reporting transformational change in their lives.

In a second study with staff from Denver Parks and Recreation, Laser-Maira evaluated the benefits and outcomes of using experiential activities



with healthy adults at a challenge course. The outcomes evaluated were problem-solving, decision-making, cooperation and communication skills, as well as self-awareness, enjoyment of the activities and the participant's likelihood to return to the challenge course and to recommend it to others. Laser-Maira found that the sample was positively influenced by the activities, both individually and as a group, with most participants reporting that the experiential activities they had participated in would positively influence future behaviors.

"Experiential therapy can move people along in ways that sitting and talking can never do," says Laser-Maira,

who teaches two MSW courses on the subject. "We can move people out of their comfort zone by playing games and using activities as a way of having conversations."

Laser-Maira is presenting findings from both studies at the Alliance for Social Workers in Sports 4th Annual Social Work in Sports Symposium in November.

WATCH A VIDEO ABOUT TEACHING EXPERIENTIAL THERAPY:
bit.ly/GSSWexperientialtherapy



PHD CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT: KATIE MASSEY COMBS, PHD '19

Specializations: behavioral health, child welfare, health and wellness, intervention research, sexual and reproductive health, research methods, trauma

Dissertation: "Evaluation of a Sexual Health Training for Child Welfare Caseworkers"

Research Interests: prevention of behavioral health problems for vulnerable youth, particularly related to reproductive and sexual health; understanding how social workers and child welfare

can play a role in reducing reproductive health disparities for youth in foster care

LEARN MORE:
portfolio.du.edu/kmasse27



Exploring the Effectiveness of Mind-Body Interventions

Neuroscience has demonstrated that mind-body interventions such as yoga and mindful breathing can change the brain, says Professor **Nicole Nicotera**, who studies the healing efficacy of mind-body interventions in clinical practice.

In collaboration with the The Blue Bench, a nonprofit serving sexual assault survivors, Nicotera and Megan Connolly, GSSW MSW '14, are looking at the potential benefits of a trauma-sensitive yoga and mindfulness intervention for survivors of sexual assault. The intervention was developed and implemented by licensed mental health providers/certified yoga teachers in the natural setting of a community-based organization. Unlike traditional yoga, trauma-sensitive yoga does not include touching; it emphasizes mind-body awareness and is careful about the

language used and poses introduced, as some could be triggering. Findings have demonstrated statistically significant changes in participants' emotion regulation and skilled awareness, both of which have the potential to reduce PTSD symptomatology, Nicotera says.

"Mindfulness and gentle mind-body interventions can be more helpful than forcing survivors to talk," says Nicotera, noting that The Blue Bench is using data from the ongoing study to refine the intervention.

In a second study, Nicotera and community partner Erica Viggiano (LCSW, MSW) are studying the outcomes of an eight-week yoga-mindfulness based intervention designed to address the behavioral and emotional self-regulation needs of young women incarcerated in a high-security facility, specifically targeting development of interoceptive awareness. Although data analysis is still underway, participant scores on the Mindful Awareness and Attention Scale

CULTIVATING STUDENT WELLNESS

Does participation in wellness activities improve quality of life and reduce stress among MSW students? Professor **Nicole Nicotera** and Associate Professor of the Practice **Kathryn Ross** have been studying the outcomes of wellness programs for GSSW MSW students. Preliminarily, Nicotera says, students who were more likely to use any of the three wellness interventions offered demonstrated a statistically improved quality of life compared students who said they seldom used any of the interventions. Researchers also identified some cognitive roadblocks and bridges to wellness. The research team includes MSW student **Joshua Andelora** and doctoral students **Tyler Han** and **Jennifer Sedivy**, who are presenting research findings at the Council on Social Work Education conference in November 2018.

for Adolescents increased significantly from pre- to post-test, Nicotera says.

"There is hope for all of us to change through mind-body interventions such as yoga and mindful breathing due to the neuroplasticity of the brain," she says. "Interventions can be simple and don't have to be expensive. Once these kinds of interventions are learned, practicing them can be free because all you need is your body, breath and mind."

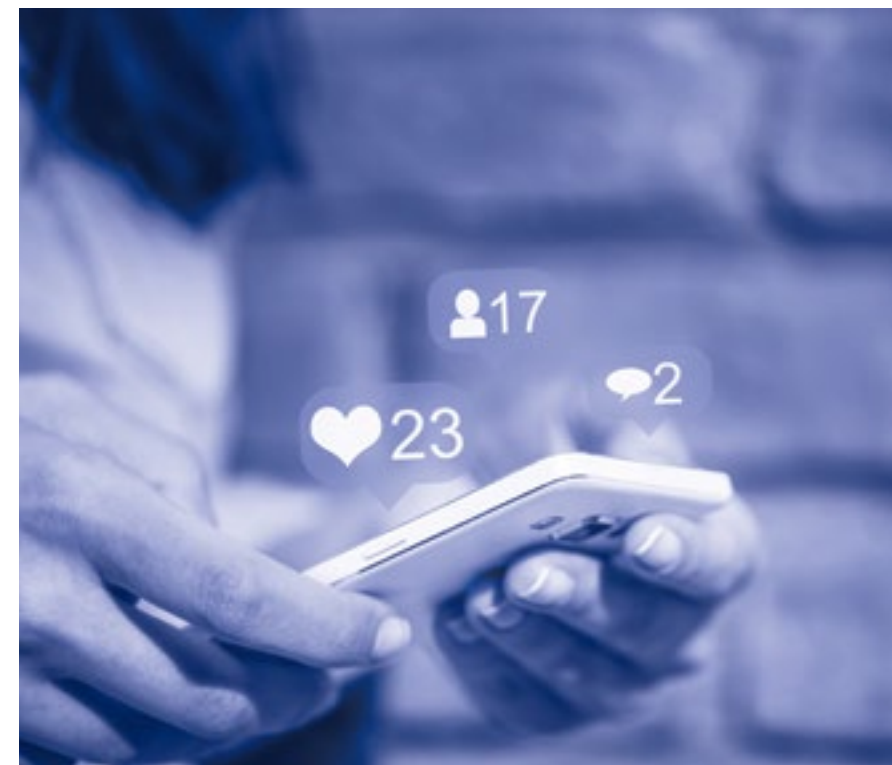
health and social work focusing on individuals within systems. Ten students have enrolled in the new program, says Bensen, noting that dual-degree graduates can expect expanded career options in areas such as medical and public health services, substance use prevention and treatment, and behavioral health. Coordinated by Clinical Associate Professor **Michael Talamantes**, the MSW/MPH program is one of 13 GSSW dual-degree programs that pair social work with degrees in business, law, international studies and theology.

Understanding Benefits of Social Media

Assistant Professor **Anamika Barman-Adhikari**, Professor **Kimberly Bender**, University of Denver engineering and business colleagues and a team of graduate students are studying the benefits of social media for homeless youth. They aim to develop a better understanding of how youth use Facebook, the topics they discuss and share, and how others respond to them. Researchers also want to understand

how these interactions influence young people's engagement in sexual risk behaviors, substance use and experiences of victimization. The ultimate aim of the study—the first in the country to examine how homeless populations are using social media—is to use this information to develop social media interventions to help unstably housed youth avoid negative outcomes.

READ MORE:
socialwork.du.edu/homelessyouth



INVESTIGATING COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

PI: Associate Professor Stacey Freedenthal and Professor Nicole Nicotera

Co-PI: Clinical Assistant Professor Brian Gonzales

Community Partner: Denver Health Medical Center Psychiatric Emergency Services

Impact: This qualitative pilot study investigates individuals' cognitive and emotional responses to their suicidal thoughts. Findings will lay the groundwork for future research into the relationship of treatment outcomes and responses to suicidal ideation, new interventions to modify responses to suicidal thoughts, and possible modifications to interventions to accommodate different responses to suicidal ideation.



Connecting Social Work and Public Health

GSSW has added a new dual-degree program that pairs a master of social work (MSW) with a master of public health (MPH). The partnership between the University of Denver and the Colorado School of Public Health is a natural fit, says Associate Professor of the Practice **Karen Bensen**, coordinator of dual degrees. Both fields strive to improve health and social functioning, with public health focusing on population



PHD CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT: ANTONIA ALVAREZ, PHD '19

Dissertation: "Historic Loss and Suicide Risk Between and Among Native Hawaiians: Exploring a Historical-Trauma Informed Approach to Suicide Prevention"

Specializations: addictions and substance use, community organizing and community development, culturally responsive practice, disparities, Indigenous and native peoples, LGBTQIA, mental and behavioral health, social justice, suicide and suicide prevention, trauma

Research Interests: community-based interventions, culturally responsive social work practice, and Indigenous/minority health and mental health; continuing to challenge systems that perpetuate health disparities among communities of color, LGBTQ youth, and other multiple-minority groups; the use

of qualitative, arts-based and liberatory methodologies that translate research to practice and practice to prevention

LEARN MORE:
portfolio.du.edu/argalvarez

ENSURING HEALTHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

31 Focusing on Fathers

32 Fostering Healthy Futures

33 Evaluating Restorative Practices

FOCUSING ON FATHERS

The Dads Matter parenting intervention reduces child maltreatment by increasing father involvement

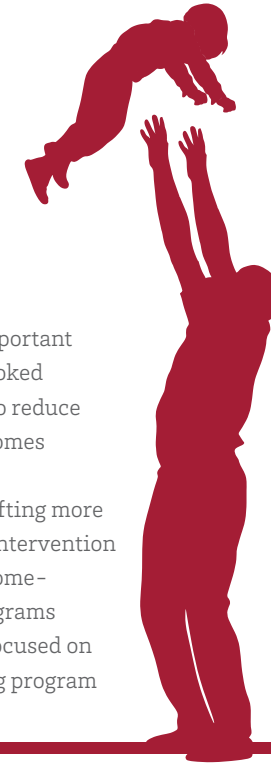
Despite strong evidence that fathers are important to children's development, dads are often overlooked in perinatal home-visiting programs intended to reduce maltreatment and optimize developmental outcomes for kids.

Associate Professor **Jennifer Bellamy** is shifting more focus onto fathers through Dads Matter, a new intervention designed to incorporate fathers into perinatal home-visiting programs. Typically, home-visiting programs start close to the time of a child's birth and are focused on mothers and babies. Although the home-visiting program may continue until children are 3–5 years old, early positive results usually are not sustained over time.

"We believe that's because we're dissecting families," Bellamy explains. "We pay little attention to dads, and fathers have been the missing link."

With a focus on co-parenting, Dads Matter reorients home visiting to a family approach that includes fathers when they are present in the home. The intervention is layered into standard home-visiting programs and helps mothers and fathers to develop parenting skills together and support one another.

Findings from a quasi-experimental pilot study of Dads Matter suggest that the intervention resulted in better engagement of fathers in services, better quality of father-child and mother-father relationships, and fewer child maltreatment



DADS MATTER HAS RESULTED IN BETTER ENGAGEMENT OF FATHERS IN SERVICES, BETTER QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS, AND FEWER CHILD MALTREATMENT INDICATORS.

indicators as compared to home visiting as usual.

Dads Matter has been implemented via five large Chicago agencies that provide home-visiting services; data collection for a randomized controlled trial of the intervention recently wrapped up. In addition to Bellamy, project collaborators include faculty at New York University and the University of Nebraska, as well as GSSW PhD candidate **Jon Phillips** and doctoral student **Rachel Speer**.

Trial participants completed a baseline interview before receiving services. Researchers also audio recorded participants for 24 hours, allowing them to pick up on harsh parenting such as yelling and gauge the quality of parents' interactions with their child;

they repeated this process after four months—the length of time required to deliver Dads Matter—and again after one year.

"My hope is that we could shift the entire field of home visiting to be family inclusive, leveraging what is already a good service into an extraordinary service that has the opportunity to reduce child maltreatment widely," Bellamy says.

INCREASING FATHER INVOLVEMENT TO PROMOTE CHILDREN'S SOCIO-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING



PI: Associate Professor Inna Altschul

Funder: National Institutes of Health, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development

Impact: Using longitudinal data from 5,102 racially diverse, low-income families with young children to test transactional family process models, this project advances the understanding of family processes associated with father involvement and socio-emotional outcomes for children in fragile families, providing targets for interventions to increase father involvement and promote children's socio-emotional well-being.



PHD CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT: JON PHILLIPS, PHD '19

Specializations: interprofessional collaboration, child welfare, child and youth well-being, and workforce development

Dissertation: "Working Together to Achieve Safe and Timely Reunification: A Mixed-Methods Study of Interprofessional Collaboration in Child Welfare"

Research Interests: Increasing the intensity and quality of interprofessional collaboration in the child

welfare system to improve child and family well-being

LEARN MORE:
portfolio.du.edu/Jon.Phillips

FOSTERING HEALTHY FUTURES

The evidence-based intervention improves youth outcomes and provides a training ground for future social workers

Since it was established more than 15 years ago, Fostering Healthy Futures® (FHF) has transformed the lives of hundreds of youth involved in the child welfare system through mentoring and skills training and has been the focus of multiple studies, including three randomized controlled trials. The preventive intervention has also been a training ground for almost 400 MSW and other graduate students who have worked as FHF mentors and research assistants.

One of those is MSW student and Research Assistant Liza Baxter, who is responsible for coding, data entry, and cleaning and merging data from multiple databases spanning four cohorts over many years. Another is Rachel Bennett, GSSW MSW '15, who started out as an FHF mentor, became a research assistant and now works as the project's full-time project manager, supervising up to 10 graduate student interviewers and research



assistants and coordinating with counties and caseworkers.

"Some of the best training and supervision I received as a social worker came through this program," Bennett says. Mentors, for example, participate in training, weekly individual and group supervision, and take a weekly seminar covering topics such as emotion regulation or trauma and attachment.

Recognized as an evidence-based intervention, FHF is the brainchild of Professor **Heather Taussig**, associate dean for research. Designed for youth ages 9 to 11 who are in foster care, the nine-month program includes group-based skills training on topics such as healthy relationships, anger management, communication, and resisting negative peer pressure. Graduate student mentors also work individually with participants to generalize the skills they are learning to real-life situations.

Two randomized controlled trials found that FHF participants had fewer placement changes, higher rates of permanency, fewer trauma symptoms, better mental health functioning, less residential treatment, and better quality of life.

Taussig and Professor **Kimberly Bender** now are conducting a randomized controlled trial of the Fostering Healthy Futures for Teens mentoring program, which enrolls 8th and 9th graders with open child welfare cases. Mentors (each works with three students) are trained to creatively and organically incorporate skill and resource building into meetings and activities, promoting positive youth development within the relationship, education, extracurricular activity, career and health domains.

Taussig and colleagues recently completed a National Institute of Justice-funded 10-year follow-up study examining dating violence (DV) outcomes. They found several salient predictors of young-adult involvement in DV, including early adolescent victimization, trauma symptoms and risk behaviors, as well as a protective effect of social support. Taussig and colleagues are now conducting a study of delinquency outcomes funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Students are involved every step of the way. "We pride ourselves on being a training site for future social workers," says Orah Fireman, co-director of programming and dissemination with Robyn Wertheimer Hodas. "I love to see graduate students grow in their clinical skills, in their confidence, in their ability to work with the participants and their caregivers."

EVALUATING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Learning communities are increasing restorative practices implementation in Denver Public Schools

Associate Professor **Yolanda Anyon's** research addresses racial equity in education—specifically, how students of color are often excluded from schools and classrooms because of conflict and perceived misbehavior at higher rates than their white and Asian peers. Restorative practices are one way to address this issue, and research indicates they can prevent out-of-school suspensions and disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline.

For the past five years, Anyon has studied restorative practices in Denver Public Schools (DPS). In a recently completed study funded by the University of Denver Barton Institute for Philanthropy and Social Enterprise, Anyon looked at whether participation in a district-level restorative practices learning community led to increased implementation of the approach. Anyon's previous research had shown that certain implementation conditions mattered for schools to take up restorative practices in a robust, school-wide way. So, she helped to design a learning community to strengthen implementation.

Every month, educators from 15 DPS elementary, middle and high schools came together to review implementation strategies, discuss best practices and problem-solve; a specialist also



provided site visits and coaching. Participating schools increased their use of restorative practices and reduced use of out-of-school suspensions for all groups, including black students and students with disabilities, who might be suspended at higher rates otherwise.

"These types of learning communities are a useful tool for supporting consistent implementation of district discipline reforms," Anyon says, noting that DPS is now expanding its restorative practices training.

"Training and coaching can help schools take these kinds of practices to scale," Anyon says. "The ultimate goal is to have everyone in the building using restorative approaches in a preventative way, not just when conflict happens. We need to keep students in school and learning."

MENTOR SPOTLIGHT: KJELL TAYSON, GSSW MSW '17

Who he mentored: Three teenage boys who were resistant to traditional therapy

They worked on: coping skills, goal setting, relationship skills, mindfulness, assertive communication, "... getting these kids to believe in themselves and create their ideal future."

He learned: bridging cultural differences, relationship building, setting and maintaining boundaries, the importance of planned termination

Example of the impact: "One young man had social anxiety. When I started, he didn't want to leave the house, and if he did he would only say a few words. By the end, he was using public transportation to access after-school clubs by himself—taking initiative to make his dreams come true."

What he is doing now: He is a therapist in a day-treatment program for kids with severe mental health problems, where he uses the client-centered and skills-focused approach he learned in FHF.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES WITH AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

GSSW's Bridge Project is a community-based after-school program in four Denver public housing neighborhoods, where it primarily serves low-income adolescents of color. The intervention includes academic tutoring, homework help, a reading curriculum, and skill-building groups to enhance participants' academic and social-emotional development.

For the past five years, the Bridge Project has also implemented the YELL Program, a youth-led participatory action research project designed to

increase opportunities for youth voice among middle school participants. A recent study focused on how young people in YELL demonstrated critical consciousness in their analysis of the 2016 presidential election.

"So much of the election discourse was directly about immigrants and people of color. Our research team wanted to understand how early adolescents of color, many of whom are immigrants or refugees, responded to the election in the context of a youth participatory action program," explains Associate Professor **Yolanda Anyon**.

"We found that they engaged in critical reflection, developed their own sense

of political efficacy and took action," says Anyon, noting that after-school and youth-led participatory action research projects may be an understudied resource in early adolescents' sociopolitical development.

In a related study, GSSW Professor **Jeff Jensen**, Anyon and other research team members found that Bridge Project participants had significantly higher levels of school attendance, a greater increase in independent reading level over the academic year, and lower odds of incurring a suspension or expulsion from school than youth in a comparison group. Bridge Project participation also was

significantly related to ratings of proficiency in math and science.

Jensen and colleagues also compared reading proficiency improvement among Bridge Project participants and peers residing in public housing neighborhoods without the program. Bridge Project participants demonstrated better reading proficiency than comparison group participants, providing preliminary evidence that it is possible to impact reading proficiency for very high-risk students in the early grades of elementary school.

IN BRIEF

Enhancing Publishing Practices

A decade ago, the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) asked **Jeff Jenson** to lead an examination of social work publishing practices. Jenson and a group of leading scholars identified several challenges, including weak reviews, inconsistent publishing processes, lengthy waits between submission and decision, and even longer waits for publication.

Those findings led the SSWR board to create a journal known for rapid decisions, high-quality reviews, and quick publication. The *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research*

(JSSWR) published its first issue in 2010 as an open-access journal.

Today, SSWR's flagship publication is published by the University of Chicago Press, and Jenson is the journal's editor-in-chief.

"I'm continually impressed by the caliber and impact of social work research published by JSSWR. We publish rigorous, original qualitative and quantitative research by both established and emerging scholars from all over the world," says Jenson, the Winn Endowed Professor for Children and Youth. "We'll celebrate JSSWR's 10th anniversary next year, and I'm particularly proud that the journal's publishing practices continue to align with its founding principles."

The journal received its second Impact Factor of 1.053 and is ranked 21 among 42 social work journals. Submissions increased 53 percent from 2016 to 2017, authors receive a decision within six weeks of submission, and most articles are published online within 6 months of acceptance.

Jenson credits much of this success to JSSWR's team of associate editors, including GSSW Associate Professor **Jennifer Bellamy**, who also serves on the SSWR board.



Jeff Jenson

In late 2018, the journal will publish a special issue focused on the Grand Challenge to Ensure Healthy Development for All Youth Through the Power of Prevention. GSSW Professor and Associate Dean for Doctoral Education **Kimberly Bender** and University of California, Berkeley Associate Professor Valerie Shapiro are guest editors for the issue, which includes commentaries as well as intervention research, implementation research, and methodological innovations that further collective thinking and action for taking effective prevention to scale.



FOLLOW JSSWR ON TWITTER:
@JournalSSWR

Expanding Access to Social Work Education

Through initiatives such as its Four Corners and Western Colorado MSW programs, GSSW expands access to social work graduate education and provides a well-trained, culturally responsive workforce in rural and underserved communities.

The MSW@Denver online MSW program is expanding the school's footprint and carrying its social justice emphasis even farther—to communities in 37 states. With 280 advanced-standing and two-year students currently enrolled, MSW@Denver will graduate its first cohort of students in June 2019.

"We're providing broad access to the MSW degree for changemakers in communities where there are few social workers, if any," says Associate Professor of the Practice **Jae McQueen**, founding associate dean for online programs. For instance, she says, one student hails from a small town in Arkansas and intends to continue living and working in that community, which has had only fleeting access to social workers. "We provide access for individuals who wouldn't be able to join the social work profession otherwise."

In developing the MSW@Denver program, McQueen says, GSSW has worked to match the curriculum to diverse needs of learners from different

contexts and localities. "We give students opportunities to bring their unique community perspective into the classroom. These engaging learning experiences expand understanding of social work's grand challenges and generate action for social and racial equity across a range of issues."

"The GSSW community is growing to include individuals across the country who are passionate about making change and working for social justice," McQueen adds. "Through MSW@Denver, we are advancing our vision to create equity across the country by increasing access to quality social work services."

MSW@DENVER

Training an Evidence-Based Workforce

Students in GSSW's Denver, Western Colorado and Four Corners programs get to choose internships that fit their interests from more than 750 field education options. For Erin Mussman, GSSW MSW '18, that meant finding a second-year internship that included a research component.

Mussman interned at EarthLinks, where her responsibilities included grant writing and program evaluation. EarthLinks is a Denver nonprofit that aims to cultivate transformation and self-worth with people experiencing homelessness and poverty by creating opportunities through Earth-centered programs such as the EarthLinks Workshop, where participants work in an urban garden, create crafts from what is harvested and then sell the handicrafts to support participant stipends.

"I found the survey instruments EarthLinks was using, and how they administered them, were not effective," says Mussman, whose concentration was sustainable development and global practice. "They do really important work, but not work that can be easily measured." A lack of good data demonstrating results limited grant opportunities, Mussman explains.

So, Mussman designed a new survey instrument. She adapted Pick-A-Mood for the EarthLinks survey, which would be administered when participants arrived in the morning and again after completion of their group sessions and workshop. Pilot results were positive, Mussman says, and the survey better demonstrated the program's direct impact on individuals.

Today, Mussman works with nonprofits as a grant writer for Zim Consulting, a professional connection she made through a mentor at her first-year field placement.

This sort of outcome is exactly what GSSW is aiming for with its field education program, says **Aneesha Bharwani**, associate professor of the practice and assistant dean for field education and community partnerships. Bharwani and the field education



An EarthLinks workshop

team—Clinical Assistant Professor **Denise Breinig-Glunz**, Associate Director/ Clinical Assistant Professor **Kathryn Johnson**, Clinical Assistant Professor **Julianne Mitchell**, Assistant Professor of the Practice **Jessica Zaslav**, and Associate Director/Associate Professor of the Practice **Michele Sienkiewicz**—continue expanding and enriching field education opportunities, including a new collaboration with Savio House that will train GSSW interns in evidence-based practices such as Multi-Systemic Therapy and offer them a job upon graduation.

Meanwhile, Mussman says, "I want to make the world a better place, and grant writing is the best use of my skills and how I can make a meaningful impact."



LEARN MORE ABOUT GSSW'S PARTNERSHIP WITH SAVIO HOUSE:

socialwork.du.edu/saviohouse

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR TRIBES



PI: Research Associate Professor Robin Leake

Co-PI: Research Associate Professor Nancy Lucero

Community Partners: Tribal Law and Policy Institute, University of Southern Maine, Westat

Impact: The Capacity Building Center for Tribes is part of the Children's Bureau Capacity Building Collaborative—a partnership between the Center for Tribes, the Center for States and the Center for Courts. The project will strengthen tribal child welfare and family service systems and services to nurture the safety, permanency and well-being of children, youth and families.

Serving as a Community Resource

The community frequently calls on GSSW as a resource for workforce development, training, implementation support, research and assessment. Recently, GSSW was asked to partner with the Tennyson Center for Children, a local nonprofit that serves children who have experienced severe abuse, neglect and trauma.

In 2017, Tennyson launched an Impact Department focused on measurement, data integrity and programmatic improvement and turned to GSSW to help develop a monitoring framework to improve outcomes through data-driven decision-making.

Associate Professor **Michele Hanna**, Assistant Professor **Amy He** and doctoral student **Jennifer Sedivy** collaborated with Tennyson Center staff to develop internal systems to track children's progress while in the therapeutic program, paying special attention to treatment advances, outcome measurements and systematic data-collection strategies to follow children and families after discharge to assess long-term outcomes.

This work culminated with a commitment by

Tennyson to monitor outcomes of children and families using a range of indicators within a three-part treatment framework (stabilize, heal, reintegrate) for up to three years after discharge.

Professor He also looked at Tennyson's organizational health—including the culture and climate of the organization and issues such as inclusivity and employee burnout—using the Comprehensive Organizational Health Assessment, an instrument developed for child welfare organizations. This was the first time the instrument has been used in a residential community-based program, she says.

"The Tennyson Center is a great agency that helps children in many ways while they're in its therapeutic program," Hanna says. "We pushed the center to consider new ways to ensure that the work they do is sustained after discharge."

GSSW provided much needed skills and capacity, helping Tennyson Center

"GSSW has made Tennyson better, which will translate into better results for children and families across Colorado"

— Ned Breslin

staff find ways to illuminate those aspects of Tennyson's programs that have lasting impact and those that need to be reconsidered, says Tennyson Center President and CEO Ned Breslin.

"GSSW has made Tennyson better, which will translate into better results for children and families

across Colorado," Breslin says. "GSSW leaders helped walk us to a radically new place that tied our ambitions for impact with dynamic and achievable ways to monitor results over time. That creates the conditions for us to constantly improve and innovate. Tennyson is better when we let others, like GSSW, into our work and together forge ahead to dramatically change for the good of children and families."

PUTTING FAMILIES FIRST

Assistant Professor **Amy He** has been invited to serve as a member of the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Family First Prevention Services Act 2018 (FFPSA) Program and Services Subcommittee. The committee supports CDHS's efforts to analyze and implement stipulations of the FFPSA, groundbreaking legislation aimed at providing prevention services to families at imminent risk of entering the foster care system. Professor He also is a member of the CDHS Core Compression Planning Team. Working with Casey Family Services, the team has identified and developed critical decisions, timeframes and recommendations for the state's FFPSA road map.

GSSW Faculty

- + **Inna Altschul**, Associate Professor, Assistant Dean for Program Assessment & Evaluation
- + **Yolanda Anyon**, Associate Professor
- + **Heather Arnold-Renicker**, Clinical Assistant Professor
- + **Anamika Barman-Adhikari**, Assistant Professor
- + **Jennifer Bellamy**, Associate Professor
- + **Ramona Beltrán**, Associate Professor
- + **Kimberly Bender**, Professor & Associate Dean for Doctoral Education
- + **Karen Bensen**, Associate Professor of the Practice & Coordinator of Dual Degrees
- + **Sarah Bexell**, Visiting Clinical Associate Professor
- + **Aneesha Bharwani**, Associate Professor of the Practice & Assistant Dean, Field Education & Community Partnerships
- + **Denise Breinig-Glunz**, Clinical Assistant Professor, Field Education
- + **Daniel Brisson**, Associate Professor & Executive Director, Burnes Center on Poverty and Homelessness
- + **Jesse Burne**, Assistant Professor of the Practice & Executive Director, Bridge Project
- + **Kerry Causey**, Clinical Assistant Professor
- + **William Cloud**, Professor
- + **Wanda Ellingson**, Professor of the Practice & Program Director, Four Corners

- + **Rachel Forbes**, Assistant Professor of the Practice & Program Director, Western Colorado
- + **Meg Franko**, Research Associate Professor
- + **Stacey Freedenthal**, Associate Professor
- + **Anthony Fulginiti**, Assistant Professor
- + **Lorena Gaibor**, Clinical Assistant Professor & Coordinator, Latinx Social Work Certificate
- + **Donny Gerke**, Assistant Professor
- + **Brian Gonzales**, Clinical Assistant Professor & Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs
- + **Jennifer Greenfield**, Assistant Professor
- + **Michele Hanna**, Associate Professor
- + **Leslie Hasche**, Associate Professor & Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
- + **Amy He**, Assistant Professor
- + **Jeff Jensen**, Philip D. and Eleanor G. Winn Endowed Professor for Children and Youth
- + **Kathy Johnson**, Clinical Associate Professor & Associate Director, Field Education
- + **Suzanne Kerns**, Research Associate Professor & Executive Director, Center for Effective Interventions
- + **Johnny Kim**, Associate Professor
- + **Julie Anne Laser-Maira**, Associate Professor & Coordinator, School Social Work Certificate
- + **Robin Leake**, Research Associate Professor
- + **Nancy Lucero**, Research Associate Professor

- + **Lena Lundgren**, Professor & Executive Director, Butler Institute for Families
- + **Amanda Moore McBride**, Morris Endowed Dean & Professor
- + **Jae McQueen**, Associate Professor of the Practice
- + **Julianne Mitchell**, Clinical Associate Professor, Field Education
- + **Kevin Morris**, Research Associate Professor
- + **Nicole Nicotera**, Professor
- + **Debora Ortega**, Professor & Director, Latino Center
- + **Ann Petrillo**, Professor of the Practice
- + **Shauna Rienks**, Research Assistant Professor
- + **Kathryn Ross**, Associate Professor of the Practice
- + **Michele Sienkiewicz**, Professor of the Practice & Associate Director, Online Field Education
- + **Shannon Sliva**, Assistant Professor
- + **Michael Talamantes**, Clinical Associate Professor
- + **Heather Taussig**, Professor & Associate Dean for Research
- + **Philip Tedeschi**, Clinical Professor, Director of the Institute for Human-Animal Connection & Coordinator, Animal-Assisted Social Work Certificate
- + **Stephen von Merz**, Clinical Associate Professor
- + **N. Eugene Walls**, Professor
- + **Jessica Zaslav**, Assistant Professor of the Practice, Field Education

We are grateful for the contributions of our more than 150 staff members and student employees, whose passion and dedication support our research and scholarly agenda, fueling our mission and advancing our vision.

CATALYST SERIES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- + OCT. 30, 2018
- + JAN. 28, 2019
- + MARCH 18, 2019

REGISTER TO ATTEND:
socialwork.du.edu/catalyst

CAN'T BE THERE IN PERSON?
WATCH VIA FACEBOOK LIVE:
[@GSSWdenver](https://www.facebook.com/GSSWdenver)



CATALYST SERIES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Graduate School of Social Work does more than educate students. We also educate our community through timely—and sometimes tough—discussions and workshops. Whether the topic is white fragility, body positivity or art as activism, the goals are the same: to inform, prompt reflection, facilitate public dialogue and spark action.



PHD CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT: HEATHER KENNEDY, PHD '19

Specializations: youth civic and community engagement, social justice youth development, youth participatory action research, training and technical assistance to improve outcomes of positive youth development approaches

Dissertation: "Disrupting Adultism: Examining Participatory Action Research as a Zone for Intergroup Contact Between Youth and Adults"

Research Interests: adultism, intergroup contact theory, youth participatory action research, and adult and community outcomes of positive youth development approaches



LEARN MORE:
portfolio.du.edu/hkenne35



UNIVERSITY *of*
DENVER

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



socialwork.du.edu



facebook.com/GSSWDenver



[@GSSWDenver](https://twitter.com/GSSWDenver)



2148 S. High St.
Denver, CO 80208-7100