Empower People
Lead Organizations
Grow Communities

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
SCHOOL OF
Social Work

PROFILES IN SOCiAL WORK RESEARCH
SCHOOL MISSION

The mission of the School of Social Work is to advance knowledge and to apply that knowledge for the fulfillment of human potential through the prevention and amelioration of social problems. The school is committed to promoting the values of social and economic justice. Recognizing the complexities of contemporary society, the school dedicates itself through its educational, research, and public service activities to advocating for a society that respects the dignity and achievement of all individuals, families, and communities.
As dean of the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh, I am proud of our long-established commitment to engaging and forward-thinking research.

Since its founding in 1938, the School of Social Work has striven to produce research that changes lives. Consistently ranked among the top schools for faculty scholarship and research productivity, our school advocates for a society that respects the dignity and achievement of all individuals, families, and communities through its educational, research, and public service activities.

Our faculty members are actively exploring areas such as community-based participatory research, mental health, gerontology, and juvenile justice. In order for this work to have the most positive impact, the school endeavors to make research available to community stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers across academic disciplines.

The school also is a national leader in administering comprehensive statewide child welfare training, education, and research projects with such partners as the federal Administration for Children and Families and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. It also is the second-largest Title IV-E program in the country.

The school has taken a leading role in race-related research with its Center on Race and Social Problems. The center is one of few research centers with a direct focus on resolving race-related social problems, and it engages in research implementation, information dissemination, and education based on multidisciplinary collaboration.

We are a vibrant school that is committed to the improvement of the community and the Pittsburgh region in addition to addressing national and international social issues.

Sincerely,

Larry E. Davis
Donald M. Henderson Professor
Dean, University of Pittsburgh
School of Social Work
Director, Center on Race and Social Problems
Perhaps you are reading this because you are discovering that many social work practice questions remain unanswered—that information may be essential to developing and providing the best solutions for the vulnerable people in our society.

We would like to invite you to consider the exciting goals that can be accomplished by pursuing a career in social work research. Social work researchers use the most rigorous and advanced tools to tackle some of society’s most pressing problems. For instance, what are the best designs for child welfare services, and how can we train and support the best workforce to provide these services? Will comprehensive services provided to children in a low-income neighborhood help to bridge the racial gap that still exists in our city and nation? Do comprehensive social treatments for schizophrenia work by changing people’s brains? These are the important questions that drive our faculty members’ research.

We are committed to conducting research that changes lives, and our faculty are united in developing research agendas that can immediately affect policy and practice. Our students are vital to this effort, and they train in an environment in which they are supported by faculty as they learn the most rigorous and up-to-date research techniques, contribute to an ongoing research agenda, and develop their own agendas to successfully begin an independent career. We hope that you will consider joining us in this effort.

Sincerely,

Catherine Greeno
Associate Dean for Research
University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work

“Social work researchers use the most rigorous and advanced tools to tackle some of society’s most pressing problems.”
John Wallace

Maybe it’s because John Wallace enjoyed a stable childhood grounded in a community of faith and family that he is now so devoted to helping others find the same experience he had.

Wallace, the Philip Hallen Chair in Community Health and Social Justice in the School of Social Work, helped to establish the Homewood Children’s Village (HCV), modeled on the Harlem Children’s Zone in New York, N.Y., as a comprehensive community initiative aimed at improving the educational, health, and social well-being of Homewood’s youngsters and reweaving the fabric of their community. Through HCV, Wallace has fostered collaboration among numerous Pitt departments, a host of local civic organizations, and the Homewood community.

Wallace’s drive also has made him the principal investigator on the University of Pittsburgh Center on Race and Social Problems’ Comm-Univer-City of Pittsburgh Project. The project is an integration of research, teaching, and service designed to investigate and ameliorate social problems that disproportionately impact economically disadvantaged children, families, and communities.

Most recently, Wallace was awarded a three-year grant from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. The grant, Healthy Living, Healthy Learning, Healthy Lives Project, engages community and academic partners in an effort to investigate, ameliorate, and ultimately eliminate disparities in children’s health, with a particular focus on asthma.

Funders

- Richard King Mellon Foundation
- National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, National Institutes of Health
- National Institute on Drug Abuse
- United Way of Allegheny County
- University of Pittsburgh Office of Research

“The school’s excellent reputation in the city and the nation; its rich history of community-engaged scholarship; and the supportive leadership of the dean, the provost, and the chancellor have made the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work the ideal home for social work research that attempts to change lives.”
Fengyan Tang wants older adults to feel empowered to engage in productive activities and to improve their quality of life and well-being.

That is what fuels her primary research, which covers various topics in late-life volunteerism. They include older adults’ access to volunteer organizations, socioeconomic differences in volunteer organization involvement, individual resources needed for volunteering, and inclusion of diverse older populations in volunteering. Tang says that with support from host organizations, older volunteers gain satisfaction and emotional well-being from their contributions of time and effort.

Tang argues that, on a societal level, her research highlights the importance of offering emotionally meaningful volunteer opportunities for older adults and for giving these volunteers adequate support and freedom. In this way, older adults are able to find purpose, satisfaction, and good health later in life while they give back to society.

Tang also studies the role of home- and community-based services in aging in place, independent living and long-term care planning in a population aging with disability, and help-seeking patterns among older adults.

FUNDERS

- Lois and Samuel Silberman Fund
- John A. Hartford Foundation
- MetLife Foundation
- University of Pittsburgh Center on Race and Social Problems
- University of Pittsburgh Central Research Development Fund
- University of Pittsburgh Steven D. Manners Faculty Development Awards

“The school has provided all the resources I need for doing my research: small pilot funding, editorial help, analysis assistance, graduate student assistance, and connecting me with experts in gerontology.”
Few social work researchers have had the opportunity to pursue cutting-edge work so early in their career, but Assistant Professor Shaun Eack is focusing on the development of new social work interventions in the areas of schizophrenia and autism, with an interest in how fundamental brain mechanisms in those disorders can be enhanced through social work interventions. When University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg presented Eack with a 2013 Chancellor’s Distinguished Research Award, he wrote that Eack’s “work shows a sophisticated command of cutting-edge designs and statistical methods relevant to the questions and hypotheses being posed.”

Eack’s primary interests include the development, implementation, and evaluation of psychosocial treatment methodologies to improve the care of people with schizophrenia and related disorders. He also is interested in the biopsychosocial factors that contribute to recovery and psychosocial outcomes among people with schizophrenia and related disorders and how the elucidation of these factors can serve to aid novel treatment development efforts.

Most recently, Eack and his colleagues received a $3.1 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health to study new psychosocial treatments for individuals in the early phases of schizophrenia. They will test whether early intervention with people soon after they become ill with schizophrenia will help to alter the often negative and debilitating course of the condition. In addition, they have partnered with colleagues at Harvard Medical School to study the potential benefits of their nondrug cognitive intervention in the brains of people with schizophrenia.

“The School of Social Work enables me to conduct applied research that changes lives through developing new treatments to help people with severe psychiatric disabilities to recover and build a better quality of life. The interdisciplinary focus at the school has helped me to partner with physicians, neuroscientists, and community leaders to develop truly biopsychosocial interventions and bring these advances to those most in need.”

**FUNDDERS**

- National Institutes of Health
- National Institute of Mental Health
- Autism Speaks
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Nearly 14,000 children live in some type of foster care in Pennsylvania. That’s a lot of kids. But, thankfully, the public child welfare system, entrusted with protecting these most vulnerable children, has Helen Cahalane’s efforts in its corner.

The School of Social Work’s Child Welfare Education and Research Programs, led by principal investigator Cahalane, is committed to training dedicated and motivated caseworkers to help these children. The programs Cahalane oversees—the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program, Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL), and Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB)—are distinct yet interrelated. They support research and evaluation initiatives to strengthen the public child welfare system.

Program initiatives include research and evaluation projects that further child welfare practices and contribute to improved life outcomes for children and families, including evaluating the transfer of learning from the classroom to the child welfare practice field, evaluating the effectiveness of professional social work education in achieving child welfare agency goals, and the use of early screening to identify developmental and mental health needs among young children receiving child welfare services, among others.

As a clinical associate professor, Cahalane teaches in the direct practice concentration of Pitt’s MSW program. She also is a past recipient of the Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award, Pitt’s highest teaching honor.

HELEN CAHALANE

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As a clinical associate professor, Cahalane teaches in the direct practice concentration of Pitt’s MSW program. She also is a past recipient of the Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award, Pitt’s highest teaching honor.
Jeffrey Shook was drawn to the field of social work not only because of its focus on rigorous research, but also because of its commitment to using that research to produce social change.

After Shook received his MSW and PhD in social work from the University of Michigan, he attended law school and developed an interest in the field of juvenile justice while serving as an intern representing youths confined to a maximum-security juvenile facility.

Shook is now an associate professor at the School of Social Work, where his research, teaching, and practice focus on the intersections of law, policy, and practice in the lives of children and youths. Specifically, his research and funding have focused on juveniles being tried and incarcerated as adults, the administration of juvenile justice, the movement of young people between systems, and young people “aging out” of the child welfare system. Shook also is involved in efforts to end the sentencing of juveniles to life sentences without the opportunity for parole both in Pennsylvania and nationally.

Most recently, Shook received a 2013 Chancellor’s Distinguished Public Service Award for his work in “the creation of a movement aimed at reforming sentencing policy and, more broadly, working to improve law, policy, and practice for children and youth across a broad range of issues.”

“The School of Social Work has provided me with a strong foundation to conduct research and with the necessary support for my work in seeking to improve laws, policies, and practices that affect children and youths.”
Rachel Woodson Goode

With generous support provided by a 2012–13 Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, doctoral student Rachel Woodson Goode has been conducting ethnographic research with overweight and obese African American women within faith-based settings in the greater Pittsburgh region. She has been examining their experiences in weight loss treatment and the barriers and facilitators to achieving their weight loss goals. Her research experience has allowed her to understand the role of spirituality and how the intersection of race, class, and gender impacts some of the eating decisions of African American women. In the field, Goode facilitates several workshops that provide opportunities for participants to learn about appetite awareness, stress management, and tools to understand their relationship with food.

Eunhee Choi

Doctoral student Eunhee Choi’s work is devoted to building policies and programs that support individuals who are willing to work as a way to remain healthy and active in old age. Her experience as a social worker delivering services for older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Australia sparked an enduring interest in productive aging. Her subsequent work for the Korean Senior Employment Program convinced her that today’s older generation desires something more than passively being taken care of, and her current research is exploring this very timely subject matter. Choi has received research support from the School of Social Work through the Wynne Korr Doctoral Student Resource Fund.

RACHEL WOODSON GOODE

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For more than four years, doctoral student Samantha Teixeira has been conducting community-based participatory research through the Homewood Children’s Village under the mentorship of Professor John Wallace (see page 3), the principal investigator on the University of Pittsburgh Center on Race and Social Problems’ Comm-Univer-City of Pittsburgh Project. Teixeira’s research focuses on the ways in which the built environment affects young people and the communities in which they live. As a 2011–12 Albert Schweitzer fellow, Teixeira worked with young people in Pittsburgh to address the environmental health disparities posed by vacant buildings and lots through photography and community mapping.

The shift from the child welfare system to independence can be difficult for youths. It’s a transition that Lisa Schelbe would like to help ease. The recent doctoral program graduate received significant support to fund her research exploring how youths navigate this transition. Her hope is that findings from her research will be used to create practices and policies that will help young people move into adulthood more smoothly and experience fewer negative outcomes. Schelbe started to develop her dissertation research question while working on a pilot project funded by the Center on Race and Social Problems. Support from the School of Social Work through the Wynne Korr Doctoral Student Resource and Barbara Shore funds, as well as a student research grant from Pitt’s Women’s Studies Program, helped her to obtain a Doris Duke Fellowship for the Promotion of Child Well-being, which supported the last two years of her work.
Ram A. Cnaan (PhD ’80) is a man of firsts.
A world-renowned expert in studying faith-based social services, he carried out the first national study on the role of local religious congregations in the provision of social services and conducted the first one-city (Philadelphia, Pa.) census of congregations and their social care.

Cnaan—associate dean for research, professor, and chair of the doctoral program in social welfare, and director of the Program for Religion and Social Policy Research at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice—credits the School of Social Work with giving him a “foundation of the science of social work.”

He has completed numerous studies on the role of volunteers in social services and on the meaning of the concept of volunteering. He also has studied the role of faith-based social services in the American welfare system as well as the care provided by Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and assessed the fiscal value of congregations to their local economy. Additionally, he is conducting economic development studies in India, South Korea, and Israel.

Cnaan also initiated the first social work professional doctoral program (clinical Doctor of Social Work), now in its seventh year at Penn and being replicated by two other social work schools. More recently, he initiated the Goldring Reentry Initiative, which has social work students help prisoners to reenter life with their families and communities upon release—ultimately helping to reduce recidivism.

Cnaan was recently appointed a Global Eminent scholar by Kyung Hee University in South Korea.

“For most of my life, I was a good student who got good grades and moved along the educational system. When I came to the Pitt doctoral program in social work, I knew how to be a student. When I left the program, I knew how to conduct research. Through rigorous courses and personal attention from the faculty, not to mention my wonderful peers, I was ready to carry out independent research. The Pitt education provided the tools as well as the values that have transformed me into a proud social work researcher.”
It makes sense that Michael A. Lindsey (PhD ’02) believes in the power of joint degrees, asserting that the integrated degrees empower “students with the ability to fuse two different perspectives.” Lindsey, after all, earned his own joint PhD in social work and Master of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh.

After amassing 15 years of clinical practice experience serving youths and families in Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, Md.; and Pittsburgh, Lindsey is now an associate professor at the New York University Silver School of Social Work.

Previously, he held positions spanning different schools at the University of Maryland, Baltimore: Lindsey served as program coordinator and associate professor in the MSW/MPH joint degree program in the School of Social Work and as a faculty affiliate in the Center for School Mental Health in the School of Medicine’s Department of Psychiatry.

Lindsey’s clinical experience and academic research have focused on mental health service use among youths and families and how best to develop and target interventions to improve their engagement in and access to services. He has examined the prohibitive factors that lead to unmet mental health needs among vulnerable Black youths with depression and other behavioral health issues. In addition to his research and practice, Lindsey developed the Making Connections Intervention, a program designed to prepare adolescents to be positively involved in mental health services for depression.

“Both the MPH and the PhD programs at Pitt had stellar reputations in their respective fields, so I knew I would have an incredible educational experience with renowned faculty in the School of Social Work and in the Graduate School of Public Health. … I wasn’t sure I wanted to be in academia, but I owe Dean [Larry] Davis a lot for giving me the insight to critically examine how my skills and talents might be used in academia.”
Sandy Momper is committed to improving mental and physical health care access among American Indian and African American families and children in urban settings. It’s a mission that she lives each day as an assistant professor of social work at the University of Michigan and a board member for American Indian Health and Family Services of Southeastern Michigan.

Momper is an MSW and PhD alumnus of Pitt’s School of Social Work. Her 20-plus years of direct practice experience as well as her expertise in community organizing have made her a leader in the field. She credits some of her success in community-based participatory research to the School of Social Work faculty members “who know how to teach research that assists the community in problem solving leading to interventions.”

Momper’s work in gambling, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, mental health, and health disparities among rural and urban American Indians has been funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Newberry Library, National Institute of Mental Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse, and University of Michigan Substance Abuse Research Center as well as its Vivian A. and James L. Curtis School of Social Work Research and Training Center.

“My time in the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work prepared me to be a community-based participatory researcher. When I arrived at Pitt, I was a clinician and not a researcher. My years in the program taught me about research that is involved in the community and seeks to better the lives of the people social workers serve. Additionally, while in the program, I forged friendships with colleagues from all over the world, as the School of Social Work’s doctoral program is very diverse. I am proud to be a graduate of the program.”
The University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work established the Center on Race and Social Problems (CRSP) in 2002 to help lead America further along the path to social justice. CRSP conducts applied social science research on race, ethnicity, and color and their influence on the quality of life for all Americans.

The goals of the center are to foster high-quality multidisciplinary research on racial issues, mentor scholars who focus on race-related research, and disseminate race-related knowledge and information.

The center focuses on race-related social problems in the following seven areas:

- Criminal justice
- Economic disparities
- Educational disparities
- Health
- Interracial group relations
- Mental health
- Youth, families, and the elderly

To continually fortify its high-quality multidisciplinary applied research programs, CRSP:

- provides students, postdoctoral fellows, faculty, and other scholars with guidance and support for their race-related research;
- funds pilot studies that support race-related research;
- aids University researchers in developing and obtaining external funding for their projects;
- publicizes race-related research by providing talks, forums, conferences, lectures, summer institutes, and courses; and
- publishes the quarterly journal Race and Social Problems.

In addition, the center is a national resource for race-related social science information for both academics and the general public. The CRSP Web site, www.crsp.pitt.edu, also is a searchable database that connects users instantly to 10 years’ worth of videos, publications, and other center information that can be used for research, grant preparation, and education.

“The problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line.”

W.E.B. DuBois, author, 1903

Participating in a panel discussion during the 2010 Race in America: Restructuring Inequality conference are (left to right) Alex Castellanos, Abigail Thernstrom, Tony Norman, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, and Benjamin Todd Jealous.
CONTACT

For additional information or to make arrangements to visit the Pittsburgh campus, contact:

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The School of Social Work welcomes applications from international students whose credentials meet the requirements and standards of the School of Social Work. International applicants should contact:

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