

Doris Duke Fellowships

for the Promotion of Child Well-Being

Seeking innovations to prevent child abuse and neglect

A Quarterly Publication

Volume II, Issue I, February 2013

In this Issue

[Fellowship News and Events](#)

[Notes from Deb](#)

[Guest Writer: Rachel Johnston](#)

[Featured Fellow: Kate Daderko](#)

[Featured Fellow: Kerri Raissian](#)

[Academic Mentor: Lawrence Palinkas](#)

[Policy Mentor: Frank Putnam](#)

[Calendar of Fellowship Events](#)

Quick Links

[Doris Duke Fellowships for the Promotion of Child Well-Being](#)

[Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago](#)

[Doris Duke Charitable Foundation](#)

In light of the tragedy in Newtown, CT and the many other headlines in the news about youth and violence over the last year, the theme of the winter newsletter is "Violence Prevention and Child Well-Being: An interdisciplinary perspective." Fellows reflect on their own work on this topic, interview their mentors, and share their conversations on the theme. Additionally, we are delighted to feature guest writer Rachel Johnston, director of the VISA Project at Chapin Hall.

Fellowship News and Events

Doris Duke Fellowships Meeting at the University of Washington in St. Louis

- March 13-15, 2013
- Washington University, St. Louis, MO
- We are excited to offer the fellows this additional time to meet in person, collaborate on joint projects, and receive additional training.
- The agenda for the meeting has been finalized and is available to the fellows on Ning along with information about hotel accommodations.
- We are very grateful for the generous support of the meeting sponsors from Washington University in St. Louis, including the Brown School Policy Forum and the WashU Center for Violence and Injury Prevention.

Cohort Three selection process underway

- Our national advisory board is hard at work reviewing the outstanding applications we received for Cohort Three. We will announce the next group of Doris Duke Fellows in early April.

Fellowship Dinner at SSWR conference

- The second annual dinner at the SSWR conference hosted by Chapin Hall was again a huge success! Thanks to all fellows and mentors who attended.

Notes from Deb

by **DEBORAH DARO, Ph.D.**
Senior Research Fellow
Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

We are all saddened by the recent events in Newtown, CT, where the violent deaths of 20 children have sparked outrage, mourning, and questioning across the country. We are searching for answers and unfortunately-as those of us who study children, families, and communities know-there is no simple or single answer to complex issues like the interrelated nature of violence and child well-being. This tragedy should serve as a reminder, however, that the research we are engaged in is critically important and every well-done study can contribute to preventing violence in the future. There are many vital questions we must answer through our research. What are the causes and remedies for children and adolescents who struggle to make social connections with their peers? How can we meet the mental health needs of all children? Does the availability of guns influence individuals' decision making? Which protective factors help individuals to choose peaceful means to resolve conflict? And finally, how does the broader culture affect our willingness to consider nonviolent remedies to adversity in our society?



The Doris Duke Fellows are engaged in work that will improve our understanding of a diverse array of factors affecting children and families. They are making new connections with their peers, establishing new collaborations across disciplines, and learning from veterans of the field. It is my hope that through this fellowship they will increase their understanding of how to conduct high quality research and become more adept at communicating important research findings to those who work directly with families and those charged with developing policies that will reduce violence and improve the lives of children. As we move forward to tackle the interrelated issues of violence and child well-being, the role of research in informing policy and practice cannot be overemphasized.

The VISA Project: A Collaborative Effort to Improve Violence Prevention Services

by **RACHEL JOHNSTON, Ph.D.**
Director, Violence Inquest for Solutions and Alliance (VISA)
Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

Violence tends to disproportionately involve young people. In Chicago, from 2007 through April 2012, 57% of all murder victims killed with a gun were between the ages of 15 and 26 years old. During the same time period, the most common age of a murder offender who used a gun was 19; for those who did not use a gun, the age was 18.



There are many publicly- and privately-funded violence prevention projects in Chicago, but public agencies do not always provide seamless or even well-coordinated services to intended recipients. An individual may have repeated contacts with multiple public agencies, but it is unlikely that the care or services that person receives are coordinated in a manner that would best support them.

Furthermore, the violence prevention development process is focused on the overall size of the problem. In a large city like Chicago, with high rates of violence, it is difficult to systemically examine single violent incidents and the individuals involved in order to learn how to best focus collaborative efforts.

The VISA project (Violence Inquest for Solutions and Alliances) is built on the understanding that there are numerous opportunities to improve services and support better outcomes for the most vulnerable individuals through enhanced coordination and collaboration. This is done in a number of ways, but central to the process are "shooting reviews," where practitioners and policymakers from multiple local, state, and federal agencies conduct in-depth reviews of fatal and nonfatal shooting incidents. By bringing agencies together to discuss specific incidents of violence, VISA creates a regular forum to foster cooperative efforts to improve service delivery to at-risk youth. We hope that this work will positively impact violence prevention efforts that extend beyond the scope of the project.

Featured Fellow

Kate Daderko

School of Education

University of Washington, Seattle

by KERRI RAISSIAN

Kate & Kerri interviewed one another about the theme of violence prevention and child well-being and its connection to their own academic and professional work.

Prior to beginning her dissertation work, Kate worked as a substitute child care worker at Childhaven. Childhaven seeks to transmit a range of supports and skills to children who have been or are at risk of maltreatment. Kate's dissertation asks how children who attend Childhaven (and receive therapeutic care) perform academically and socially during their kindergarten year. Encouraging preliminary data suggest that Childhaven graduates who are currently enrolled in kindergarten have levels of academic achievement similar to their peers. Her dissertation aims to identify the common factors that promote academic and social emotional readiness, so that these early interventions can be refined and duplicated in future programs.



As a graduate research assistant, Kate works in a local elementary school that provides tiered levels of behavior support. Using a universal screening tool, she helps to evaluate all children for internalizing (e.g., anxiety) and externalizing (e.g., aggression) behaviors that may inhibit their success in school. If the screening reveals a problem, students are provided with more individualized and increasingly intensive services, such as mentor-based supports. This type of multi-tiered system of support may help children to develop coping strategies that will allow them to succeed in school and prevent future aggressive behaviors.

Kate discussed that children may be exposed to different types of trauma for variant lengths of time. For example, children may witness a horrific, but rare, event like the school shooting at Sandy Hook or they may witness more prolonged trauma such as ongoing neighborhood violence. In either case, a universal screening tool will help practitioners to identify children who are in need of more individualized behavior support.

Kate will be continuing her research with graduates of Childhaven through the end of this school year and will be starting her predoctoral internship this summer.

Featured Fellow

Kerri Raissian

The Maxwell School of Public Administration and International Affairs
Syracuse University

by KATE DADERKO

Kerri's interest in child and family abuse stems from working as a victim advocate for adult and child victims of family violence. Following this experience, Kerri chose to focus her dissertation on rigorous policy evaluation to better understand the effects of laws targeted at vulnerable families. For her dissertation, Kerri is writing three papers revolving around understanding and improving the public policies addressing family violence. One of these papers investigated whether the 1996 federal Gun Control Act (GCA) expansion (which bans people convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors from possessing a firearm) reduced familial homicides. Since the expansion was unevenly implemented across the 50 states from 1996 to 2008, Kerri was able to evaluate whether the law had an effect on reducing the number of familial homicides.



Kerri found that the GCA expansion led to a significant decline in familial homicides, with no increase in non-gun homicides. Specifically, there was a 12 percent decrease in female intimate partner gun homicides (when women are killed by a male partner), 34 percent fewer male domestic child gun homicides (when male children are killed by a parent), and a 26 percent decrease in parent and sibling gun homicides (when children kill a parent or siblings kill each other). Male intimate partner homicide numbers did not change (men killed by a female partner).

The results of Kerri's study show that despite enforcement limitations, federal gun control can work in reducing familial violence. Kerri believes that it is important to realize that the family is a unique institution and cautions against generalizing this finding to other people prohibited from owning a firearm by the GCA (e.g., felons, people with mental illness). However, she does believe that her findings point to a role for the federal government in gun control.

Kerri will continue her research on family violence and child maltreatment at the University of Connecticut, where she accepted a position as an assistant professor in the Department of Public Policy.

Academic Mentor Spotlight

Lawrence Palinkas, Ph.D.

Albert G. and Frances Lomas Feldman Professor of Social Policy and Health

Director, Behavioral Health Research Cluster
University of Southern California

by MEGAN FINNO VELASQUEZ

Dr. Lawrence Palinkas is a medical anthropologist with expertise in preventive medicine, cross-cultural medicine, and health services research. He has been involved in several projects on violence prevention and the behavioral health of children and adolescents. Recently, his research has focused on the dissemination and implementation of evidence-based practices for delivery of mental health services to children and adolescents.



In 2001, Dr. Palinkas was involved with a CDC-funded violence prevention center in his hometown of San Diego when he was approached by a community in the area to conduct research to develop a plan to prevent school violence after a fatal school shooting occurred there. Nearly twelve years later, Dr. Palinkas says that the questions his community wanted answered are the same as those asked after the recent shooting in Newtown: "Why did this happen, and what can we do to prevent it from happening again?"

Dr. Palinkas stresses that an effective approach to violence prevention occurs simultaneously at multiple levels—individual, family, community, and society. In his 2001 study in San Diego, he found that interventions for individuals and families needed to be adapted and strengthened in order to treat mental health issues and prevent violence. An example of one such intervention is a community-based education program that orients people to the importance of speaking up when witnessing behavior that could lead to violence.

Finally, at the national level, he reported that efforts should focus on restricting access to guns and adequately funding mental health service delivery.

Policy Mentor Spotlight

Frank Putnam, M.D.

Professor of Psychiatry
University of North Carolina

by BROOKS KEESHIN

In the wake of the violent tragedies that have filled the news, Dr. Putnam reflected on what he has witnessed about the intersection between child maltreatment and future exposure to violence.

Individuals who experience an act of violence or sexual aggression frequently are revictimized by their original or subsequent partners. Dr. Putnam recalled an early clinical experience while he was a psychiatrist for a local rape crisis center. He noted some women repeatedly coming to the clinic with multiple injuries due to repeated rapes. Looking at common symptoms experienced by the survivors, he suspected that both dissociation as well as a failure to recognize danger cues might be involved. "The victims were not accurately assessing risk," he noted, adding that this fact was leading to increased violence exposure.



Dr. Putnam believes that in some cases, child maltreatment also can impact the way child survivors assess their surroundings and judge the level of danger in ways that differ from their non-abused peers. Dr.

Putnam says that "some victims may know what a certain cue means, but can't activate an appropriate response." In doing his research, he found there isn't a simple factor to explain the disconnect. While dissociative behaviors are a mediator, they are not the sole symptom that connects the history of abuse with the risk for future violence.

Dr. Putnam believes that we need to recognize that children who come into a child advocacy center are at higher risk for re-victimization as well as other forms of traumatic life experiences. To change this, Dr. Putnam says, "We should be thinking about a brief intervention to protect against re-victimization. We need to see the risk, identify issues around perception of risk, and intervene to address this cognitively. With ACEs (adverse childhood experiences), we know that trauma is cumulative, and anything we can do to reduce future trauma is preventative."

Calendar of Events

Fellowship Events

Doris Duke Fellowships Meeting at the University of Washington in St. Louis

- March 13-15, 2013
- Washington University, St. Louis, MO

Conferences

2013 National Summit on Quality in Home Visiting Programs

- February 13-14, 2013
- Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington D.C.
- Register and learn more [here](#)

Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE)

- March 7-9, 2013
- The Fairmont and the Park Hyatt, Washington D.C.
- Register and learn more [here](#)

Council on Contemporary Families (CCF)

- April 5-6, 2013
- University of Miami Newman Alumni Center, Coral Gables, FL
- Register and learn more [here](#)

Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)

- April 18-20, 2013
- Washington State Convention Center and Sheraton Seattle Hotel, Seattle, WA
- Register and learn more [here](#)

Society for Prevention Research (SPR)

- May 28-31, 2013
- Hyatt Regency, San Francisco, CA
- Register and learn more [here](#)

American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC)

- June 25-28, 2013
- Caesar's Palace Hotel, Las Vegas, NV
- The fellowship will be hosting a breakfast for doctoral students on June 27-- more information coming soon
- Register and learn more [here](#)

ChapinHall
at the University of Chicago



D O R I S D U K E
C H A R I T A B L E F O U N D A T I O N