LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS

It is hard to believe that two years have gone by since the launch of Project 2Gen. Even more amazing are the incredible partnerships that we have been so fortunate to engage in during that time. In launching Project 2Gen, our goal was to foster a vibrant community of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers working to empower children and caregivers across New York State and beyond. By taking a holistic, family-based approach, we can better inform and develop policies and programs that enhance the lives of children, their families, and their communities.

The framework of translational research is essential to what we do. This means building and enhancing reciprocal relationships between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. Just as policy and practice can benefit from research insights, so, too, is research enhanced by a strong collaboration with those working on the ground in our local, state, and national communities.

Over the past two years, Project 2Gen has grown, building collaborations locally, statewide, and nationally. In our local community, we work with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County (cce-Tompkins), the family court system, and the William George Agency, among others. At the state level, our faculty and students travel to Albany to discuss how Cornell research can address pressing policy issues. Nationally, we work with the nationwide Cooperative Extension system to share approaches and resources for combating the opioid epidemic.

We are incredibly grateful for support from the William T. Grant Foundation and are honored to have been awarded the Foundation’s first Institutional Challenge Grant. This grant supports our research collaboration with cce-Tompkins around the opioid crisis, and more broadly supports new approaches to research and community engagement that serve as a model for Cornell.

Going forward, we are excited to adapt our work in the local community to be responsive to our current public health crisis, to extend our model of community-based partnerships to others, and to continue to involve both graduate and undergraduate students in our work. Thank you so much for being part of our work!

Rachel Dunifon
Director
Laura Tach
Director
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Overview

Cornell Project 2Gen is an initiative led by Rachel Dunifon and Laura Tach that seeks to create an interdisciplinary hub for research, policy, and practice to better support families throughout New York and beyond. Our work adopts the 2Gen framework, an approach that focuses on building family well-being by intentionally and simultaneously working with children and the adults in their lives together. We consider how broader contexts, such as educational and employment systems, the social environment, and policy and practice, can enhance family well-being.

GOALS

Research
Build a vibrant research community of scholars to better understand how services and policies affect the entire family system.

Practice
Connect researchers and practitioners using the 2Gen framework.

Policy
Strengthen and develop synergistic relationships between Cornell faculty and students and New York policymakers.

Student Training
Involve Cornell students in 2Gen research, policy, and practice.
Laura Tach
Director
Laura is an associate professor of policy analysis and management. Her research examines the effects of economic inequality for families and communities and how public policy can disrupt the transmission of inequality across generations.

Rachel Dunifon
Director
Rachel is a social policy expert who researches child and family policy with a focus on factors influencing the development of less advantaged children.

Elizabeth Day
Assistant Director for Policy Engagement
Elizabeth has training in human development and family studies and expertise in the use of research by policymakers.

Francesca Vescia
Research and Program Assistant
Francesca has a background in sociology and data science. Her research interests include inequality, family, health, and their many intersections.

Kimberly Kopko
Parenting & Extension Liaison
Kimberly is a developmental psychologist who studies parenting and family processes. Her research and outreach efforts focus on parenting in various contexts and the use of research- and evidence-based parenting programs to strengthen families.

Adam Hughes
Opioid & Extension Liaison
Adam is a state extension specialist for Cornell University. Adam has applied his background in public health to various administrative and policy settings with a particular focus on health disparities and social determinants of health.

Mary Beth Morrissey
Graduate Research Assistant
Mary Beth is a Sociology PhD student with interests in gender, emotion, inequality, family, and qualitative methods.

Erin Mathios
Graduate Research Assistant
Erin is an MPH student with a background in human development and health policy. Her research interests include the impact of family, health, and education policy on families and children, with a particular focus on the opioid epidemic.
The Launch of Project 2Gen

DISRUPTING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY:
Two-Generation Approaches from Research, Practice, and Policy

In October 2017, we celebrated the launch of Cornell Project 2Gen with a panel discussion among noted scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. “Disrupting the Cycle of Poverty: Two-Generation Approaches from Research, Practice, and Policy” brought professors Lindsay Chase-Lansdale (Northwestern University) and Lisa Gennetian (New York University), Ascend at the Aspen Institute Assistant Director Lori Severens, and Ithaca mayor Svante Myrick together to discuss the importance of 2Gen approaches to supporting families. You can read more about the event in the Cornell Chronicle.
Lori Severens

Lori Severens, Assistant Director for Leadership and Design with Ascend at the Aspen Institute, described how a 2Gen approach promotes equity by working with parents to clarify and meet their family's needs, together. Severens praised the framework for “div[ing] down below the stereotypes that we all hold, in some form or another, about what it means to be family and what it means to disrupt the cycle of poverty.”

Svante Myrick

Ithaca mayor Svante Myrick drew from his childhood experiences of poverty and homelessness to assert that a 2Gen approach to promoting mobility is “spot on.” Myrick described the City’s efforts to disrupt poverty through housing, transportation, and skills development. He thanked practitioners and researchers for supporting families and for proving that investing in children and parents “is not only the big-hearted thing to do, but the hard-headed thing to do.”

Lisa Gennetian

Economist Lisa Gennetian of New York University's Institute for Human Development and Social Change offered a behavioral perspective on enriching 2Gen program approaches. Behavioral economics, Gennetian argued, helps us understand how poverty constrains parents’ attention. It also gives us levers to help free up parents’ attention, empowering them to take greater advantage of 2Gen services and to become more effective change makers in their family's lives.

Lindsay Chase-Lansdale

Northwestern developmental psychologist Lindsay Chase-Lansdale shared preliminary findings on the benefits of a 2Gen human capital-building approach for families involved in the Head Start program. One-year parent outcomes were promising, but Chase-Lansdale stressed the need for further research evaluating long-term outcomes for parents and children. She expressed optimism that 2Gen research, practice, and policy will help clarify what works for families and how model programs can be scaled up.
Project 2Gen conducts qualitative and quantitative research and supports faculty interested in using a 2Gen approach in their own work. We also facilitate faculty connections with relevant community partners and provide outlets for sharing research with policymakers and practitioners at local, state, and national levels.

PROJECTS

In Fall 2017, Cornell Project 2Gen funded six faculty research projects relevant to advancing 2Gen work supporting families in New York. We worked with the grantees over the course of the year to facilitate connections with relevant community partners and provide outlets for sharing their research with policymakers and practitioners. In addition to producing research briefs, faculty presented at a number of conferences including a research briefing to New York legislators and staff at the State Capitol, the Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium in Washington DC, and a School Anxiety and Avoidance Summit in Tompkins County.

The Opioid Epidemic and Child Maltreatment: Two Generations at Risk

Maria Fitzpatrick, Elizabeth Day, and Laura Tach (Policy Analysis and Management; Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research)

Investigates whether the opioid epidemic has caused an increase in child maltreatment in rural communities nationally and in upstate NY. Also investigates whether rates of drug-related maltreatment decline following the introduction of initiatives that reduce the availability of opioids or provide drug treatment services.
Creating Family Learning Partnerships to Promote Early Learning

*Marianella Casasola (Human Development)*

Investigates how parents understand their role in their children’s cognitive development. Creates, implements, and evaluates parent-training workshops via existing community partnerships to enhance the role of parents in their children’s cognitive development.

School Engagement & Avoidance among Criminal Justice-Involved Families with School-Aged Children

*Anna Haskins (Sociology)*

Explores why parental engagement in schools declines following the incarceration of a parent using qualitative interviews with criminal-justice involved families, teachers, and school administrators in upstate NY counties. Seeks to understand how parents experience their children’s schools as surveilling institutions and how teachers/administrators interact with criminal-justice involved families.

Left Behind: Deportations, Child Welfare, and Foster Care Placements

*Matt Hall and Frank Edwards (Policy Analysis and Management; Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research)*

Assesses the link between the deportation of immigrant parents and their children’s exposure to the child welfare system using administrative data combined with the adoption of local policies that enabled deportation.

Child Support Debt and Father-Child Relationships

*Maureen Waller (Policy Analysis and Management)*

Examines how child support arrears policies affect fathers’ debt burdens and involvement with their children. Combines quantitative analysis of state child support enforcement systems and national survey data with qualitative interviews with NY fathers to explain how child support policies shapes fathers’ involvement.

Capacity for Two-Generation Care in Rural Communities: Implications of Educational Policy and Community Characteristics on Head Start Program Trends

*John Sipple, Lisa McCabe, and Hope Casto (Development Sociology; Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research)*

Examines the effects of NY state-funded pre-K rollout on Head Start enrollment and how this rollout has been experienced across different communities, particularly in rural areas.
Practice

Cornell Project 2Gen works to strengthen and develop relationships between Cornell faculty and students, community organizations, and Cornell Cooperative Extension educators. We work with existing programs interested in incorporating a 2Gen approach, or enhancing their 2Gen work, by sharing evidence-based research and connecting them with faculty whose expertise supports this work.

PROJECTS

Cornell Cooperative Extension

The Cornell Cooperative Extension (cce) system brings together campus and communities to promote well-being for New York residents. With offices in every county and each of New York City’s boroughs, Extension helps translate Cornell research into community programming and ensures that community priorities inform the University’s research agenda.

In 2017 and 2018, the Project 2Gen team presented at the cce Parent Educator, Youth Development Educator, and Financial Literacy Educators in-services. Presentations included hosting a Community Café to explore the challenges counties are facing amidst the opioid epidemic and the resources needed to support community members. The responses from cce offices have helped to continually inform our team’s research focus and outreach efforts.
CCE Tompkins County

Through our partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension Tompkins County (ccee-Tompkins), we evaluated data from seven sessions of the Strengthening Families Program (SFP), an evidence-based, whole-family parent education program that focuses on parenting skills, children's life skills, and family life skills. After entering, cleaning, and analyzing the data, our team produced a report summarizing the findings that families participating in SFP experienced positive changes in parent communication, parental efficacy, family organization, family conflict, discipline, parental warmth, and the amount of quality time spent with children. The report was circulated to key stakeholders at the ccee-Tompkins office and the Tompkins County Department of Social Services.

CCE Orange County

Our team has partnered with the Orange County ccee office to support their work raising awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), preventing exposure to toxic stress, and increasing resilience among children and families. In Fall 2019, Cornell undergraduates had the opportunity to research best practices and cutting-edge work on ACE prevention happening around the country and share their findings with members of the Orange County Resilience Project.

Tompkins County Department of Social Services

Through an ongoing partnership with the Tompkins County Department of Social Services (DSS), Project 2Gen has provided technical support for data entry, cleaning, and analysis since 2018. The 2Gen team has worked closely with the DSS Associate Commissioner to analyze data to understand which programs are associated with beneficial outcomes for families involved in the child welfare system.

William George Agency

In Summer 2018, Project 2Gen Scholar Pearlanna Zapotocky had the opportunity to work with the William George Agency (WGA), an organization providing therapeutic, clinical, and medical care to at-risk youth in a residential treatment setting. Pearlanna conducted 22 interviews with family service coordinators and cottage directors at WGA to identify approaches for effectively engaging families. She developed a parent engagement handbook for the WGA Director of Operations and has submitted a peer-reviewed manuscript to disseminate her findings.

My Brother’s Keeper Ithaca

As part of the Project 2Gen Summer Scholars program, Amy Kim had the opportunity to work with My Brother’s Keeper Ithaca, an organization dedicated to building opportunities for children of color in Tompkins County. Through an extensive literature review and an interview with Dr. Luvelle Brown, Superintendent of the Ithaca City School District, Amy helped to research the impact of local policies, including the Free-Range Parenting policy and the Vaccination Exemption policy, on children of color.

Tompkins County Family Treatment Court

The 2Gen team has worked closely with Family Treatment Court (FTC) Judge John Rowley and FTC Coordinator Mindy Thomas to strengthen programs and supports for families struggling with substance use disorders. FTCSs are a rapidly-growing, innovative approach to supporting families disrupted by substance use – simultaneously aiming to reduce parents’ substance use and promote child well-being. The Tompkins County FTC is a nationally-recognized peer learning court and involves collaborations among the courts, the Department of Social Services, local treatment programs, mental health services, and Cooperative Extension educators. As part of this ongoing collaboration, the 2Gen team has conducted in-depth interviews to learn about parents’ experiences with the court.
Among Project 2Gen’s diverse efforts, one area of focus is a commitment to understanding and improving the experiences of families affected by opioid use. This project launched in 2018 through the support of the William T. Grant Foundation’s inaugural Institutional Challenge Grant, which promotes increased capacity for research in community organizations and increased consideration of practice in the research process.

CCE COLLABORATORS

Adam Hughes  Anna Steinkraus  Juliana Garcia  Rose Ippolito

In 2018 and early 2019, Project 2Gen and cce-Tompkins co-hosted a series of Community Café forums on the opioid epidemic. The goal of the Community Café model is to provide a safe space for stakeholders to share ideas, challenges, and innovations in their work. In Tompkins County, cafés brought together key stakeholders to discuss local impacts of and responses to the epidemic, unmet needs of families affected by opioid use, and opportunities for research-practice collaborations to enhance family well-being.

Beyond Tompkins County, the Opioid and Family Life Team supported trainings for Cooperative Extension Executive Directors and Educators. These trainings, lead by Adam Hughes in Albany and Syracuse, provided basic information on the opioid epidemic, as well as promising strategies for supporting families. The Opioid and Family Life Team also helped to form the Opioid Program Work Team, which brings together Extension Educators across the state on monthly conference calls to share research on the opioid epidemic and provide resources for Educators to share with local stakeholders.

Research projects are also a key piece of the Opioid and Family Life Project. For example, Project 2Gen is conducting a scoping review of the empirical literature on the consequences of opioid use for child outcomes. The team is also creating a complementary review identifying evidence-based parenting programs that support families facing substance use. The database will be a resource for Extension Educators working across the United States to support families facing opioid use and other challenges.

Additionally, the Opioid and Family Life Team conducts applied research in partnership with the Tompkins County Family Treatment Court (FTC). Family Treatment Courts are a rapidly-growing, innovative approach to supporting families disrupted by substance use—simultaneously aiming to reduce parents’ substance use and promote child well-being. The Tompkins County FTC is a nationally-recognized peer learning court and involves collaborations among the courts, the Department of Social Services, local treatment programs, mental health services, and Cooperative Extension Educators. Research efforts include qualitative interviews with FTC parents and quantitative analysis of Department of Social Services data on long-term child welfare outcomes.

As part of the FTC process, families with children age 6-11 take part in the Strengthening Families Program (SFP), administered by cce-Tompkins. In addition to studying
FTC broadly, our research practice partnership also focuses on studying the benefits of SPP for families involved in FTC, as well as developing additional programming to address the unique needs of court-involved families. Through a 2019 summer internship with Cornell Cooperative Extension, Rose Ippolito surveyed CCE county offices across the state to learn about their unique needs, strengths, and challenges related to the opioid epidemic. Using the survey responses, Rose connected CCE staff with faculty members and developed research briefs based on Educators’ needs and interests. Through these efforts, Rose is helping to establish a more formal network between campus and county offices so that resources and best practices can be shared.
Policy

Cornell Project 2Gen works to develop and strengthen relationships among Cornell faculty, students, and New York policymakers. We provide outlets for sharing research with policymakers and are developing new strategic partnerships between researchers and policymakers to help inform the decision-making process.

FAMILY IMPACT SEMINARS

The Family Impact Seminar model, developed by Karen Bogenschneider at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is a model for bridging research and policy at the state level. The goal of the seminars is to provide policymakers the chance to discuss policy-relevant research in a non-partisan setting with leading experts in the field. Each spring, Project 2Gen leads a graduate-level course in which Cornell students learn about the Family Impact Seminar model and support faculty as they prepare to speak with state legislators. The topical focus of each seminar changes yearly based on legislative needs and research requests. Each day-long event consists of a large-group panel presentation by Cornell faculty in the morning followed by one-on-one meetings with legislators and their staff in the afternoon.
April 2018—Supporting Vulnerable New York Families

For our inaugural seminar, Cornell faculty and students traveled to Albany to speak with legislators and their staff about ways to support New York Families. Presentations included: The Opioid Epidemic: Two Generations at Risk by Laura Tach (Director of Project 2Gen and Associate Professor of Policy Analysis and Management), Childcare Deserts in New York: Factors Related to Community Capacity to Care for Children by Lisa McCabe (Research Associate at Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research), and Making Medicaid Better for Vulnerable Families in New York by Jamila Michener (Assistant Professor in the Government Department).

April 2019—Criminal Justice and New York Families: Policy Perspectives

In the second year of our event, faculty and students presented information to legislators and their staff on the 2Gen approach to criminal justice policy. Presentations included: Paternal Incarceration and Child Well-being by Christopher Wildeman (Director of the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research and Professor of Policy Analysis and Management), and The Multigenerational Possibilities of Prison Education by Jamila Michener (Assistant Professor in the Government Department).
Events

Project 2Gen hosts and participates in events that bring researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and community members together to exchange knowledge and share experiences. These conversations help inform wide-ranging efforts to promote child and family well-being.

CCE Educator In-Services

Project 2Gen has presented at a variety of CCE educator in-services, including parent education, youth development, and financial security. These in-services bring educators from across the state to campus to connect with researchers.

Project 2Gen is a regular participant at The Parenting Project’s annual Parent Educator in-services. In 2018 and 2019, we presented updates about our work on behalf of families impacted by the opioid crisis and led a Community Café with educators to help identify their community’s most pressing needs.

In 2018, Project 2Gen was invited to present at the Eighth Annual Youth Development Research Update. At this event, we provided 4-H Educators with information on cross-generational approaches to youth development.

NYS Agency Learning Exchange

In Spring 2019, the Project 2Gen team was invited to participate in a learning exchange spearheaded by the NYS Offices of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and Temporary and Disability Assistance (ODTA). This was the first event of its kind, with the goal of actively bringing together agency staff and officials from both offices to collaborate on efforts to support housing options for homeless youth and young adults. As part of the program, OCFS and ODTA leadership requested we lead efforts to educate staff on the 2Gen approach and 2Gen perspectives related to housing and homelessness.

Community Cafés

Cornell Project 2Gen and CCE-Tompkins have partnered together, through the support of the William T. Grant Foundation, to examine the association between the opioid epidemic and child maltreatment rates in low-income, rural communities. A series of Community Cafés brought diverse constituents together to share insights about supporting families impacted by substance use.
Sixth Biennial Urie Bronfenbrenner Conference

Project 2Gen co-directors Rachel Dunifon and Laura Tach organized the sixth biennial Urie Bronfenbrenner Conference, “An Equal Start: Policy and Practice to Promote Equality of Opportunity for Children.” The conference brought together scholars from more than a dozen institutions and programs to cultivate interdisciplinary perspectives and consider micro-, meso- and macro-level interventions for giving children an equal start in life. Papers from the conference are published in *Confronting Inequality: How Policies and Practices Shape Children’s Opportunities*, edited by Dunifon, Tach, and Douglas Miller, Associate Chair and Professor in Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell. You can read more about the event in the Cornell Chronicle.

*ABOVE: Darrick Hamilton of The New School for Social Research presenting at the Bronfenbrenner Conference.*

*BOTH: Scholars (front row, left to right) Jens Ludwig, Stephanie DeLuca, Janet Curie, Laura Tach, Darrick Hamilton, Ariel Kalil, Cybele Raver, Rachel Dunifon, Anna Rhodes, Allison Young, Chloe East; (back row, left to right) Kirabo Jackson, Timothy Nelson, Tyler Watts, Gary Evans, Douglas Miller, Sean Reardon, and Marianne Page gathered for the Bronfenbrenner Conference.*
2Gen Scholars

Project 2Gen involves Cornell students in translational research and practice through the 2Gen Scholars Program. The program gives undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to gain on-the-ground experience with family-based research and programming.

PROJECTS

Engaging CCE in the 2Gen Approach
In Summer 2017, 2Gen Scholar Sharon Glick created and launched a statewide survey of CCE offices and their 2Gen efforts. Many counties across the state were actively engaging caregivers and children in 2Gen programming, but were not closely connected with researchers and other practitioners doing this work. Through this survey, Sharon was able to identify key needs for better supporting 2Gen efforts across a range of counties and a variety of CCE programming. This survey was Project 2Gen’s first project to formally engage practitioners for their expertise in working with families and educate practitioners in the 2Gen framework.

Supporting Youth In Tompkins County
In Summer 2018, 2Gen Scholars Pearlanna Zapotocky and Amy Kim were paired with community partners in Tompkins County, including the William George Agency and My Brother’s Keeper Ithaca. Scholars worked with these partners to identify community and program needs, synthesize relevant literature to inform programming, and review current and proposed 2Gen policies with implications for youth and families being served by the organizations.

Documenting Family Treatment Courts
During the 2019 Spring semester, Muyang Li had the opportunity to research family treatment court programs in New York State. The goal of the project was to identify the number of counties with operational family treatment courts and obtain a better understanding of the number of families served by these programs. Out of New York State’s 61 counties, Muyang identified 18 counties with an active family treatment court and 13 counties with a discontinued family treatment court.

Promoting Resilience
During the Fall 2019 semester, 2Gen Scholars partnered with CCE Orange County to help address childhood trauma. Students read and synthesized the latest research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and spoke with community stakeholders. Based on their findings, they provided Orange County with recommendations for better evaluating existing efforts to increase ACE awareness and cultivate community resilience. Scholars also suggested ways the County can equip health care providers to offer more support to children experiencing trauma.
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