

Letter from the Chair



As I reflect upon all the amazing accomplishments of our students, alumni, and the CUSSW faculty, I can't help but juxtapose those against current events. As I write this letter, confidence in financial markets is tanking, Congress is struggling to pass a \$700,000,000,000 rescue package, and both presidential candidates are calling for fundamental change – change in governance, values, priorities, and the image we project to others. All this makes me grateful I am not in Ben

Bernanke's or Henry Paulson's shoes. But it also makes me wonder why some institutions are prone to crises and others are much less so, and why ours is so productive and so resilient. I don't have answers to the first question but I have thoughts about where our strength comes from. I could point to many small factors that I think play a role, but none, I think, is nearly as consequential as the passion everyone here has to produce scientific knowledge that can improve people's lives. That shared passion and the fact that research is about shaping the future helps us create a common vision of where we are headed, and to stay the course. And the focus on the prize – the production of knowledge – allows us to constantly adapt to changing environments, be they funding priorities, scientific advances, new

technology, or new population concerns. As chair of the doctoral program during the past year, I gained such tremendous appreciation for being part of a community with common goals and a desire to adapt and adjust to real world changes in real time. This took the form of restructuring financial aid to better take advantage of research opportunities for students, making adjustments to the program milestones to better prepare students for their dissertation research, and going through a self-study process that clarified where our strengths were and where we could further improve our program. This year, we will review our curriculum to make sure that it reflects the cutting edge of knowledge and methodology. I very much look forward to that process, and to another year of stimulating intellectual exchanges with all of you.

Julien Teitler

CUSSW Welcomes New Cohort

Once again, the PhD program was delighted to welcome the most recent cohort of doctoral students to the School at the end of August. The newest students come with a broad range of interests and have already hit the ground running in their research on several faculty projects.

◆ **Liana Fox** (Policy) comes to CUSSW from the

Economic Policy Institute in Washington, DC, where she worked with Dr. Jared Bernstein ('94). As an Economic Policy Analyst, her research centered on the economic impact of domestic labor policies. Liana's own research interests revolve around the intersection of race, class, and gender on intergenerational mobility and health transference. She has a BS in Industrial & Labor Relations from Cornell Univer-

sity, and an MS in Labor Studies from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Liana is currently working on Professors Jane Waldfogel & Wen-Jui Han's NICHD-funded project Work-Family Policies and Child and Family Wellbeing.

◆ **Angela Ghesquiere** (Practice) has a BA in Psychology from Smith

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

SOCIAL WORK & THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS & ALUMNI

GRADUATION 2008

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New PhD Students (cont'd)

College, and an MSW with a Mental Health focus from Washington University in St. Louis. She comes to CUSSW most recently from Seattle, where she has worked in research at the University of Washington. Angela is focusing her studies on PTSD; grief and loss; and end-of-life care. She is particularly interested in researching traumatic stress with both adults and adolescents, especially low-income and ethnoculturally diverse populations. She is currently working with Professor Kathy Shear on her NIMH-funded study of Complicated Grief Treatment in Older Adults.

◆ **Leona Hess** (Practice) is a Project Director at CUSSW's Social Intervention Group, where she has worked with Prof. Elwin Wu in the start-up and management of a federally funded, 4-year socio-behavioral study focusing on criminal justice-involved individuals who attend Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) programs in New York City. Her own research will eventually focus on group-level HIV/AIDS prevention interventions for adolescents in high-risk contexts, such as women of color and members of the LGBTQ populations. Leona has a BS from George Washington University and an MSW from NYU.

◆ **Timothy Hunt** (Practice) also works for SIG as a Training and Capacity Building Specialist for Project Connect and the CU Center for New Media Teaching and Learning (CCNMTL), where he and Professors Nabila El-Bassel and Susan Witte are developing and implementing training for clinicians and research staff on two federally-funded studies. He comes to the program with over 17 years of

experience in intervention and prevention therapy, and will concentrate his studies within HIV/AIDS and co-occurring disorders; addictions; and culturally congruent treatment. He is also interested in Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) and Community-Based Research (CBR). Timothy holds a BA from Carson-Newman College and an MSW from NYU.

◆ A recent graduate of the CUSSW MSW program, **Nathan Hutto's** (Policy) interests are centered around geographical and ecological influences on health disparities. During his previous studies he interned for the Social Indicators Survey Center at Columbia and the Jewish Home and Hospital. He has worked in various capacities in Boston-area schools, and in program coordination in Prishtina, Kosovo. Nathan is currently working with Prof. Neeraj Kaushal on her study of the Effects of Tuition Subsidy on Education, Earnings, and Healthy Behaviors of Undocumented Youth. He holds a BA in American Studies from the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

◆ **Kenneth Jones** (Practice) returns to New York from Atlanta, where he has worked for the Centers on Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) as both a public health analyst and, most recently, a behavioral scientist. A graduate of CUSSW's MSW program, Kenneth will be investigating racial and sexual socialization in Black men who have sex with men (MSM)'s actual, or perceived, HIV risk. He is also interested in how researchers can integrate the consequences (or lack thereof) of socialization into existing HIV prevention activities. Kenneth holds a BA in sociology from the University of Michigan, Ann

Arbor.


◆ **Leyla Karimli** (Admin) is originally from Azerbaijan, where she received a BA in International Relations from Baku State University. She has also received graduate degrees in Comparative Politics in Nice, France and Political Science at Kansas State University. Leyla has worked for Oxfam as a program & policy officer in her home country and as a regional governance advisor in Kenya. She is working with Professor Fred Ssewamala on the SUUBU-MAKI project, and is interested in international & community development; poverty & inequality; and social capital.

◆ **Bright Sarfo** (Practice) has worked as a research assistant on several projects at the Social Intervention Group here at CUSSW, including Project EBAN and Project Connect II. He is also a member of a research team, headed by Prof. El-Bassel, Louisa Gilbert (Practice) and Matt Epperson ('08), that is developing a pilot study testing the feasibility of conducting an HIV risk reduction intervention with formerly incarcerated adult males. Bright is interested in HIV prevention in low-income communities of color, especially for African-American men and women with criminal justice involvement. He holds an MSW from CUSSW and a BA in sociology/psychology from SUNY-Stony Brook.

◆ **Dorita Setiawan** (Admin), a Fulbright Fellow from Indonesia, is currently working on Professor Susan Witte's project, Using Multimedia and Internet Based Technologies to Disseminate an HIV/STI Prevention Intervention for Heterosexual Couples. Dorita holds degrees in social work

from McGill University in Montreal, and a bachelor's in education from State Islamic University in Jakarta. She plans to focus on practices that help to mobilize women, and to explore identifying and evaluating of obstacles for women implementing social change.

◆ **Joyce Shim** (Policy) has gained practical and research experience in organizations ranging from the United Nations and the Ministry of Health Welfare of Korea to Human Rights Watch and the Legal Aid Society during her tenure in Columbia's dual-degree master's program in social work and international affairs. She is interested in cross-national social policy; poverty & welfare; and comparative politics—and plans to eventually develop clinically-proven social welfare policies based on the differentially-designed policy approach. Joyce is currently TA-ing for Professor Garfinkel in the Social Welfare Policy course (T6801). She holds a BA in political science from Rutgers University.

◆ **Anya Spector's** (Practice) interests in substance abuse and HIV/AIDS led her to work for the HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies at Columbia—as a research assistant for Dr. Rogério Pinto ('03)—during her graduate studies and, most recently, as a counselor at Greenwich House Outpatient Chemical Dependency Program. She is especially concerned about the interventions and treatments being offered within the mental health/addiction services system, hospitals, and the criminal justice system. Anya holds an MSW with a substance abuse treatment focus from Fordham University, and a BA in psychology from Barnard. 



CUSSW Doctoral Student Kudos

◆ Daniel Miller (Policy) has been awarded a one-year Centers on Disease Control (CDC) Dissertation Grant for Public Health Research (R36). His project, under the mentorship of Dr. Jane Waldfogel, is entitled "The Effects of Parental Work on Child Obesity."

◆ Alida Bouris (Practice) and her dissertation sponsor, Dr. Vincent Guilamo-Ramos, were awarded a one-year dissertation grant from the CDC to examine sexual behavior and outcomes among a nationally representative sample of young adults and to relate these behaviors and outcomes to a comprehensive range of parenting practices encountered during adolescence. They were also awarded a Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) for her dissertation, which they declined due to redundancy in funding. She and Dr. Guilamo-Ramos also co-authored a guide for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy entitled, "[Parent-Adolescent Communication about Sex in Latino Families: A Guide for Practitioners.](#)" Alida has also been published in *Social Work Research*, *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, *Youth and Society* and *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

◆ Geetha Gopalan (Practice) has been awarded a dissertation grant by the National Institute on Mental Health (NIMH), entitled "Foster Parenting Styles and Adolescent Mental Health Status."

◆ Matthew Epperson (Practice) was awarded a Behavioral Science Training in Drug Abuse Research predoctoral fellowship from the National Development & Research Institutes (NDRI). Matthew published an article entitled "Increased HIV risk associated with criminal justice involvement among men on methadone" in *AIDS and Behavior* and presented "Criminal Justice Involvement and Associated HIV Risk among Men on Methadone" at the 135th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association in Washington, DC in November 2007.

◆ Jennifer Manuel (Practice) has accepted a postdoctoral position in the Division of Mental Health Services & Policy Research at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. She will be working with Molly Finnerty, MD, and the NY State Office of Mental Health to develop, implement and examine a model for step down from Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) that has the potential for broad dissemination. Ms. Manuel will work with the project team to integrate information from national experts, prior research on ACT step-down, focus groups with ACT team staff and consumers, and analyses of administrative and other data regarding recovery of ACT clients. Results from these data will inform the development of a step-down training package with materials, which will be examined in a randomized controlled trial with community mental health centers in NY State.

◆ Dooyeon Kang (Admin) has accepted a postdoctoral

fellowship at the Center for Medical Health Policy & Service Research in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. She will work with Dr. Aileen Rothbard and other researchers as part of a multidisciplinary team researching the organization, financing, and management structure of mental health systems and the delivery of mental health services.

◆ Andrew Tomita (Admin) was appointed to a T37 NIH fellowship under PI Malinda Fitzgerald (Christian Brothers University) for Summer 2008, where he conducted evaluations of psychosocial programs for war-affected children in Uganda.


◆ Leyla Ismayilova (Practice) has been awarded a fellowship from the Harriman Institute at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). The fellowship provides support to graduate students conducting research in the former Soviet Union and/or Turkic countries. Leyla's dissertation is on intimate partner violence and maternal health in Azerbaijan, Moldova and Ukraine. Leyla also co-presented a paper entitled "The Role of Family Relations in Sexual Risk Taking among Orphaned & Vulnerable Adolescents in Rural Uganda" with Drs. Fred Ssewamala and Mary McKay at the 12th Annual SSWR Conference in Washington, DC in January. She was also accepted to present a poster at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in Boston in August; papers at the 20th

Annual National Conference on Social Work and HIV/AIDS in Washington, DC in May; and at the White-House Faith-Based and Community Initiative Conference on Research, Outcomes & Evaluation in June.

◆ Pin Wang (Policy) presented a paper titled "Pricing welfare services: Strategies to adapt the social-democratic welfare model to a post-industrialized East Asian country--Taiwan" at the 103rd Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA) in Boston in August. She also presented a paper titled "Taiwanese Homecare workers and their clients: Maintenance of the body or family relations?" at the 60th Annual Science Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) in San Francisco in November, 2007.

◆ Arminda Gomes (Practice), Daniel Kaplan (Practice), and Lydia Ogden (Practice), candidates in the 2007 cohort, have all been awarded Hartford Geriatric Social Work Pre-Dissertation Awards.

◆ Dan Kaplan (Practice) and Arminda Gomes (Practice) been named Grantmakers in Aging Fellows.

◆ Erik Shumar (Admin) has been awarded a JAA Honjo scholarship, which he will use toward the completion of his dissertation on Capitalized-Based Risk Assessment of Social Enterprise Decision-makers in the U.S., Japan, and South Korea. 



CUSSW Doctoral Alumni Kudos

◆Dr. Qin Gao ('06) has been awarded the 2008 Frank R. Breul Memorial Prize, awarded annually to the author(s) of the best article published in the *Social Service Review*. The article, co-authored with CUSSW Associate Professor Neeraj Kaushal and CUSSW Professor Jane Waldfogel, is entitled "Welfare Reform and Family Expenditures: How are Single Mothers Adapting to the New Welfare and Work Regime?" Dr. Gao is an assistant professor at Fordham University. Her research was recently [profiled](#) on the Fordham website.

◆Dr. Kimiko Tanaka ('07) has been awarded a John Beard Post-Doctoral Fellowship in psychiatric rehabilitation. Her mentor is Dr. Jim Mandiberg.

◆Dr. Lenna Nepomnyaschy ('03) has accepted a tenure-track faculty position at Rutgers University School of Social Work beginning in Summer 2008. Dr. Nepomnyaschy has been an Associate Research Scientist at CUSSW.

◆Dr. Bradley Zodikoff ('05) is one of five faculty on an Adelphi University School of Social Work team that has been awarded \$40,000 from the Council on Social Work (CSWE) Gero-Ed Center and the John A. Hartford Foundation as part of CSWE's Master's Advanced Curriculum Project (MAC-P) under PI Judy Fenster. The goal of this two-year project is to develop and evaluate an innovation to increase the capacity of advanced-level MSW students to serve older adults in Healthcare, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse treatment settings. Dr. Zodikoff is also a current Hartford Faculty Scholar.

◆Dr. Shu-Yung (Brenda) Wang ('06) co-presented a paper with Yu-Siang Chou at the 4th Annual East Asian Social Policy research network (EASP) International Conference held in Tokyo, Japan in October 2007. The paper was entitled "The Division of Responsibility in Elderly Care among State, Market and Family in East Asia—an Example Based in Taiwan Migrant Domestic Worker Policy."

◆An article featuring the Global Health Research Center in Almaty Kazakhstan was in the Winter 2007-2008 issue of *Columbia Magazine*. Dr. Nabila El-Bassel ('89), Executive Director of the Center, is quoted in the piece; current doctoral student Louisa Gilbert (Practice), one of the Center's co-directors, is also mentioned.

◆Dr. Fuhua Zhai ('08) & Dr. Jane Waldfogel authored an article that was published in *Educational Research & Evaluation*, entitled "Effects of public preschool expenditures on the test scores of 4th graders: Evidence from TIMSS." Dr. Zhai currently holds joint postdoctoral research fellowships at NYU and Columbia.

◆Dr. Ji-Young Yoo ('06) has been appointed as a Research Fellow at the Korea Institute of Public Administration (KIPA) Public Finance and Budgeting Research Center, effective March 2008. She was previously a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Ewha Womans University Graduate School of Social Welfare in Seoul, Korea.

◆Dr. William Meezan ('78) has been elected to the post of President of the Institute for the

Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR) Board of Directors. His 3-year term will be effective as of July 1, 2008. Dr. Meezan is currently Dean of The Ohio State University College of Social Work.

◆Dr. Allen Zweben ('77) delivered the keynote address at the 40th Anniversary conference of the National Association of Social Workers-New York City Chapter's Addictions Institute on June 5th. His presentation was entitled, "Two Decades of Treating Addictive Behaviors: Integrating Practice Wisdom and Evidence-Based Practice." Dr. Zweben is currently the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Research at CUSSW.

◆Dr. Barbara Berkman ('70) received the President's Medal of Honor from the Society for Bachelor Program Directors in recognition of her efforts to increase the gerontological research capacity of PhD social work faculty in undergraduate programs.


◆Dr. Jennifer Bellamy ('06) has accepted a faculty position at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration, beginning in Fall 2008. She was previously a postdoctoral fellow at George Warren Brown School of Social Work (Washington University, St. Louis), under the mentorship of Dr. Enola Proctor.

◆Dr. Lin Fang ('05) has accepted a faculty position at the University of Toronto. She has previously worked as an Associate Research Scientist at CUSSW.

◆Dr. Anne C. Deepak ('04) has accepted a tenure-track position at Texas State University-San

Marcos.

◆Dr. Murray Nossel ('01), an Academy Award-nominated documentary filmmaker, gave several performances of his acclaimed two-man show [Two Men Talking](#), an unscripted two-man piece on growing up white, gay, Jewish and privileged under the apartheid, at the Barrow Street Theater in New York this spring.

◆Dr. Jared Bernstein ('94) was quoted in a July 2008 [Wall Street Journal article](#) on the declining value of bachelor's degrees. Dr. Bernstein is an economist, and Director of the Living Standards program at the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, DC. 

In Memoriam

◆Barbara Hunter Randall Joseph ('86)

◆Leo Augustus Corbie ('83)

◆Claire S. Landau ('57)

◆Charlotte B. Parkinson ('88)

◆Harold H. Weissman ('66)

*Social Work & the Justice System:
Profiles of Current Students & Alumni*




The Intersection of Social Work & the Justice System: Implications for Research

The intersection of the social work with the criminal and juvenile justice systems of the United States harkens back to the profession's very beginnings—the first juvenile court in the U.S. being founded in Chicago by one of social work's great foremothers, Jane Addams. In the years hence, the roles of social work and social worker within the field have metamorphosed in reaction to shifts in

political, legal, and social frameworks and ideologies, as well as in light of new knowledge built through practical experience and rigorous research.

The following profiles offer snapshots of current students and alumni who are engaged in research involving the criminal justice system and incarcerated populations, as well as reports

from recent forums wherein CUSSW faculty have presented their own research conducted within the setting. Here they address the challenges of their research, existing gaps in knowledge about vulnerable and oppressed populations and individuals involved in incarceration, and ways in which their contributions are helping to close these gaps. 

Stephanie Matsumura: Children & the Law




Arriving at CUSSW equipped with both a Master's degree in Social Work and a law degree, Stephanie Matsumura (Policy) has found that a background in both fields provides a unique perspective on juveniles and the justice system. "A background in social work helped me to better understand the many influences (e.g., environment, family, social networks) on human behavior and how certain social policies and laws are implemented. The study and practice of law provides an understanding of how social policies and laws are formulated and who they will affect. The common goals found in both professions is to promote the general welfare of others as well as to protect individual rights and liberties."

Through research she conducted on the economic, familial and

social aspects of international adoption upon mothers in the Marshall Islands as part of her Master's degree, Stephanie developed an appreciation for the law and how it affects the lives of individuals. Her resulting JD provided her with insight into the formation of the law and the need for sound public policy. Subsequent internships with the Children's Justice Center, Office of the Guardian ad Litem, and Division of Child and Family Services, as well as her experience as an attorney in criminal law, all helped her to develop an interest in how the law affects children's lives, particularly delinquent youth.

Stephanie has channeled this experience into her current dissertation research, which specifically examines how a youth's race influences the decision-making

process of intake workers and the outcomes of juvenile court cases. It also examines intake officers' use of discretion. The dissertation uses a mixed methods approach to analyze the juvenile justice system and is conducted in collaboration with the State's Administrative Office of the Courts.

Stephanie suggests that the juvenile justice system is unique in that "it balances penal concerns with rehabilitative aspects. In addressing the rehabilitative needs of youth, a background in social work is critical in order to assess the physical, social, and emotional needs of youth referred to the system." 

Astraea Augsberger: Representation of Adolescents in Family Court Proceedings



Astraea is a 3rd year student in the Advanced Practice method.

“My passion for working in juvenile justice and child welfare emerged a decade ago when I attended the masters program at CUSSW. Due to my status as a law minor, I had the opportunity to take classes in the law school, including “Family Law” and “Gender, Law and Equality.” My field placements included working as a case manager in an alternative to incarceration program for juvenile offenders and working as a resource coordinator for a Criminal Court Judge specializing in domestic violence cases. The combination of my fieldwork and coursework opened my eyes to the need for strong, educated advocates for youth involved in legal proceedings.

“Upon graduation, I was employed by the Juvenile Rights Division of the Legal Aid Society of New York; initially as a Forensic Social Worker and subsequently as a Social Work Supervisor. The Legal Aid Society represents 90 percent of the children and adolescents who appear before the New York City’s Family Court on juvenile delinquency, PINS (persons in need of supervision), child protective and termination of parental rights petitions. My case responsibilities included interviewing children, adolescents and families, conducting home and field visits, advocating for clients’ rights in diverse settings, preparing dispositional plans, and testifying as an expert witness. I also worked as part of an interdisciplinary management team responsible for the administration, clinical supervision and training of social workers, lawyers, paralegals and support staff.

“During my time at the Legal Aid


Society I was keenly aware of the unique challenges faced by adolescents involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Youth are at high risk for mental health issues, low educational attainment, unemployment and homelessness. While there is federal legislation addressing the needs of youth in foster care, approximately 20,000 to 25,000 adolescents exit foster care each year marginally prepared, or unprepared to successfully transition into adulthood. This understanding led me to pursue my doctoral studies focused on preparing adolescents to successfully age out of foster care or other institutional settings.

“Currently, I am working on an interdisciplinary research project with Dr. Vicki Lens, Associate Professor of Social Work and Dr. Jane Spinak, Edward Ross Aranow Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Child Advocacy Clinic. The research, in collaboration with the Child Advocacy Clinic’s Adolescent Representation Project, will utilize mixed methods to examine current policies and practices pertaining to legal representation of adolescents in diverse settings with the ultimate goal of developing models of adolescent representation, providing practice and policy recommendations, and guiding future empirical studies.

“Our study examines legal representation of young people who are involved in Family Court proceedings, including: 1) juvenile delinquency, and 2) child protective cases (abuse and neglect). We are examining current models of legal representation—comparing and contrasting juvenile delin-

quency and child protective models. We are interested in understanding—from the perspective of both adolescents and their advocates—their experiences and perceptions of effective legal representation.

“There is a lack of research focused on legal representation of adolescents—most of the literature is focused on adult representation or child representation—encompassing children from birth through age 21. Clearly, adolescents have unique needs based on their psycho-social and cognitive development. However, advocates are not mandated to receive additional training pertaining to adolescent development. Furthermore, there is no agreed upon model of legal representation for adolescents; some organizations have only lawyers working on cases, while others employ an interdisciplinary team of lawyers, social workers and paralegals.

“I am also interested in the role of social workers in the legal/advocacy relationship and process. Based on my professional experience, social workers play a critical role in adolescent representation both inside and outside of the courtroom. Social workers possess the skills to engage clients, establish rapport, assess clients’ needs and advocate for appropriate programs and services. As part of the legal team, social workers can advocate for their individual clients’ needs while concurrently educating key Family Court personnel—including judges, referees and lawyers—about adolescent psycho-social and cognitive development.” 

Matt Epperson: Criminal Justice Involvement, HIV Risk, and Mental Illness



Throughout his 12 years of post-MSW experience—primarily in adult mental health and substance abuse services, including 6 years in a county correctional facility—Matt Epperson ('08) was struck by the number of individuals with mental illness who ultimately became involved with the criminal justice system via arrest or incarceration, as well as the scarcity of research proposing methods to improve this condition. His years in a county correctional facility as a crisis mental health clinician, drug court assessor—and, eventually, as the developer of a jail diversion program for persons with severe mental illness—taught him much about “how disadvantaged populations (often the target population of social work) are greatly affected and overrepresented in criminal justice, and that we as social workers are often ineffective at interfacing with the criminal justice system in a way that can assist and advocate for our clients.” He asserts that “by understanding human behavior as both an individualistic phenomenon as well as a construct of social forces, social workers can make an impact on numerous levels, which is critical.” Outside of the forensic setting, however, he has seen a common disconnect regarding helping professions in general (and social work specifically) and their ability to impact the criminal justice system. An “invisible wall” seems to separate many social work services from criminal justice—leaving most social workers without the “experience or confidence to penetrate the system.”

To address some of these challenges, Matt recently designed and taught a new Master's level course at CUSSW entitled


“Criminal Justice / Social Work Interface.” This course was specifically designed to extend students' understanding of the U.S. criminal justice system, its intersection with the social work profession and client systems, and how social workers can promote social justice at this critical juncture. The course was very well-received, and Matt plans to teach it again this coming year.

Since entering the doctoral program in 2005, Matt found his ultimate research niche through his connection to Dr. Nabila El-Bassel ('89) and the Social Intervention Group's urban-focused HIV prevention research. Although his original research trajectory revolved around the intersection of mental illness and criminal justice involvement, while working at SIG he became interested in the disparities in HIV/AIDS among justice-involved individuals, as well as the increased HIV risk associated with some symptoms of mental illness. He is currently working with SIG on developing HIV prevention interventions with individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system, but who are still in the community where they are potentially exposed to a high degree of HIV risk. As Matt observes, “this community-based focus has to date received little research in terms of HIV and criminal justice involvement.”

His dissertation, utilizing longitudinal SIG data from a sample of men in methadone maintenance treatment programs, examines how arrest and incarceration are related to HIV prevalence and risk for these men and their primary female

sexual partners. Matt asserts that “a substantial number of these men have been arrested or incarcerated and they also report considerable criminal justice involvement for their primary female sexual partners.” Matt's research is innovative in its focus on male community-based offenders and their female partners, as well as the examination of couple-level criminal justice involvement and sexual HIV risk in a longitudinal study. Findings from his dissertation will inform the development of gender-specific and couple-based HIV prevention interventions for drug abusing individuals and couples involved with the criminal justice system.

After defending his dissertation in June, Matt began a postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Behavioral Health Services and Criminal Justice Research, housed at the University of Pennsylvania and Rutgers University. He will continue to focus on HIV prevention among community-based criminal justice populations, as well as begin work on an intervention study focusing on community reentry for prisoners with mental health problems. Matt is participating in this NIMH-sponsored research under the mentorship of Dr.'s Jeffrey Draine and Steven Belenko.

Reflecting on social work's role in criminal justice, Matt suggests, “as a profession, we were once an integral component of the criminal justice system, but in recent decades we have increasingly distanced ourselves. I believe that we are now at an opportune time to reestablish our criminal justice focus, in terms of social work education, policy, and practice.” 

Tricia Bent-Goodley: Finding Culturally-Congruent Solutions




Photo courtesy of Howard University

Dr. Tricia Bent-Goodley ('98) is passionate about utilizing research to find culturally congruent solutions to some of the most profound social problems impacting communities nationally and globally. A Hartman Child & Family Scholar, she has been a faculty member at Howard University since 1998, and has served in numerous national leadership positions, including National Policy Institute Chair, National Student Coordinator, and National Chair & Chief Instructor for the Academy for African-centered Social Work for the National Association of Black Social Workers. She is the recipient of several national and local teaching, service and scholarly awards. Her book with Dr. King E. Davis, *The Color of Social Policy*, has been one of the top selling books for the Council on Social Work Press since it was first published in 2004. She has also authored *Teaching Social Policy* (with Dr. Davis), and edited *African American Social Workers & Social Policy*, which critiques social

policies and the policy process from a Black Perspective.

Building on her experience as a practicing social worker, Dr. Bent-Goodley has conducted research examining the intersection between domestic violence and child welfare system responses, kinship care, juvenile crime and gang involvement, and prisoner reentry policies. Her interests have focused on developing the knowledge base of domestic violence, particularly within a cultural context and among African Americans. She has conducted intervention research and community-based research in faith-based and community settings on domestic violence in the African American community. As a researcher for the Prince George County (MD) Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee, she is adding to her research on informing culturally sound criminal responses to violence. Within the past two years she has become increasingly concerned with the intersection

of domestic violence and health disparities among people of color, particularly HIV and how it relates to domestic violence. Dr. Bent-Goodley is currently a fellow of the CUSSW HIV Intervention Science Training Program led by Drs. Nabila El-Bassel ('89) and Elwin Wu of the Social Intervention Group (SIG).

Dr. Bent-Goodley acknowledges the challenges of being a student of color as a catalyst for her strong commitment to mentoring other scholars, particularly women and people of color. "It is critical," she reflects, "that we invest in the development of students and scholars of color as we witness the continued diversification of American society and our position as citizens in a global community with a majority of people of color around the world. Scholars of color are needed to help build bridges with indigenous communities, develop and articulate research that is culturally congruent and rooted in the experiences of the population." 

Pat Merle: Female Incarceration & Strengths-Based Approaches




Pat Merle, PhD ('00)—in red—and her colleagues at Step by Step of Rochester, Inc.
Photo courtesy of Dr. Merle.

What began in a church basement in 1992 as two-person grassroots effort—the founders collecting recyclables in order to raise funds—to develop programming for incarcerated women has grown into an agency with an active 12-member board and a six-member staff that has served more than 4,000 incarcerated women and continues to grow. Dr. Pat Merle ('00) founded Step by Step of Rochester, Inc. when, as a child protective worker (and later a foster care worker), she realized that, along with the rapidly rising rate of female incarceration, the problem-focused approach utilized by many agencies often left untapped the potential of utilizing the women's own stories about their lives and unearthing their personal strengths as a launch pad for their treatment. As Dr. Merle suggests, "social workers are less immersed

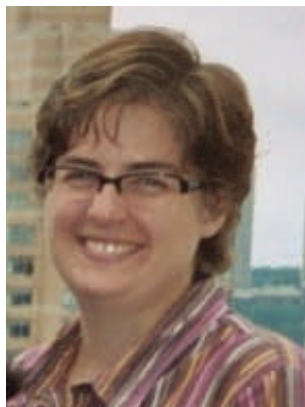
in the medical model than other professions and therefore have the skills to work with women who need to be reaffirmed, 'empowered,' healed, and given the tools to solve their own problems." Her strength-based approach has been organized into nine highly-structured 8-week workshops, as well as a 22-session parenting workshop to help support women in prison to become better parents. The latter focuses on topics such as the women's own experiences as children and how they related to their mothers; information on child development and effective means of discipline; as well as advice on how to parent from prison.

The New York State Department of Corrections recently analyzed data collected by Step by Step and found that those who participated in the programs had a re-

cidivism rate of one-third less than the rate for women statewide. The organization is now developing research proposals to determine the causal link. They have submitted a grant to NIMH in collaboration with the University of Rochester that proposes to assess the effects of the Step by Step programs on the mental health status of incarcerated women. Another has been submitted to the National Institute of Justice to study similar rates in unsentenced women.

Dr. Merle plans to continue to develop workshops in addition to developing a training center through which to make the Step by Step model available, with the collective goal for the organization in the next few years of becoming the model of programming for women in prison in New York State in the next few years. 

Malitta Engstrom: Grandmothers as Missing Links in Family Intervention



Top: Malitta Engstrom, PhD. Photo: Peter Kiar

Bottom: Jennifer Kenney, MSW, MPH. Photo: Chris Filner

Jennifer Kenney, a doctoral student in the Advanced Practice concentration, has previously worked as a clinical social worker at a chemical dependency agency, a psychiatric community hospital, correctional facilities, a mental health unit in a maximum security prison, and a women's halfway house for women in early recovery from drug and alcohol dependence. At CUSW, she has worked with Dr. Elwin Wu on two research projects: a service utilization project for women and men enrolled in Alternative to Incarceration Programs in New York and a couples-based HIV prevention research intervention for men who have sex with men. She also worked with other students on a project on the childhood effects of maternal incarceration. Her main research and clinical interests are working with women involved in the criminal justice system.

Recently, Jennifer spoke with CUSW Doctoral Program Alumna Dr. Malitta Engstrom ('02) about her current research as part of the Hartford Faculty Scholar Award. The following is based on their conversation.


Women are a rapidly growing population in the criminal justice system. A disproportionate number of these women are women of color. Most women currently incarcerated are mothers of minor children, the majority of whom were living with their children prior to their arrest. When women are arrested and detained, their children most often move in with their grandparents. Grandmothers are frequently the grandparent caregivers and they are likely to experience numerous challenges as they care for their grandchildren and offer support to their daughters who are incarcerated.

With almost ten years of direct practice experience and a doctorate from Columbia University School of Social Work, Dr.

Malitta Engstrom focuses much of her work as an Assistant Professor at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration on helping this group of women and their families. Using a family systems approach, Dr. Engstrom believes that incarcerating one person affects the entire family and that helping one person struggling with an issue is not sufficient. In order to help each woman manage the challenges of incarceration and permanently leave the criminal justice system, clinicians and researchers must work with her family as well.

Dr. Engstrom continues to take this one step further as a Hartford Geriatric Social Work Faculty Scholar. Hartford Faculty Scholars engage in research, professional development, teaching, and leadership mentoring. They work closely with senior faculty around issues aimed at increasing the health and well-being of older adults. Prior to receiving her award, Dr. Engstrom noticed a limited amount of attention given to the grandparents of the children left behind when a mother is arrested and incarcerated. In her project titled "Women, incarceration and substance abuse: Caregiving grandmothers as a missing link in family intervention," Dr. Engstrom is exploring the strengths and needs of mothers who are incarcerated and of grandmothers who care for their grandchildren while their daughters are away. After an initial phase of focus groups to understand the women's strengths, needs, and service preferences, Dr. Engstrom will develop and pilot-test a family-oriented intervention to assist families in areas that are most important to them. One of the unique components of this study is the community-based participatory nature in

which Dr. Engstrom will learn about the issues the families face and what providers can do to best serve them.

Dr. Engstrom's clinical work with families continues to be a motivating force in her scholarship. This experience guides her interest in producing practice-relevant research that will assist clinicians with helping grandparents, parents, and children address challenges associated with substance use problems, incarceration, and other co-occurring concerns. While there are programs that provide services for caregiving grandmothers, grandmothers have been overlooked in intervention research with this group of families for far too long. Dr. Engstrom plans to change that. With the help of the Hartford Faculty Scholar Award, a number of exceptional mentors, and the grandmothers and mothers interviewed in her study, she plans to expand understanding of this situation that is becoming more and more common. Guided by the families' input, she plans to develop interventions and supports that will effectively help women involved in the criminal justice system and the families who love them. 

-Jennifer Kenney, MSW, MPH



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Doctoral Practice Forum: Addressing Social Justice within Criminal Justice

By Jennifer L. Kenney, MSW

The 2007-08 year marked the second academic school year for the Doctoral Practice Forum here at the Columbia University School of Social Work. Our mission is the “advancement of social work practice by promoting and fostering interdisciplinary exchange of scholarly information, ideas, and critical reflection on issues relevant to social work practice and research.” During the year, under the guidance of faculty advisor Dr. Ellen Lukens and the previous year’s co-chair Mathew Epperson (Practice), Aimee Campbell (Practice) and I decided that we wanted to focus on social justice issues in the field of social work. Additionally, we felt that opportunities to attend presentations from our own CUSSW faculty were often limited. Because of this, we wanted to learn from our faculty this year about how they integrate social justice into their practice, research, and teaching.

At the Spring Doctoral Practice Forum, those in attendance had the opportunity to hear from and discuss with Drs. Andre Ivanoff and Elwin Wu about how social workers can bring social justice issues to the criminal justice system. Social justice is not a practice that immediately comes to mind when thinking of the criminal justice system in the United States. In recent decades, the pendulum has swung more toward punishment – less and less energy is expended in the interest of rehabilitation. Addressing a group of Master’s and Doctoral

students and faculty, the speakers discussed their efforts to change both the practice and the perception of social work and social justice within this challenging system.

Dr. Ivanoff offered her definition of social justice and how that relates to her work in correctional settings. She discussed the importance correctional staff place on maintaining safety and security within the facility. Through this avenue, she was able to work with inmates and staff surrounding issues of suicide. She found that inmates who attempted suicide in the past were more likely to attempt again. Through her work, she also gained a better understanding of the impact suicide has on the entire institutional community. From this early research, she has developed more and more integrated programs and studies to help women and men specifically in correctional facilities.

Dr. Wu described why he is drawn to work in the margins of society. In order to better understand the motivation behind criminal behavior, he is currently working with several Alternative to Incarceration Programs in the New York City area. Dr. Wu examines the lives of individuals involved in the criminal justice system more holistically and in smaller time segments than in previous research. Like Dr. Ivanoff, Dr. Wu is committed to understanding the numerous risks and protective factors that are associated with both criminal and

pro-social behavior in a contextually rich way.

As a whole, the group discussed how social justice can be brought into the criminal justice system and how important it is to understand the impact the criminal justice system has on the lives of our varied client base even if they are not directly involved in the system themselves. When working with disenfranchised populations, social workers will inevitably meet clients who have current or past experience with the criminal justice system. After hearing the speakers at this semester’s forum, those in attendance gained a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of how we can affect change at multiple levels through the course of our work. ♣

Jennifer Kenney is a third year student in the Advanced Practice concentration.



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Graduation 2008 in Words & Images

“Thank you. First of all, congratulations, fellow graduates! And thank you faculty, family, and friends for joining us on our big day!

By becoming a master of or doctoral of philosophy in social work today, I hope that each of us is throwing our hats in the ring, joining our passionate, critical forbears of the profession. Today, we draw inspiration from our profession’s forefathers and mothers as we commit ourselves to action that improves the circumstances of the people we serve, *as well as* the working conditions of social workers. During the 1930’s, another time of fear and uncertainty in our society, we had Bertha Capen Reynolds,

Jacob Fisher, Mary van Kleeck and many other individuals who were part of the Rank and File movement that fought against unjust social conditions *and* worked to improve social workers’ job conditions. They advocated for radical, fundamental social, political, and economic change. Historically and currently, social work has been used both to promote social and economic justice *and* as a tool of social control to maintain social inequalities. I hope we are all committed to the former and ready to fight against the latter.

As Social Workers, we are committed to righting social wrongs, and we are committed to doing this work from within social systems: human service agencies, corporations, academia, research institutions, etc. You do not need a social work degree to create your own personal utopia—but you will find it quite useful in your work to help

make the world at large a little more like the utopia you envision. At our best, I think we as social workers are passionate, critical outsiders working from within and changing preexisting social systems. I think of us as “marrying the world.”

I am using the term “marriage” in a broad sense to mean joining together—committing one’s sweat and talent to a larger body. Marrying the world means working within imperfect systems but being driven by the fire in your belly—your vision of social change, your passion, your dream—that drives you to do so. Today we each take a big step in marrying the world, and the world—as we all know—needs some serious love.

Thank you.”

~Alissa Schwartz, PhD (’08)
Delivered at the CUSSW Commencement Ceremony, 05/19/2008