Harnessing High Tech to Capture Kids and Communities in Context

By Suzanne Valdivia

With a palpable sense of enthusiasm and a warm smile, the latest faculty member to join the Center, Associate Director Candice Odgers, gives you the sense right away that she is accessible. So it is not surprising when she explains that one of the key aspects of two research projects she is spearheading involves innovating and collaborating for better data accessibility. Odgers and her team are using technology in ways that are relatively new to social science research and linking up with partners ranging from Google engineers to Verizon project managers to London police in order to build a fuller picture of the context in which the children and adolescents in their studies are growing up.

Through their partnership with Google, Odgers and her researchers are using the application Google Street View to take a virtual walk down London streets and record both positive and negative features of local neighborhoods that are believed to influence children’s health. They are then linking this information to an already comprehensive array of data gathered on families in the Environmental Risk (E-Risk) Longitudinal Study, directed by Center fellows Avshalom Caspi and Terrie Moffitt, to create a “genes-2-geography” map of the factors that may influence children’s life outcomes.

Charting her own course

Odgers grew up in a remote village in Canada and has also lived in England and the United States. Through her travels, she has been immersed in different cultures, developing an appreciation of cultural and geographic inputs that helped foster a spirit of adventure.

While working one summer to organize a NATO advanced research workshop in Poland, Odgers recounts how an American professor (her soon-to-be Ph.D. advisor) convinced her to leave her career path in sociology and become a psychologist. She decided to forego a prestigious research award, the Commonwealth Scholarship, and relocate to the University of Virginia to complete her Ph.D in psychology. Her journey then took her to England for postdoctoral training, before circling back to the United States to start her first faculty position in California.

“As I moved across contexts,” Odgers said, “I began to understand how the commonalities across disciplines and the fundamental...”
At our annual retreat this past August, I noticed a heightened level of energy surrounding a raft of exciting research projects and numerous opportunities for collaboration going on in the Center. I can hardly wait to see how this kind of intellectual exchange will be enhanced even further by the renovations that are underway in both of our physical locations.

We are so pleased to welcome our newest faculty member, Candice Odgers, who comes to us from the University of California - Irvine. In this issue of Bridge, you will hear about the high-tech partnerships she has developed, how she and her research team are using texting to obtain a clearer picture of the day-to-day experiences of young adolescents in the miLife study, and how they are zeroing in on specific neighborhood characteristics through a partnership with Google, using its Street View application. Candice is a tenured Associate Professor in the Sanford School and will play a leadership role in the Center.

We are happy to have three more Center faculty members join our reconfigured Center space in the Rubenstein Building – Liz Ananat, Anna Gassman-Pines, and Christina Gibson-Davis – and I look forward to their continued contributions to the Center, in their research as well as through impromptu lively discussions and exchanges in the halls.

Visiting with us this semester is Mark Fondacaro, professor of psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Mark will be engaging with faculty and researchers across campus in psychology, neuroscience, law, and public policy to strategize about how he might push through some of the ground-breaking reforms he and colleague Christopher Slobogin propose in their book *Juveniles at Risk: A Plea for Preventive Justice*.

In the pages that follow, we retrace the long-term friendship the Center has with Anne Bryan, senior policy advisor to North Carolina Governor Beverly Perdue on early childhood. She has incorporated the Center’s Durham Connects model into the Race to the Top Early Learning plan to ensure that families with newborns living in rural North Carolina can connect with available services. The Durham Connects model grew out of the Center’s ten-year commitment of support from The Duke Endowment. After years of collaboration with numerous Durham community leaders and agencies, we have implemented and evaluated the program with a rigorous randomized controlled trial, which reveals that the program lowers emergency room visits and overnights in the hospital by over 60 percent in the first 12 months of life. The Center for Child and Family Health now administers this evidence-based program, providing services to the families of every baby born in Durham.

Jenni Owen, Jeff Quinn, and Katie Rosanbalm are partnering with Duke’s Office of Durham and Regional Affairs and Triangle Community Foundation to gain a clearer understanding of the technical assistance that Durham nonprofits need most.

Leslie Babinski, Cindy Kuhn, and Wilkie Wilson have received highly competitive funding from the federal Institute of Education Sciences to develop a health curriculum that will teach high school students about how their behaviors involving sleep, nutrition, exercise, and drug and alcohol use can affect the health of their brain.

And there is more to share beyond what I have touched on here, so please read on.

I am excited to see where we go this year in our efforts to synergize first-rate scholarship and engagement with on-the-ground practitioners to improve outcomes for children and families. ▲
Newest Center Faculty Continued from page 1

... differences between countries in their response to children’s behavior and mental health could be leveraged to better understand and promote healthy development."

Her commitment to improving the life chances of at-risk children was evident even earlier, in her undergraduate years, when she worked as an advocate for young people who had been involved with the justice system, often victims of exploitation. “Working in the juvenile justice system... you are trying to connect these kids with services and intervene, but in many ways you just wish you had gotten there sooner.”

Pinpointing when to intervene to help early adolescents avoid future substance abuse was a key part of the miLife study. Young adolescents were recruited into the study if they had a history of behavior problems or a family history that heightened their chances for abusing substances later in life. The study was designed to identify the daily triggers of a number of health-risk behaviors and, eventually, inform how and when to intervene in the lives of young adolescents.

The way the miLife study used cell phones to collect real-time data is seen as cutting edge in social science. Odgers acknowledges that she went out on a limb, trying this new approach. But with funding and encouragement from the William T. Grant Foundation, Odgers and her team had a green light to explore how technology could engage young adolescents and provide a window into their real day-to-day interactions, negative impacts, and “uplifts.”

They launched the study in 2009, loaning phones with unlimited texting to the participants. Following a baseline assessment of parents and kids, the adolescents responded to three short surveys per day for 30 days and reported on their daily interactions and activities. This micro focus is meant to complement much of the standard child development research that follows children over long periods of time, with months and often years between assessments, and tends to focus on the impact of what Odgers calls “major life events.” The aim of miLife is to determine whether and how the repeated stressors that kids experience across a short period of time accumulate to alter their trajectories during critical periods.

“There is good evidence to suggest that the daily, chronic, pervasive, and sometimes lower-level stressors and exposures that many of us experience have the largest effects on people’s health,” said Odgers. “In the same way that the number of words a young child hears in a day differs between families and predicts later verbal ability, the daily stressors, harsh exchanges, and uplifts that kids encounter each day are likely to move kids in both positive and negative ways and, in some cases, leave a lasting mark.”

The miLife study provides insight into young adolescents’ lives through an almost instantaneous delivery of information. “This type of study design gives you the ability to adapt... you can see what’s happening – who is responding, who is not. And you have the opportunity to calibrate questions – and eventually micro-interventions – in a more individualized way.”

Although the miLife study has had an impressive response rate (over 90%), Odgers acknowledges that managing the deluge of survey responses and data they have received has created some unanticipated challenges that her tech-savvy researchers have found creative ways to address.

Working with Google to Analyze Neighborhood Factors

Through support from Google, Odgers has been able to fold in an additional layer to a very thorough longitudinal study being conducted by Center fellows Avshalom Caspi and Terrie Moffitt. Over a decade ago, their Harvard-based collaborator, Robert Sampson, tried to help overcome self-reported bias in neighborhood assessments by purchasing a van and having his team drive down the streets where the families in his Chicago-based longitudinal study lived. But because of high costs, only 20 percent of the families’ neighborhoods could be coded. With the advent of Google Street View, Odgers was able to adapt Sampson’s method for virtual use and collect similar information on the neighborhoods of children in the E-Risk Study for a fraction of the cost.

Demonstrating how Google Street View could provide a reliable and cost-effective way to assess neighborhoods attracted so much interest and so many inquiries from other researchers, for-profit entities, etc., that Odgers’ team decided to make the assessment tool freely available online and developed a series of online training videos to teach others how to use the application. Ideally, they hope that these methodological innovations will help researchers better understand how the communities where people live, work, and play influence behavior and health.

Matching Personal Values to the Center’s Mission

While she may have a history of taking risks, what led Odgers to Duke was a much more calculated decision. She saw a strong link between the mission and focus of the Center and her belief that science should have a real and positive impact on the lives of children. “I was excited about the prospect of being in a place with a true commitment to interdisciplinary research and student engagement, while also having access to the platform that the Center provides to translate knowledge in ways that can reach practitioners and touch kids’ lives.”

In addition to her appointment at the Center, Odgers is Associate Professor of Public Policy as well as Psychology and Neuroscience. ▲
In 2008, the Center for Child and Family Policy theorized that a brief, universal family intervention at birth could enhance child and family well-being and reduce child maltreatment in a community. Following a multi-year pilot of the program known as Durham Connects and positive outcomes of a randomized controlled trial of the intervention, the Durham Connects program model was selected by the state’s early childhood and health leaders for inclusion in a major federal grant proposal, Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant. The grant aims to improve early childhood outcomes for all children by establishing what the U.S. Department of Education calls “statewide systems of high quality early education programs.”

Sharing the Durham Connects Model

Anne Bryan, Senior Policy Advisor to the Governor on Early Childhood and a key figure in the design of the proposal, recalls how her relationship with the Center and with Center Director Kenneth Dodge led to the inclusion of the Durham Connects model in the state’s application. “It started with a conversation with Kenneth Dodge, Kevin Ryan (N.C. Division of Public Health), and Robin Britt (former congressman and chair of the Early Childhood Advisory Council) one year ago,” said Bryan. She had previously attended the Center’s 10-year anniversary event where she heard Nobel Laureate Jim Heckman speak on childhood issues, and she was familiar with the Center’s work. “I see CCFP (the Center) as an example of how things ought to be done on a wide scale. We are very interested in how research can translate into practice,” said Bryan.

In March of 2011, Bryan attended one of the Center’s Sulzberger Distinguished Lectures. The speaker was Joan Lombardi of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and her talk focused on how early childhood policies need to be designed for the next generation.

During dinner that evening with Lombardi, Dodge, Durham Connects staff, and other Center staff, Bryan heard about how such a universal intervention might help solve the problem of lagging early childhood development in high-need rural counties. “I didn’t know of any other model in the state that was as clearly focused (as Durham Connects) on the needs it addresses,” said Bryan.

Focus of the Funding

The state estimates that 27 percent of northeastern North Carolina families are chronically exposed to multiple risk factors such as poverty, unemployment, single-parent households, and low parent education level, which may lead to poor child achievement outcomes. The Early Learning Challenge grant proposes an array of services and capacity building to help communities improve outcomes for all children and assist families in overcoming disparities to close the achievement gap.

The multi-million dollar federal grant is intended to provide funds over four years to strengthen the state’s early childhood system. The Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) is the lead agency with key participation from the Division of Child Development and Early Education, the Division of Public Health, the Office of Early Learning, and the North Carolina Partnership for Children. Guidance will be provided by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) based at UNC-Chapel Hill’s Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute.

Creating a Transformation Zone

In early 2012, North Carolina was one of nine states out of 37 applicants selected to receive a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. A portion of the $70 million in funding will be used to create an early childhood “Transformation Zone” comprised of several of the state’s most rural, at-risk counties in northeastern North Carolina. Transformation Zone activities will include capacity building as well as direct service delivery.

The Durham Connects model, dubbed “Northeast Connects” in the Race to the Top proposal, is just one of a range of programs that will make up the Transformation Zone interventions. “A Transformation Zone anchored by Northeast Connects is a powerful idea,” said Bryan. “We can link with families from day one, offering support for their efforts to get their newborns off to the best possible start.” Northeast Connects will provide universal nurse home visits for all birthing parents in the selected counties, acting as a triage service by assessing each family’s health and social needs.
The intervention protocol includes an assessment of 12 factors of child maltreatment risk which include mother and infant health, quality child care accessibility, parenting knowledge, social support, financial needs, depression, substance use, and domestic violence. Based on the results of the assessment, Northeast Connects nurses will educate parents on a variety of health and well-being issues, including breastfeeding, finding a medical home, financial resources, family dynamics, home safety, baby care, and health information. Nurses will make additional visits, if necessary, to ensure parents receive whatever formal or informal support services are available in the Transformation Zone.

The original Durham Connects model relies heavily on nurses making referrals to outside service agencies. This works well in the resource-rich Durham community. However, over the course of the program’s implementation, a greater emphasis has been placed on in-home education and solution building through parent and nurse collaboration. This more family-focused and nurse-driven emphasis will work well in the rural Transformation Zones where availability and access to outside service resources is more limited.

Other programs planned for the zone include Reach Out and Read, Motherhead/Fatherhead, and Triple P. Emphasis will be placed on increasing access to and enhancing the quality of child care. Seventeen rural northeastern counties were eligible to apply for the Transformation Zone funding through the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant include: selection of evidence-based programs for utilization in the Zone by at-risk children; changes to infrastructure and policy to assist in producing positive child outcomes; the development of theories of change within communities; and implementation of a strategic plan for improved developmental, school readiness, and health outcomes for at-risk children.

Looking to the Future

Bryan sees a future that offers opportunities for equality and achievement for all children in the state. “I believe we are lucky in North Carolina. We have outstanding programs and services to build upon and the vision of what can be. Still, we don’t often have the level and breadth and continuity of services needed to reach all the positive results we’re seeking. With the Early Learning Challenge grant, we have a rare opportunity to make a huge leap forward by demonstrating what can happen when all of those key elements come together — and the chance to spread that experience all across the state.”

Jeannine Sato is the program director for Durham Connects.

The recent “Great Recession” brought financial insecurity into the homes of numerous North Carolina families, many of whom had never previously experienced poverty or job loss. Currently, North Carolina’s unemployment rate is 9.6 percent, placing it fifth highest in the country. The state’s high unemployment rate, coupled with an increase in long-term unemployment (meaning more than 27 weeks unemployed), has resulted in the highest poverty rate in decades.

These stark statistics were among the reasons that legislators identified poverty as their choice of topics for the 2012 North Carolina Family Impact Seminar, Working Toward Greater Prosperity in North Carolina: Effective Employment Strategies, which was held May 24 in the Legislative Building in Raleigh. More than 70 people attended, including policymakers, state agency staff, researchers, and a wide range of other stakeholders.

N.C. Family Impact Seminars (FIS) provide objective, nonadvocacy and solution-oriented research on timely issues selected by policymakers. The seminars also encourage policymakers to consider the impact of policies on families, just as they regularly consider the impact of policies on the economy and the environment.

“Poverty alleviation is not the lens through which most legislators and legislative staff initially expressed interest in these employment challenges. The proven employment strategies that the experts highlighted at this year’s Family Impact Seminar, however, are in large part focused on increasing overall family and household wellbeing — and thereby mitigating or alleviating poverty,” said FIS Director Jenni Owen, also director of policy initiatives at the Center for Child and Family Policy.

This year, the Family Impact Seminar team, led by Owen and Jeannine Sato, the Center’s director of Durham Connects, worked with Ron Haskins, co-director of the Brookings Center on Children and Families and senior fellow of economic studies at the Brookings Institution, as well as a group of regional experts to tailor the discussion of poverty to focus on four evidence-based policy programs that could have an impact in North Carolina: preschool education, manufacturing extension partnerships, sectoral employment, and career academies.

In addition to delivering the keynote address, Haskins joined three other panelists to showcase existing employment-enhancing initiatives in North Carolina: Rev. Odell Cleveland, president and CEO of the Welfare Reform Liaison Project, Inc. in Greensboro; David Drugman, human resources manager at Honda Aircraft Company in Greensboro and member of the Governor’s Aerospace Initiative; and Dr. Terri Ratcliff, executive director of the Industrial Extension Service at North Carolina State University.

Seminar speakers focused on the following four evidence-based employment-related strategies:

**Quality Preschool Education**

Haskins highlighted the benefits of a quality preschool education, including increased lifetime earnings and decreased teen pregnancy rates, abortion rates, health problems, and drug usage. Children who received a quality preschool education earned at least $30,000 more than peers who did not.

“This is an area where we have very strong evidence,” Haskins said. “We have more recent evidence that if we have high-quality preschool, kids would start school much more ready for school and would do better in school.”

**Manufacturing Extension Partnerships**

Often, small manufacturing companies are unable to keep up with innovative designs and processes and are therefore less likely to employ efficient technologies. Manufacturing Extension Partnerships are a nationwide network of centers aimed at helping small manufacturers create and retain jobs, improve efficiencies, and increase profitability.

“The whole idea is to help small businesses be effective and grow,” Haskins stated. “These Manufacturing Extension Partnerships have been shown to have quite an extensive impact — not only on the businesses but also on productivity and profitability. If we had more of this, they (small businesses) could expand.” Haskins highlighted research showing that for each $1,570 of...
investment, one manufacturing job is created or maintained.

**Sectoral Employment**

Sectoral Employment initiatives seek to identify workforce needs and opportunities within a targeted group of workers — dislocated workers or new entrants to the job market — and provide training to meet industry needs for a competitive workforce, as well as the needs of the targeted workers. One study showed that, by the eighth month of participation, workers receiving the training earned more than similar workers who were not part of the training because they were qualified for better-paying jobs. Those who successfully completed the training earned approximately $300 more per month than their untrained peers.

**Career Academies**

Career Academies are smaller schools within high schools, providing students with a combined academic and technical curriculum to help prepare them for college or a career. Small groups of students remain with the same teachers over time, follow a curriculum that includes rigorous academic courses as well as career-oriented courses, and participate in work-based learning activities such as internships and workplace mentoring. Academies often follow themes such as health sciences, law, business and finance, and pre-engineering.

Haskins was enthusiastic about the impacts of Career Academies, branding them nothing short of “spectacular.” Although there were no impacts for girls, research showed that male graduates of Career Academies earned more than their peers — to the tune of $30,000 more over eight years. “And, get this,” Haskins added. “They were more likely to be married and more likely to live with the mother of their children — some of them were not married yet, but they lived in the same household as their children. That in itself is a huge outcome. That could have reverberating effects throughout our economy, especially on those kids.”

**Panel Highlights: Improving Employment Outcomes**

Following Haskins’ talk, panel experts provided insight on employment efforts already underway in the state. Reverend Cleveland is president and CEO of the Welfare Reform Liaison Project, a successful nonprofit that trains economically-disadvantaged residents for new jobs in areas such as video production and digital imaging, among others. Drugman is part of the Governor’s Aerospace Initiative whose goal is to ensure a robust and sustainable aerospace/aviation workforce in North Carolina. Ratcliff, executive director of the Industrial Extension Service, heads efforts to bring new technology and best practices to manufacturers and other businesses across the state.

At the conclusion of the panel discussion, each participant was asked to name a key action that legislators could take to improve employment outcomes in the state.

Drugman asked legislators to be good stewards of state funds and encouraged the same kind of collaboration and information-sharing being demonstrated at the Family Impact Seminar. “I think the first thing is to champion efforts like these: to bring these folks together, to bring these groups of people together, whether it’s from the educational community or from industry or from the state agencies…. Let’s not leave the room until we hammer some things out.”

Dr. Ratcliff encouraged legislators to become “true champions of employment systems like manufacturing.” She also stressed the importance of evidence-based programs, saying “… not one dollar should go to any program that can’t show a proven record of collaborative efforts that have true, evidence-based outcomes.”

Reverend Cleveland recommended that legislators play upon North Carolina’s existing strengths to attract new industry and jobs. “Let’s take what we already have: deep ports, let’s take the interstate systems, let’s take a base of manufacturing, traditional jobs, textiles, tobacco, furniture,” he said. “Those skill sets are so transferable to digital imaging and scanning…. We don’t have to send people to long-term training to get that skill set.”

The full audio recording, briefing report, PowerPoint slides, and materials from the 2012 N.C. Family Impact Seminar and all previous seminars are available on the Center’s website at: http://childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/engagement/ncfis_2012.php.

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**Erika Layko is the Center’s meeting and events coordinator.**

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Helping Durham Nonprofits Thrive in the New Evidence-Based World

By Suzanne Valdivia

Attention to evidence-based policy and practice has become a focal point across a wide range of social issues. Accordingly, policymakers, funders, and practitioners continually search for research and data to inform their decisions, their investments, and their program implementation. As a consequence of this “evidence-based movement,” nonprofits are increasingly looking to the Center for Child and Family Policy for advice and technical assistance. There is a clear gap between the acknowledged need for data-driven decision making and the availability of the necessary expertise within many service organizations to acquire, analyze, and apply the data required for such decisions.

In order to respond most effectively to the variety of requests, three Center colleagues have hatched a plan to formalize a process that will provide targeted consultation to Durham nonprofits. In collaboration with Duke’s Office of Durham and Regional Affairs (DARA) and Triangle Community Foundation (TCF), Center project leaders Jenni Owen (director of policy initiatives), Jeff Quinn (research analyst), and Katie Rosanbalm (research scholar) identified over 40 local nonprofits and invited them to participate in a self-assessment designed specifically for this project.

The plan is for the self-assessment to be followed by more in-depth interaction with some of the respondents to determine which ones are likely to benefit most from targeted assistance. If the agencies require assistance outside of the Center’s areas of expertise, project leaders can enlist the skills of colleagues from Duke and other institutions. “Because of the Center’s collective experience and expertise,” Owen explained, “it is well positioned to work strategically with these organizations to help make real progress in areas like program implementation evaluation, and using findings to inform policy changes.”

Partnering with TCF and DARA on this project is ideal, given that at least one of them has funded each of the initial 40-plus agencies invited to conduct the self-assessment. “We all recognize that nonprofits are going to be able to do more with funders’ investments if some of their organizational capacity and infrastructure issues can be addressed as comprehensively as possible,” said Quinn.

Phail Wynn, vice president of DARA, has been involved in this project since its inception. He has been a key figure in forging partnerships involving universities as well as businesses in Durham since 1977, serving as president of Durham Technical Community College, as well as chairman of the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce and the board of directors for the Triangle Community Foundation. He understands the historical and economic context in which these organizations are evolving.

“Duke’s Office of Durham and Regional Affairs is committed to working with other partners to build strong, effective, and sustainable community organizations,” said Wynn. “In addition to helping
selected nonprofits build the capacity to develop innovative approaches and solutions to the challenges they face, we also seek ways to assist them in strengthening their impact, increasing their sustainability, and expanding collaboration with other nonprofits. Our partnership with Triangle Community Foundation and Duke’s Center for Child and Family Policy provides us the opportunity to accomplish these goals.”

The self-assessment, designed by Quinn, Rosanbalm, and Owen, took the form of a 22-question online survey. Twenty-three agencies completed it, and their responses are helping the team to understand what each of these organizations needs individually, while also filling in a broader picture of which areas across multiple organizations most need strengthening.

Early analysis of the self-assessments shows that agencies are eager for assistance with evaluation design, data collection and management, data analysis and interpretation, and resource development. Only 35 percent of the agencies reported having logic models to guide their program activities and implementation, and 80 percent said they lack resources such as technology, staff time, and expertise that would make evaluation easier and more effective.

When it comes to specific evaluation-related tasks, respondents noted challenges with the following:

- identifying measurable outcomes rather than relying solely on satisfaction surveys;
- tracking participants long term to better understand program outcomes;
- feeling confident about their approach to analyzing results as well as the overall evaluation process.

Having completed analysis of the self-assessments, the Center’s project team, along with TCF and DARA, plan to select a subset of organizations and provide them with targeted technical assistance in areas that may include — but may not be limited to — grant writing, evaluation, data collection, diversification of funding, social marketing, policy engagement planning, and guidance on incorporating evidence-based practices into their daily operations.

According to Quinn, the criteria for selection will hinge on organizational readiness, as well as which organizations’ needs best match the operational assistance currently available from the Center. Rosanbalm emphasized that those nonprofits that are interested in and poised to take on an evidence-based way of doing business are most likely to benefit from these services and sustain them over the long term.

Owen is optimistic about the wide range of organizations that have expressed a desire to incorporate evidence-based approaches. The Center team looks forward to working with these agencies to help build sustainable, evidence-based systems in order to maximize outcomes for children and families in Durham and beyond.
Developing a Healthy Brain
An Innovative Spin on North Carolina’s High School Health Curriculum
By Suzanne Valdivia

Every week researchers are reporting more findings that demonstrate the complexity and the coordination of different functions of the human brain. But if you ask a class of ninth-grade students, it is unlikely that they have spent any time learning about how to take care of this critical organ, our “command central.” With a Development and Innovation grant from the Institute of Education Sciences, researchers from the Center for Child and Family Policy are about to change that.

The neuroscience health education curriculum will meet the health education content requirements mandated by the state of North Carolina, addressing mental and emotional health, nutrition and physical activity, interpersonal communications and relationships, and alcohol, tobacco, and drug use. Through interactive exercises and applied projects, the curriculum will focus on the impact of behaviors on the brain, leading students to understand the importance of the brain, how to improve its functions, and the immediate benefits to academic, athletic, and life success.

Wilson, a research professor of prevention science, has been working for years on different approaches with parents and teens that communicate the basics about how to develop and maintain optimal brain performance. “Every time I talk with educators about it [the healthy brain curriculum],” says Wilson, “they are really, really enthusiastic because they understand the irony: We bring kids to school to use a tool called their brain, but we never teach them practical ways to ensure it is functioning at its highest, healthiest level.”

The research team, which includes Leslie Babinski (principal investigator), Cynthia Kuhn and Wilkie Wilson (co-principal investigators), Desiree Murray (investigator), Ashley Corra (project coordinator), and Ann Dishong (lead education consultant), is designing and pilot-testing a neuroscience health education curriculum for high school freshmen. “We are lucky to have assembled such an accomplished interdisciplinary team,” says Babinski, referring to her collaborators as well as the project’s advisory committee members: Harris Cooper, Janet Dal Santo, Kenneth Dodge, and Tim Strauman from Duke University; and Carol Dweck from Stanford University.

Distinct Aspects of the Teen Brain

Kuhn, a professor of pharmacology and cancer biology, co-authored a book with Wilson, Buzzed: The Straight Facts about the Most Used and Abused Drugs from Alcohol to Ecstasy, that details the impacts of various drugs and the risks of mixing different substances. When asked how teen brains differ from adult brains, Kuhn explains that the last area of an adolescent’s brain to fully mature is the frontal cortex, where planning and prioritizing occurs, while those areas that manage emotional information and reward are the first to reach maturation. As a result, teens approach decision-making differently than adults.

“The bigger issue,” Kuhn emphasizes, “is that we as a culture have a very deterministic view that adolescents are impaired due to their maturational state. In fact, our team is motivated to show them that the brain is plastic, that learning is improved by practice, and that many things about how they conduct their lives affect their ability to learn: sleep, exercise, and nutrition all have huge impacts on brain function.”
Expanding the Reach

Wilson and Kuhn recognized the need to get this information out to a much broader audience and began giving talks at local schools, inviting parents and teens. What they found was that when the focus was clearly on helping children develop and care for their brains so they could maximize their effectiveness, attendance was at capacity. But when they approached the topic by focusing solely on behaviors that could harm the brain (e.g., drug or alcohol use), the response from both parents and teens was lukewarm.

The researchers believe that a health curriculum that can potentially reach all public high school students in North Carolina would be an ideal vehicle for disseminating this information more effectively. “We have been talking about doing this, but it has taken years to get this done,” Wilson recalls. “We didn’t have the education component; fortunately we got that by partnering with Leslie (Babinski).”

Babinski, an educational and school psychologist, will draw on her expertise in adolescent development, school-based interventions, and teacher professional development to help design and evaluate the neuroscience health education curriculum. The curriculum will engage students by asking them to monitor and log their behaviors and link these behaviors to changes in their brain using Dweck’s growth mindset approach, which maintains that one can improve his/her abilities with effort and practice. Babinski and Corra will conduct focus groups and interviews with teachers, administrators, students, and parents to get feedback on this approach.

The research team is working closely with curriculum developers who bring expertise from the K-12 arena as well as the private sector and non-profits. Dishong, who has been working with the team for over five years, is excited about developing the new curriculum. “The curriculum design will fascinate students and influence their decision-making,” she says. It will focus on how learning is impacted by the neurobiology of both motivation and addiction, as well as what characteristics make the adolescent brain unique.

Next Steps for the Curriculum

The neuroscience health education curriculum will be pilot-tested in a number of high schools in North Carolina. “We will be looking for increased knowledge about the brain, as well as a shift toward a growth mindset, improved self-regulation skills, and increased self-efficacy – the kinds of things that will lead to positive health behaviors,” says Babinski.

If the outcomes are positive for those students enrolled in the new brain-oriented health education curriculum, it could ultimately result in an opportunity for all public high schools to adopt the curriculum. Researchers also plan to offer training to parents, teachers, health educators, and administrators so that everyone can see how the school environment can best support healthy brain development in adolescents.

Wilson and his associates see tremendous potential in the pilot, and they hope it can expand nationally. “One of my dreams is to have ‘The Great Brain Campaign’ and really emphasize the importance of the brain, but in a broad public relations effort,” he says. Based on the responses from focus groups conducted by Wilson and Kuhn since first embarking on this idea in 2007, there is clearly a strong interest among parents and educators in bringing this information to students early in life, while their brains are still developing, so that they can be real drivers in maintaining their health by taking care of that most vital organ.
The Center is pleased to introduce the four Sulzberger/Levitan Graduate Fellows for this year: Taryn Allen, Regina Baker, Sarah Fuller, and Madeleine George.

The fellowships are made possible through generous support provided by the Sulzberger family and by Dan Levitan. Having made significant contributions to American society through publishing the New York Times, the Sulzberger family is now supporting the development of exceptional scholars in child and family policy. Dan Levitan graduated from Duke in 1979 and is co-founder of Maveron, a venture capital firm located in Seattle, Washington.

Profiles of This Year’s Fellows:

Taryn Allen is a fifth-year doctoral student in clinical psychology under the mentorship of Melanie Bonner, professor of psychology and neuroscience. Her work with Bonner is broadly focused on the assessment and treatment of neurocognitive deficits and quality of life in children with brain-based impairment secondary to disease or illness. She has a particular interest in sickle cell disease and the biopsychosocial processes that put these children at risk for a number of developmental sequelae. Taryn is currently working on two quality-of-life studies in children with sickle cell disease, including her dissertation, a pilot intervention for neurocognitive impairment, and a project assessing social-cognitive functioning in this population.

Regina S. Baker is a fourth-year doctoral student in sociology with a Master in Social Work. Her broad research area is stratification and inequality, and she is particularly interested in child poverty, work and the family, and spatial inequality. Her Center Faculty Fellow mentor is Linda Burton, James B. Duke Professor of Sociology. With Burton, Baker is using longitudinal ethnographic data from the Three City Study to examine cumulative disadvantage and mobility among low-income families of children with disabilities. Baker’s other research includes examining the changing effects of marriage and work on child poverty, as well as a multi-level analysis of persistent poverty in the U.S. South.

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Fall 2012 Courses

Youth, Crime and Public Policy
(CCS 89S/PubPol 89S)

Instructor: Joel Rosch, Senior Research Scholar

This first-year seminar is for students who are interested in learning more about public policies related to crimes committed by young people. This course uses the subject of crime to introduce students to a wide variety of issues involved in child and family policy. Students will be introduced to juvenile crime, the criminal justice system, how public policy is made, what different kinds of research tell us about juvenile crime, and the role of research in the policymaking process. The course also explores: 1) how juvenile crime policy is impacted by different kinds of societal values; 2) how the nature and “causes” of criminal behaviors are understood; and 3) the kinds of resources and technologies different societies have at their disposal to both analyze and respond to the problems associated with juvenile crime.
Children in Contemporary Society
(CCS 250S/PubPol 242S)
Instructor: Clara Muschkin, Assistant Research Professor of Public Policy Studies; Director of the Children in Contemporary Society Certificate Program
What does it mean to be a child in the 21st century? Using an interdisciplinary approach, this course provides an overview of issues facing today’s youth, from childhood through adolescence. It begins with an exploration of social forces that shape the definition of childhood across place and time and a review of how different disciplines study children. The course also examines the many social contexts of childhood, including the family, schools, the economy, the media, and the dynamics of race and gender. One of the objectives of this course is to gain an understanding of issues of childhood adversity — including poverty, violence, delinquency, and health inequities—and how some public policies are addressing these issues. Students have the opportunity to participate in a research service learning component coordinated by the Hart Leadership Program. Participation in the service learning component is optional. This course is required for students working on the Children in Contemporary Society certificate.

Making Social Policy
(CCS 270S/PubPol 234S/Soc 234S)
Instructor: Jenni Owen, Lecturer, Director of Policy Initiatives
Looking at a range of social policy issues, this course focuses on: 1) the policymaking process; 2) the role of different sectors in policymaking (public, non-profit, etc.); 3) when and why policymakers use research — and when and why they don’t; and 4) communicating with policymakers. The course exposes students to current social policy challenges stemming from health and human services, education, and other domains. Readings include research, policy and practice articles, and analyses from multiple disciplines. Experiential and written exercises help students develop skills for using research to inform policy and practice. The course includes visits from policymakers and visits to policymaking events; student work that combines policy and research considerations; and the potential for students to contribute useful insights to policymakers and others. Students learn about the value of research in informing policy and the constraints within which policymaking occurs. They complete independent and group assignments that combine their knowledge from the readings with their observations of live policy events.
Interest in Education Spurs CCS Student to Intern at Advocacy Organization

By Suzanne Valdivia

Sitting down for pizza with her fellow interns, Duke Senior and Children in Contemporary Society certificate candidate Adria Kinney got the chance to meet the founder of the organization she was working for: former chancellor of Washington D.C. public schools, Michelle Rhee. This event was part of Kinney’s 10-week internship at StudentsFirst, an advocacy organization launched by Rhee in 2010 with the mission “to build a national movement to defend the interests of children in public education and pursue transformative reform, so that America has the best education system in the world.”

Since attending public schools in the Cleveland suburbs, Kinney has been interested in public education and school quality issues. She was aware that the quality of education she was receiving in tracked classes and AP courses was much higher than the kind of education being offered at schools just a few blocks away, and she knew that there were students at her own high school who weren’t succeeding. “It was really unsettling to me,” Kinney says. Her mother is a high school English teacher, so Kinney has had an insider’s perspective on what is happening in public education throughout her life.

An internship is not required for psychology majors. However, since Kinney is pursuing a minor in Education, a friend forwarded her some education-related opportunities she had received through the Public Policy internship listserv. Kinney saw the StudentsFirst position and decided to apply.

Kinney was selected as one of 24 summer interns for StudentsFirst who ranged in age from 19-28. The group included public policy and law students, as well as undergraduates with a variety of academic backgrounds. Kinney worked in the Development Office where she assisted with donor research, a critical piece in an organization that set a very ambitious initial goal to raise $1 billion in their first year of operations.

In addition, Kinney contributed her strong research and writing skills, which she sharpened during her participation in Duke’s School Research Partnership (SRP) project, a program led by David Rabiner and Jenni Owen, key faculty at the Center. “StudentsFirst is active in 17 different states,” explains Kinney, “so I was assigned five states to work for over the summer. And we compiled case studies for each of these states that summarized legislative policy work, outreach activities, and membership activities that StudentsFirst had done as an organization during a particular legislative session in a particular state.”

Kinney found that StudentsFirst advocacy and legislative efforts aren’t without controversy. She says she was surprised at how personal and volatile issues involving public education are. In addition to reforming teacher evaluation and tenure policy, she described one of their most contentious reform efforts — the Parent Trigger Law — which allows parents to choose from three different approaches and take over a failing school.

Throughout her time at Duke, Kinney has found different ways to
pursue her strong interest in education. Through her School Research Partnership project, she was matched with Terri Mozingo, Durham Public Schools’ assistant superintendent for research and accountability, who asked Kinney to summarize research showing the effects of all-girls or all-boys public schools on academic performance. As part of that process, she had to be persistent in her efforts to obtain firsthand data from administrators in other cities who had implemented single gender schools.

“I thought it was really cool because, unlike writing a research paper for any other class, you actually see the direct effects of it — the real world application…. It’s immediate.” Kinney encourages other Duke students to apply to the SRP program. “It was one of my favorite experiences at Duke and it’s probably what confirmed my desire to work in education policy, honestly.”

This semester, through Duke’s Program in Education, Kinney is taking “Legal Issues in Education.” And she is readying to take the capstone course to complete the Children in Contemporary Society certificate. Her plans for the future include applying to graduate school but, prior to that, she hopes to work for Teach For America or a similar alternative teacher certification program.

As Kinney reflects back on her summer in Sacramento, she says that while she doesn’t necessarily agree with every position StudentsFirst takes, her experience as an intern there gave her a chance to be immersed in a context where everyone shared a strong commitment to education reform issues. “At Duke, everyone is interested in tons of things, but you know there’s not necessarily a ton of people so passionate about education reform. That’s a very narrow issue. So it was really cool to be surrounded by people — 23 other people — for ten weeks that knew a lot more than I knew about all the issues.”

Congratulations to David Rabiner, the Center’s Associate Director for Program Evaluation Services, who has recently been promoted to Research Professor in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience. Rabiner received his Ph.D. from Duke in Clinical Psychology. He joined the Center in 2000 as a Senior Research Scientist. His research focuses on the role of attention difficulties in children’s academic achievement, cognitive training interventions for attention problems, and a variety of issues related to ADHD. Rabiner also co-directs the Center’s School Research Partnership office with Center colleague Jenni Owen, Director of Policy Initiatives.
Center Director Kenneth Dodge Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

At its biennial meeting in Luxembourg in July, the International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA) awarded the John Paul Scott Award to Kenneth Dodge, recognizing “lifetime achievement and contributions to research on aggressive behavior.”

According to a statement provided by ISRA, “The John Paul Scott Lifetime Achievement Award is named in honor of John Paul Scott, one of the founders and an early president of ISRA, whose research interests were informed by world events of his time and his concern with the possibility of reducing violence and fostering peace. His primary interests were in behavior genetics, development, and social behavior, a diversity that represents the interests of a large number of current ISRA members. He believed in the possibility of a more peaceful world and that scientists have a responsibility to use their knowledge to contribute to these goals.”

Helen “Sunny” Ladd Honored as University Scholar/Teacher of the Year

Congratulations to Center Faculty Fellow Helen “Sunny” Ladd, Edgar T. Thompson Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and Professor of Economics, who has been selected as this year’s University Scholar/Teacher of the Year Award recipient. This award is sponsored by the Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church and recognizes a member of the faculty for his/her “dedication and contributions to the learning arts and to the institution.” According to a statement from Provost Peter Lange, Ladd was proposed by the selection committee “because she embodies the stated selection criteria in terms of exceptional teaching, concern for students and colleagues, sensitivity to the mission of Duke, record of scholarly contributions and commitment to high standards of professional and personal life. She has a very strong teaching record, with rave reviews and very high ratings from undergraduates and graduate students alike. She has won many teaching awards, dating back to Duke’s 1994 Howard Johnson Teaching Award.”

Candice Odgers is Thomas Langford Lectureship Awardee

Candice Odgers, associate director at the Center, is one of four recipients of the University’s Thomas Langford Lectureship Award for 2012-13. Provost Peter Lange created the Thomas Langford Lectureship Award so that Duke faculty would have the opportunity “to hear about the ongoing scholarly activities of new or recently promoted colleagues.” The award is named in honor of Thomas Langford who was a Divinity School faculty member, dean and provost at Duke. According to the announcement congratulating this year’s awardees, “Langford embodied the highest university values of scholarship, teaching, collegiality and the promotion of faculty, excellence and community.”

Madeline Hogan Meier Recognized for Alcohol Research

Congratulations to Madeline Hogan Meier who received the Enoch Gordis Research Recognition Award from the Research Society on Alcoholism. The award is named for Enoch Gordis, M.D., former director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Each year, the Research Society on Alcoholism recognizes young investigators’ outstanding contributions to alcohol research. Meier was one of three winners in the postdoctoral category, and she won for her Transdisciplinary Prevention Research Center-funded research on developmental subtypes of alcohol dependence. The award was made at the Research Society on Alcoholism Conference in June 2012. The paper is forthcoming:

The goal of Project LAUNCH is to create a preventive system of care for children from birth to 8 years of age and their families by enabling a child’s medical home to act as a portal for screening and identifying potential concerns in the areas of physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral health. The Center for Child and Family Policy has contracted with the Alamance County Health Department to conduct the external evaluation of the program.

**Partnering for Excellence**

**Sponsor:** Benchmarks

Investigators: Katie Rosanbalm, Christina Christopoulos, Matt Edwards, Raha Sabet

Dates: July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

Partnering for Excellence aims to create a coordinated system of screening and evidence-based service delivery between child welfare and mental health systems. Goals include identifying child mental health concerns early in child welfare involvement and providing trauma-informed services to improve child outcomes, reducing use of high-end services, and preventing children from entering into foster care.

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**Community Non-Profit Capacity Building Pilot Project**

Sponsors: Duke’s Office of Durham and Regional Affairs and Triangle Community Foundation

Investigators: Katie Rosanbalm, Jenni Owen, Jeff Quinn

Dates: April 1, 2012 – August 31, 2012

The Community Nonprofit Capacity-Building Project seeks to support family-serving organizations in Durham by providing training, coaching, and technical assistance in areas such as policy engagement, evaluation, and evidence-based implementation. This project, currently in the pilot phase, will partner with organizations to identify their needs and goals, match them with experts in these areas, and provide targeted support to build resources and capacity to meet these needs.

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**Community Prevention of Child Maltreatment**

Sponsor: Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

Investigators: Kenneth Dodge, Ben Goodman, Jeff Quinn

Dates: April 1, 2012 – March 31, 2017

The aim of this randomized controlled trial (RCT) is to evaluate the impact and mechanisms of the Durham Connects brief, universal nurse home-visiting program for newborns and their families designed to prevent child maltreatment and improve child well-being. It is the first-ever RCT of a home-visiting program that is designed to prevent child maltreatment in an entire community population.

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**Project LAUNCH Evaluation**

Sponsor: Alamance County Department of Social Services

Investigators: Christina Christopoulos, Katie Rosanbalm, Matt Edwards, Jeff Quinn

Dates: May 1, 2012 – September 30, 2012

This study harvests state administrative data for insights into who teaches what kinds of students, what determines teacher quality, and how these concerns affect academic achievement and high school graduation rates. The research, which tracks public school teachers and students in kindergarten through 12th grade, concentrates on interactions among teacher hiring, compensation, assignment, and certification; school accountability, governance and choice; and student demographics, labor markets, and school financial resources.

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**Parenting, Adolescent Self-Regulation, and Risk-Taking Across Cultures**

Sponsor: Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

Investigators: Jennifer Lansford, Kenneth Dodge, Ann Skinner

Dates: July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2017

This study utilizes the most culturally diverse sample ever assembled to provide an unprecedented opportunity to understand biological, familial, and cultural processes in the development of self-regulation and risk-taking. The aim is to understand how risk-taking develops across adolescence as a function of biological maturation (puberty and age) and socialization (parenting and culture).

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**Strengthening Benefit-Cost Analyses of Substance Abuse Prevention**

Sponsor: National Institute on Drug Abuse

Investigators: Max Crowley, Kenneth Dodge

Dates: September 1, 2012 – August 31, 2015

In order to strengthen benefit-cost analyses of substance abuse prevention, this project will model the systemic costs of a large-scale NIDA-funded prevention effort known as PROSPER, estimate the societal value of targeting childhood substance risk factors, and identify best practices and research priorities for benefit-cost analyses (BCAs) of prevention. By improving BCAs in this area, researchers can obtain more robust and reliable estimates that will facilitate more informed allocation of social resources and efficient substance abuse prevention efforts.

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**Policy and Practice Engagement**

Sponsor: Oak Foundation

PI: Jenni Owen

Dates: July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2025

This funding will support ongoing engagement and community networking efforts focused on increasing and enhancing the productive use of research in policy and practice.
Recent Publications


### Recent Presentations

**2012 Annual Conference of the American Psychology-Law Society, San Juan, PR:**


**Cook, P. (2012, April).** Public safety through private action. Invited lecture at Southern Illinois University Vandeventer Chair Public Lecture in Economics.


**Wells, R., & Gifford, E. (2012, August).** School implementation of a state child and family team initiative: The first five years. Oral presentation given at the Academy of Management annual meeting, Boston, MA.

**Goodman, W. B., & Dodge, K. A. (2012, May).** The Durham Connects program: Proposing a population approach to preventing child maltreatment and promoting healthy development (and early school readiness)?. Invited presentation at the second annual Frontiers of Innovation Conference, Boston, MA.


**Desiree Murray** conducted the first North Carolina group leader training in the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Program on August 15-17 in Durham. Several local mental health and early childhood agencies across the state participated.

**Clara Muschkin** presented a paper co-authored with Helen “Sunny” Ladd and Kenneth Dodge at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association held in Vancouver, Canada, April 13-17. The paper, From birth to school: Early childhood programs and third-grade outcomes in North Carolina, was included in the Educational Policy and Politics session, “Educational Policies Pursuing Equal Opportunity.”


**Owen, J., & Usdansky, M. (2012, April).** Helping child & family funders & providers meet rising expectations for Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) in an increasingly competitive environment. Poster presented at the 2012 Council on Contemporary Families Annual Conference (co-sponsored by The University-Based Child and Family Policy Consortium), Chicago, IL.

**Quinn, J. (2012, April 12).** Getting fatherhood to the forefront: Current research, best practices and recommendations. Presented to the Wake County Smart Start Planning Committee, Raleigh, North Carolina.


**Wilkie Wilson** spoke to 9th grade students and their parents at Durham Academy on August 27. The title of his talk was “How to have better grades with less stress,” and it focused on what the brain requires for maximal performance and how lifestyle choices affect performance.
Mission
Bridging the gap between research and public policy to improve the lives of children and families.

Vision
The Center for Child and Family Policy is working to solve problems facing children in contemporary society by bringing together scholars from various disciplines with policymakers and practitioners in an effort to improve the lives of children and families. We are dedicated to teaching, research, and policy engagement and are focused on the areas of early childhood education, education policy, and adolescent problem behavior.