

# Doris Duke Fellowships *for the* Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

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## Notes from Deb Lessons from Penn State

by [DEBORAH DARO](#)

Senior Research Fellow

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

In November, the country was rocked by allegations of child sexual abuse against a long time Penn State football coach. The alleged offender was not a drug addict. He did not have criminal record or a history of violence. Indeed, he was a respected member of the community with a long history of philanthropic support to disadvantaged children. Although certainly not the first case of a seemingly upstanding citizen to be accused of heinous crimes against young children, the case generated a public discussion of child abuse in new domains, filling sports pages and sparking commentary on football pre- and post-game shows for weeks. The topic "[Penn State Sex Abuse Scandal](#)" has its own Wikipedia page and continues to trend high on Twitter and other social media outlets. The case has ignited a new national conversation on child sexual abuse and the seemingly countless situations in which children can be victimized.



For those who follow trends in child sexual abuse reporting, the case stood as a stark reminder of the potential disconnect between official reports of a social problem and its actual incidence. For the past two decades, child sexual abuse reports have steadily declined-- down over 50 percent since 1990. While many practitioners, researchers, and advocates have cautioned that these reductions did not mean the problem had been resolved, they did find in these trends reason to believe that a combination of universal prevention education, effective therapeutic services for victims and offenders, and aggressive prosecution was making a measurable impact on the problem.

That belief in the power of developing an effective public response to child maltreatment should not be diminished by the recent events in University Park. Rather, the important message to take away from this tragedy is that we all need to do better. We need to be more diligent in reporting acts of abuse to local authorities and following up on these reports to ensure action is being taken to protect current and future victims. We need to remove any barriers in our institutions, be they universities, churches, corporations or non-profit organizations, which would lead employees to

believe that reporting violence toward children will have negative repercussions on their career or will be dismissed without a full investigation. And when we encounter children who need assistance and support, children who may be isolated or lack positive role models, we need to offer assistance and, if necessary, direct them to services and professionals with the skills to provide more therapeutic assistance.

Regrettably, prevention efforts cannot stop all abuse or protect all children. However, our cumulative knowledge in how to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse and our collective will to protect children has and will continue to make a difference.

## Featured Fellow

### **Lisa Schelbe**, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work

by CARLY DIE RKHISING

*Carly & Lisa interviewed one another about their career paths, academic and professional work, and current research.*



When [Lisa Schelbe](#) began her doctoral studies at the [University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work](#), she was not planning on conducting an ethnography of youth aging out of the child welfare system for her dissertation. However, reflecting on her practice and academic experiences, Lisa now sees it as a natural progression of her work.

As an undergraduate, Lisa worked at a women's shelter and volunteered in a hospital-based domestic violence program. After graduation and at the advice of a mentor, she worked for a couple of years before pursuing her Master of Social Work at the [George Warren Brown School of Social Work](#) at Washington University in St. Louis. By the time she started the program, Lisa knew she wanted to develop programs and policies that would assist survivors of intimate partner violence. While in graduate school, Lisa served as a research assistant on a study of survivors of domestic violence and completed an independent study on feminist research practices. These experiences solidified her dedication to research and her desire for a doctorate. After graduation, Lisa worked as a social worker in a supervised visitation center. As she watched children fall through the cracks, Lisa became concerned about the current system and further motivated to pursue her PhD in order to contribute to knowledge production and train the next generation of social workers.

As a doctoral student, Lisa worked with [Dr. Jeff Shook](#) and [Dr. Sara Goodkind](#) on a study of youth aging out of the child welfare system. The resiliency of the youth she interviewed inspired her, and she found herself increasingly interested in understanding how youth negotiate the transition out of the system. With a supportive dissertation chair and committee, Lisa designed an ethnography of youth aging out for her dissertation. The study participants' perspectives offer insights into how to ensure that former foster youth do not perpetuate the cycle of abuse and neglect. The high prevalence of aging out youth becoming parents and the higher incidence of female foster youth being investigated for child abuse and neglect is one that has been overlooked until recently. Understanding the experiences and perceptions of youth aging out can contribute to finding creative solutions to strengthen former foster youths' parenting and to prevent child maltreatment.

In addition to dissertation work, Lisa's research includes examining youth "hustling" and involvement in the informal economy. The common thread throughout her research and practice is the desire to understand

experiences of disenfranchised groups and to influence policies and practices that can positively impact people's lives. Upon completion of her dissertation, Lisa will pursue an academic appointment where she can continue her research in child welfare.

## Featured Fellow Carly Dierkhising,

Ph.D. Candidate, Developmental Psychology, University of California, Riverside

by LISA SCHELBE

[Carly Dierkhising](#)'s interest in child abuse prevention evolved out of her clinical work with incarcerated adolescents who had been exposed to multiple types of violence, including child abuse and neglect. She dedicated herself to working with adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system after listening to multiple stories of chronic trauma that precipitated the youths' involvement in the system. Carly became more interested in conducting research than performing clinical work, as she felt it was a way to make a bigger impact on this population. She is drawn towards policy-related research for similar reasons.



After receiving her master's degree in Clinical Psychology from [Pepperdine University](#), Carly was hired at the [National Center for Child Traumatic Stress](#) (NCCTS), the coordinating body of the [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) (NCTSN). The NCTSN was established by Congress in 2000. It works to raise the standard of care for traumatized children and advocates for trauma-informed services for children and adolescents involved in multiple service systems, such as child welfare and juvenile justice. As the Service Systems Program Coordinator, Carly assisted teams of experts on child traumatic stress from across the country in developing advocacy briefs and trainings on building trauma-informed service systems. Read more about the work she was engaged with [here](#).

In 2009, Carly started work on her doctorate in [Developmental Psychology at the University of California, Riverside](#). It is her hope that her dissertation, "The Nature and Scope of Abuse and Revictimization in Juvenile Institutions", may lead to enhanced interventions with victimized youth, policies targeted at preventing abuse within juvenile facilities, and juvenile facility staff training.

Recently, Carly was rehired to work on a supplement grant that NCCTS received to support work focused specifically on building capacity for trauma-informed juvenile justice systems. In this position, Carly will conduct analyses using the NCTSN Core Data Set, a national dataset collected by the NCTSN clinical centers, which includes longitudinal assessments and treatment outcomes on over 14,000 children and adolescents exposed to trauma. In the next year, Carly is particularly excited about evaluating the trauma profiles of the subgroup of youth in the NCTSN Core Data Set who have also been involved in the juvenile justice system. After receiving her doctorate, Carly hopes to obtain a research position in a policy or research institute where she can continue conducting policy-related research on the prevention of child abuse and neglect and trauma-focused services for children and adolescents exposed to violence.

**Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention at  
The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**

by [MARY BASSETT](#)

Program Director for Child Abuse Prevention  
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

The [Doris Duke Charitable Foundation](#) (DDCF) launched the [Child Abuse Prevention Program](#) ten years ago, in accordance with the desire expressed in Doris Duke's will, which requested that the foundation support efforts to "prevent cruel treatment of children." The decision to focus on child abuse prevention, as opposed to treatment, was made early, and grantmaking has never been directed to child welfare services or to the care of abused or neglected children. Over time, the foundation has become ever more convinced that the solution to child abuse lies with building stronger families in healthier communities to ensure positive early childhood experiences. Grantmaking has aimed to build a constituency for this perspective, an expanded array of evidence-based prevention strategies, and a robust pool of highly trained professionals committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. DDCF's current support for the [Fellowships for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect](#) reflects this interest in improving efforts to prevent maltreatment through the development and support of new scholars in the field.



We have been gratified to see substantial progress made in the field of prevention. In the last year, several past and current DDCF grantees have secured substantial support from recently allocated federal and state funding. Prevention funds often come under pressure when budgets are tight and even crucial direct services may face substantial cuts in funding. Despite this fact, the third year of a new \$1.5 billion funding stream for [maternal, infant and early childhood home visiting programs](#) was signed into law at the end of 2011. Award of these funds was highly competitive, and we were pleased that several current and former grantees -- a researcher conducting an evaluation of Chicago's [Child Parent Centers](#), [Erikson Institute's Fussy Baby Network](#), and [Nurse Family Partnership](#) - are now poised to deepen and expand their work broadly with these funds. Several other DDCF grantees have been instrumental in assisting program implementers to poise themselves to take advantage of these new state and federal funding opportunities.

Some DDCF-supported programs have expanded not through large funding inflows, but because their efforts resonate with those who work in prevention of child abuse and neglect. Perhaps the best example is the [Strengthening Families Program](#). Strengthening Families first began with a grant to the [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#) in 2002 to fund their work synthesizing important research findings around child abuse prevention into a cohesive strategy for programs. From this thorough and extensive review came the Strengthening Families framework, which focuses on resilience, rather than the more common emphasis on an inventory of risk. It's summarized in [five protective factors](#):

- \* Parental resilience
- \* Social connections
- \* Concrete support in times of need
- \* Knowledge of parenting and child development
- \* Social and emotional competence of children

This approach helps child welfare systems, and early education and other programs to work with parents to build these protective factors and create strong families to support child development. By 2008, the Strengthening Families framework was launched throughout a network of organizations that agreed to adopt this approach. Today, there are participant networks in 35 states. The foundation is pleased to be a part of the evolution of this work, from the research process, to the development of a program



approach, to the implementation of a national network energized by the shared vision of its members.

## Academic Mentor Spotlight

### Cassandra Simmel, Assistant Professor, Rutgers School of Social Work

by [KERRIE OCASIO](#)

*Kerrie interviewed her academic mentor about current work and reflections on the field.*



[Cassandra Simmel](#) (MSW, Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley) is an assistant professor at the [Rutgers University School of Social Work](#).

Dr. Simmel's current work has three primary emphases. First, pursuing her longstanding emphasis on child welfare adolescents and mental health issues, her current work seeks to: 1) dig deeper into differences by gender, ethnicity, and specific diagnoses; 2) look at nationwide trends; and 3) understand the needs of youth entering the foster care system. To accomplish this, she uses both primary and secondary data.

Secondly, Dr. Simmel is engaged in three primary data collection projects intended to provide critical information to New Jersey's child welfare system regarding services to parents and adolescents. One study is examining the implementation of family team meetings from the perspectives of child welfare workers and the families they serve. The second study is an evaluation of a program ([Project Myself](#)) that provides support to college-enrolled, former foster care youth. In addition, Dr. Simmel is advisor to Kerrie Ocasio, Ph.D. candidate, who is conducting a study of family resource and support centers for her dissertation. Dr. Simmel's philosophy in regard to these research projects is to bear in mind, as she states, "the real-world applicability to those projects in the field." Her approach is to "achieve scientifically rigorous and theoretically sound research, but balanced with the immediacy and usefulness of the results."

Lastly, Dr. Simmel has devoted considerable effort to building a partnership between the Rutgers School of Social Work and the [New Jersey Department of Children and Families](#) (DCF). In the past year, Dr. Simmel worked as a consultant for DCF in order to help DCF staff identify their research needs, build a research infrastructure within DCF, improve their use of administrative data in research projects, and develop a standardized means for DCF to partner with external researchers.

In considering the current climate and direction of child welfare research, Dr. Simmel commented, "What is really exciting about the field is the advent of rigorous data analytic tools and analyses that are being utilized with different child welfare problems." She noted that public-use datasets, such as the [National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being](#) (NSCAW), have helped facilitate this shift.

In addition, Dr. Simmel noted that partnerships with state and federal government being undertaken by various schools of social work and related research institutions are "facilitating opportunities for important research to occur that improves our scientific knowledge and has real and immediate applicability in the field." Further, she noted that there is an audience for this work. "I think there is an audience at the federal level for science," stated Dr. Simmel. "[Bryan Samuels](#) (Commissioner for the [Administration on Children, Youth, and Families](#)) is very eager to engage researchers in translational research, using research to inform policy."

Dr. Simmel returned to full-time faculty status in January, following her

term of service with DCF. She looks forward to nurturing the partnership that has been developed with DCF, resuming her responsibilities teaching child and family policy, and continuing to deepen the field's understanding of the particular needs of children and families and their experiences with service providers.

## Fellowship Event: Quarterly Webinar

### Nancy Guerra, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Delaware

by GENEVIEVE BENEDETTI  
Project Associate  
Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago



In December, as part of the Fellowship's quarterly webinar series, [Nancy Guerra](#) presented on the topic, "Preventing Children's Aggression: Effective Programs for Immigrant Latino Families." Dr. Guerra is a Professor in the [Department of Psychology at the University of Delaware](#) and serves as academic mentor to fellow Carly Dierkhising. Guerra studies children's aggression, behavioral problems of youth, and youth violence with a focus on prevention. She is particularly interested in the process of program implementation and the evaluation of evidence-based practice across culture and context. During her talk, she discussed the growing importance of translational research as a means to bridge science and practice in a world where research and statistical methodologies are becoming increasingly specialized and complex. She believes that science should answer questions that exist in the real world and prevention and intervention research are an important way to investigate these highly impactful social questions. Today, proving the efficacy and effectiveness of any social program is necessary for the program to survive, as it is impossible to secure funding without a foundation in evidence-based practice.

In her discussion, Dr. Guerra highlighted several program evaluations she conducted in Santa Ana in southern California for immigrant and Latino families. The first was an effectiveness trial that was a replication of [Families and Schools Together](#) (FAST). The study looked at how an existing evidence-based program could be taken to scale in a new community under different conditions. Dr. Guerra discussed the societal, community, and family challenges unique to the participants, and also the difficulties and complications with implementation and evaluation. She described the benefits of mixed methods research, and provided examples that illustrated how qualitative research components can help explain quantitative outcome measures and potential flaws in study design. The findings of the study indicated very few short-term or long-term impacts for children and parents related to aggression outcomes. However, parents and program workers spoke highly of their experiences, and qualitative interviews captured the ways in which participation positively influenced families. Dr. Guerra provided very important insights for young researchers dealing with findings without much power, and she speculated about factors contributing to the outcomes of the FAST program evaluation.

The second study was a randomized control trial undertaken with Latino families in Santa Ana to determine the effectiveness of a new program, Child Development Parent Training (CDPT). The program was created with the intention of training parents in a way that would address the specific needs of the Latino community including emphasis on parent-child interaction, child monitoring, and social support. Additionally, families were visited in the home by "promotores" or community health workers. More information about the program is featured [here](#) in a Bill Moyers special. Guerra and her colleagues are currently in the process of analyzing

the outcomes of the evaluation.

For further reading on the specific evaluations and more general information on the role of culture and context in developing evidence-based prevention programming, please check out the following papers:

[Guerra, Nancy G., Graham, Sandra and Tolan, Patrick H. \(2011\). Raising Healthy Children: Translating Child Development Research Into Practice. \*Child Development\*, 82: 7-16.](#)

[Knox, L., Guerra, Nancy G., Williams, Kirk R., Toro, Rosa I. \(2011\). "Preventing Children's Aggression in Immigrant Latino Families: A Mixed Methods Evaluation of the Families and Schools Together Program." \*American Journal of Community Psychology\* 48\(1\): 65.](#)

[Leidy, Melinda S., Guerra, Nancy G., Toro, Rosa I. \(2010\). Positive parenting, family cohesion, and child social competence among immigrant Latino families. \*Journal of Family Psychology\*, Vol 24\(3\), 252-260.](#)

## Policy Mentor Spotlight

**Beth Rosenberg**, Director of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice, Children's Action Alliance

by [JENNIFER MULLINS GEIGER](#)

*Jennifer interviewed her policy mentor about current work and reflections on the field.*

[Beth Rosenberg](#) is the Director of [Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice](#) at [Children's Action Alliance](#) (CAA) in Phoenix, Arizona, where she has been for over 14 years. Children's Action Alliance is a non profit, non partisan education, research, and multi-issue advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the well-being of children and families. Beth previously worked for the [Administration of Children, Youth, and Families at the Department of Economic Security in Arizona](#) and the [Arizona State Legislature](#). She participates in various state-level boards and committees that inform policies related to children and youth in the child welfare system and juvenile justice system. Beth is originally from Philadelphia and received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin, Madison and her Master of Social Work degree from the University of Pennsylvania.



When asked about recent activities in the field, Beth discusses the importance of advocacy in improving services to children and families. The Governor's [Child Safety Task Force](#), which just presented [100 recommendations](#) for change, was a result of attention to the number of children who have died due to child maltreatment in the past year, many with a history of prior reports to Child Protective Services (CPS). This is the fourth time that Beth has been involved in a major CPS Reform effort since coming to CAA. CAA advocacy efforts have been critical in shoring up support, and in many cases, leading the efforts to improve state laws in the past. However, the resources, staffing and quality of CPS interventions, and the need for broader prevention activities have never reached the level of need as promised by prior executive or legislative leaders. Plans are made, but unfortunately, resources always seem to fall short, crises take precedent over planned activities, and political leaders and direction change far too often. Additionally, Arizona was one of the states hit hardest by the economic downfall, and CPS services that were targeted to the safety, well-being, and permanency of children were severely cut. With the newest focus on CPS reform, community advocates and stakeholders stepped forward to present the successes and challenges facing CPS and the children and

families they serve.

Beth is pleased with several critical program advancements recognized by the Task Force that incorporate multi-disciplinary approaches. One such recognition is the effectiveness of child advocacy centers across the state. Advocacy centers support a multi-disciplinary approach by law enforcement, child protection professionals, prosecutors, victim advocates, forensic interviewers, medical professionals, and mental health providers who work together to intervene and investigate crimes against children. This shifts responsibility from the individual worker to multi-disciplinary team members working together to help children and improve outcomes. However, these centers are financially fragile and need ongoing support to continue the important work they do in child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention. The Task Force recognized the need to shore up multi-disciplinary programming, training and financial support. Beth stresses the importance in the field today of such programs that create a social network of supportive peers and professionals, increase the accessibility of resources, cultivate interdisciplinary collaboration, intervene appropriately, and disseminate information and awareness about child abuse and neglect to all members of our community.

As we move into 2012, Arizona and the rest of the country continue to struggle to meet the needs of children and families, and there is a critical, continuing need for legislative and political advocacy on their behalf. The next steps for the newest CPS reform efforts are the most important: leadership, implementation and resources. Without the resources to back up the policies, children are at increased risk for child abuse and neglect. Beth believes there needs to be more attention placed on prevention efforts as well as consistent interaction and collaboration among child welfare agencies to work together in promoting the well-being of children and families.

## Calendar of Fellowship Events

### National Summit on Quality in Home Visiting Programs

- **February 15 - 16, 2012**
- Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington D.C.
- Register and learn more [here](#).
- The purpose of the National Summit on Quality in Home Visiting Programs is to create a venue for the exchange of ideas to connect research with policy and practice. Building on the success of the first Summit, the 2012 Summit will offer a forum for home visiting researchers, program leaders, and policymakers to learn about the latest developments in the field and to strategize about how to ensure that home visiting investments are supporting evidence-based models backed by strong policies and embedded in early childhood systems.

### Fellowship Quarterly Webinar

#### Social Empathy Among Youth: Building a Socially and Civically Engaged Generation

- **March 5, 2012 from 2:30 to 4 p.m. CST.**
- *Presenter:* Dr. Elizabeth Segal, Professor of Social Work, Arizona State University (Academic mentor to Jennifer Mullins Geiger).
- *Webinar topic description:* Empathy is an attribute we value highly -- it is considered a key building block to prosocial behavior. Development of empathic abilities, when applied to the larger social context, can lead to social empathy. Social empathy is the ability to perceive or experience people's life situations, and thus gain insight into structural inequalities and disparities. Greater understanding can lead to social change efforts. Thus, development of social empathy among youth can increase their social and civic engagement. This webinar will explore the concepts of social empathy and youth civic engagement, and share findings from a recent survey of college youth regarding their levels of individual



- empathy and the possible links to social empathy.
- Registration information for the webinar will be available soon.

### **18th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect**

- **April 16 - 20, 2012**
- Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington D.C.
- Register and learn more [here](#).
- **Workshop on the Doris Duke Fellowships for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect:**
  - **Wednesday, April 18, 2 - 3:30 p.m.**
  - *Chapin Hall Presenters:* Deborah Daro, Lee Ann Huang
  - *Fellow Presenters:* [Bart Klika](#), [Katie Maguire-Jack](#), [Kerri Raissian](#)
- **Doris Duke Fellowships Reception:**
  - **Wednesday, April 18, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**
  - Chapin Hall and the Doris Duke Fellowships for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect will be hosting a reception for fellows, mentors, Chapin Hall and Doris Duke staff, and special invited guests. We hope many of you are planning to attend the conference and will join us for refreshments and great networking opportunities.
- **Keynote Town Hall Event with Deborah Daro**
  - **Thursday, April 19, 9:00 - 10:30 a.m.**
  - Plenary III, Keynote Townhall Event
  - *Keynote speakers:* Deborah Daro, Lucille Echohawk, Eliana Gil, John Myers
  - *Moderator:* Kojo Nnamdi

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