Preparing the Country’s Next Generation for Success

The 2010 Census found that for the first time white babies were no longer the majority born in the United States, and 50.4 percent of children under the age of one were in a non-white ethnic group. The children of foreign-born parents are expected to make up about 50 percent of youth by 2040.

As immigrant populations grow in the United States, how well prepared is the next generation to succeed in school and beyond? What was understood for decades about first-generation children is quickly becoming outdated. In a paper published in *Children and Youth Services Review*, Professor Wen-Jui Han and her colleagues examine various factors related to family environment to see how they affect children’s school readiness.

They draw on data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study - Birth Cohort, the first large and nationally representative birth cohort study of children in the United States. The study followed 10,700 children born in 2001 from birth to kindergarten, with data collected at four points throughout these years.

Han and her colleagues compared four groups of minorities—Asian, Chinese, Latino, and Mexican—along with white children (non-black, non-Hispanic). They examined factors related to family resources (family socioeconomic status and language background) and family process (parenting behaviors, parental employment, and child care arrangements). The researchers found that family language background was a key influence in expressive language and early reading; socioeconomic status and language background helped determine students’ math performances.

CONTINUED INSIDE >>
Preparing the Country’s Next Generation for Success

All children of foreign-born parents scored lower than white children in expressive language, which includes verbal and written language. Children of foreign-born Chinese and Asians, however, often had better scores than their white peers in early reading and math. At the other end of the scale, children of foreign-born Mexicans and Latinos had significantly lower scores for early reading and math than their white peers.

Han found a striking difference between the children of foreign-born Asians, particularly Chinese, and foreign-born Mexicans. Chinese immigrants often had a high socioeconomic status (well educated with higher incomes) and had the highest English proficiency among all immigrant groups, even though only 15 percent said English was their primary language at home.

“If you can not only speak your monotone language, but also your parents are able to provide an English-speaking environment to prepare you for the start of school, that usually makes quite a big impact on your school readiness,” explained Han. These luxuries may be something to which the children of Mexican immigrants could not be exposed.

In fact, just having parents who can speak English well can be beneficial for children, even if English is not spoken at home. English-speaking parents can help their children navigate the school system better, perhaps providing the best possible future for their children.

“We are also surprised that Chinese parents have a very high likelihood to send their children to center-based care, which is most often likely to provide English-speaking environments, so that kind of endorses the importance of center-based care or preschool in preparing children to be ready for school,” said Han.

The study makes the important point that children of immigrants should not be compared only to white children, and that immigrants are coming from different countries than 50 years ago. “Often times when we think about how immigrant children are doing, we compare them to mainstream society,” said Han. “Immigrant children within themselves have quite a diversity.”

Ultimately, the unequal starting point for children in school is a reflection of disparate family resources. These initial differences may become magnified over years, particularly if the English capacity of parents is limited. This information can shape more effective policy, which can enhance family resources and level the playing field so all students have equal chance of reaching their optimal potential. Han notes that policymakers must keep the diversity of immigrants in mind and remember that one-size-fits-all may not be best for policies and early intervention programs.

A Letter from the Dean

Dear alumni and friends:

With the 2012-13 academic year off and running, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who supported the Silver School last year. In this issue of the Newsletter, we recognize our nearly 900 donors with the annual Honor Roll. The Silver School had a banner year in 2011-12. We worked to strengthen our academic programs, building on their strong clinical reputation. We have been able to increase research opportunities and global learning programs for students. Additionally, we have recruited world-class faculty, adding to the strong group already at the School. To learn more about our accomplishments in 2011-12, you can review our annual report, available at: www.nyu.edu/socialwork/alumni/newsletters.and.publications.html.

Also in the Newsletter, you will read about the first-class education that Silver School alumni donors help support. Lauren Kalogridis, BS ’13, writes about the organization she helped found, Youth Take Charge, which educates high school students about human trafficking. Lauren is one example of the Silver School’s leaders, and one of the many bright, creative students earning a degree here. You will also read about research by Professor Wen-Jui Han on school readiness among children of immigrants and Associate Professor Carol Tosone on shared trauma.

The topic of shared trauma is particularly timely with the experience we have all had in the New York area with Hurricane Sandy. Students and faculty jumped into action in the days following the storm, volunteering with local organizations and collecting much-needed supplies for families in hard-hit areas, even as they endured hardships of their own. We are also working to evaluate what longer-term services the School’s faculty and students may be able to provide.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season, and thank you for your efforts to support the NYU Silver School of Social Work.

Lynn Videka
Dean and Professor

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The Silver School
Hosts Conference on
DSM-5 Proposals

The fifth edition of the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) is scheduled to be published in May 2013. The standard for the field, the manual shapes treatment, diagnosis, and insurance decisions, and can impact streams of research funding. The proposed changes have stirred up controversy as they broaden some diagnostic categories and create new disorders in other areas.

Over 150 people attended the full-day conference on The DSM-5: Proposed Changes, Controversies, and the Implications for the Future of Clinical Practice. Held on Friday, October 12, the conference was co-sponsored by the NYU Silver School of Social Work and the New York City Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

The conference examined the changes proposed to diagnostic criteria and categories of disorder in the DSM-5. The speakers discussed the possible motivations and rationale behind the suggested alterations, the controversies that have arisen due to these proposals, the broader intellectual issues at stake in these controversies, and how the new edition might affect future psychiatric diagnosis and clinical practice.

“The conference emerged from the shared desire among faculty members to address how the fifth edition of the DSM might affect education and practice,” said Eileen Wolkstein, director of the Office of Global and Lifelong Learning. “With University Professor Jerome Wakefield as a faculty member at the School, it was a natural course of action for the Silver School to take the lead in considering what the changes to the DSM could mean for social workers.”

The conference was comprised of two parts. The morning portion included an overview by Wakefield of the history of and suggested revisions to DSM-5 as well as an in-depth analysis of select specific examples.

In published journal articles, Wakefield has questioned many aspects of the proposals. He argues that clinical depression will be defined too broadly and will encompass normal sadness, such as sadness during bereavement. In other cases, any negative personality trait will be inflatable into a personality disorder. Two examples include the proposed hypersexual disorder and intermittent explosive disorder.

“DSM criteria can either help us by clarifying the nature of a client’s problem and focusing us on the right target for change, or they can get in our way and obscure the real issues and mislead us as to the client’s needs,” he explained.

Wakefield argues that not every problem outside the existing criteria should be expanded into its own disorder category, pathologizing an entire segment of the population in the process. “When we label a condition with a DSM category, we thus bias how we and others think about the condition and its treatment,” he said. “We also create stigma.”

The afternoon portion featured two panels. The first reviewed proposed changes to specific aspects of DSM-5 and their potential implications for the corresponding areas of clinical practice. The second panel addressed what DSM-5 will mean for the field of mental health and specifically for the social work profession.

NYU Silver will follow up this discussion with a second conference after the DSM-5 has been published. Scheduled for October 4, 2013, the conference will look at the impact of the manual on clinical practice.
A Lifelong Commitment to Social Work

Jayne M. Silberman, PhD ’85

“Social work has been in my life all of my life.”

Jayne M. Silberman’s love of and respect for social work and community service runs deep. She is the chair of the Faculty Awards Advisory Committee for the Lois and Samuel J. Silberman Fund of the New York Community Trust, a scholar, and a champion of the profession.

The Silberman Fund was founded in the early 1960s by her father, Samuel “Buddy” Silberman, to focus on social work education and training for service delivery. Silberman’s admiration for her father comes through when she discusses her family history. Buddy grew up in a philanthropic family, which informed his decisions in the cigar business. When he built the first cigar factory in Puerto Rico in the mid-1950s, for example, he established a place of work with hours structured around Puerto Rican life.

The Silberman Fund’s impact has been sweeping. At the time of its establishment, a foundation focused on social work was non-existent. It provided major financial support for the Hunter College School of Social Work—now the Silberman School of Social Work—in 1964, forming the first public social work school in New York City. From the 1960s through the 1980s, the Fund published dozens of books on a range of topics—including volunteerism, computer technology in the field, and race issues—often before they rose to prominence in the profession.

Silberman did not realize her father’s contributions to social work until she was an undergraduate and took a social policy course. “It turned out the Silberman Fund had published the first real text book on social policy,” she said. “It was a shock.”

Pursuing a career in social work seemed like a natural fit for Silberman, a member of the NYU Silver School of Social Work’s first doctoral class. Over the course of her career, Silberman has run her own private practice and has taught at several schools, including NYU Silver and Mount Sinai Medical Center, where she is an adjunct instructor. “It was because of my education at the Silver School with extraordinary faculty that I went into teaching,” she said. “I had amazing role models.”

Silberman’s experience as a teacher led her to create the Silberman Fund’s Faculty Grant Program in 1988. Its goal is to provide social work faculty mid-size grants to conduct initial research in a particular area, which will let them springboard to larger grants for the project. Silver School Professor Vincent Guilamo-Ramos was a 2012 recipient for his proposal titled Latino Male Adolescent Well-Being: The Role of Fathers in Disadvantaged Communities.

“We are targeting faculty who are on the cutting edge of developing new opportunities for education based on their position at the interface between academic and direct practice,” she said. “We have always encouraged that partnership between academia and the community.”

Silberman has left her private practice behind and scaled back her teaching to focus more on the Silberman Fund. “I came to the conclusion that I was someone who had an opportunity to make a difference on a broader scale.”

She is also a photographer and her first book, In the Herd: A Photographic Journey with the Chincoteague Ponies and Assateague Horses, was recently published by Andover Press. “There’s no question that there’s a link between social work and my photography,” she said. “My book is all about relationship for survival. Without relationship there is no survival.”

Silberman was honored for her career’s work at this year’s Alumni Day with the Silver School’s Distinguished Alumni Award. The NYU Bookstore and NYU Silver hosted Silberman at a signing of In the Herd on Thursday, December 6.
When the Profession Becomes Personal

Following a crisis, people often turn to social workers for help. But what happens when clinicians are affected by the crisis first hand? In a recently published article, Associate Professor Carol Tosone poses this question as she compares narratives of two clinicians—one who worked in the World Trade Center on 9/11 and one who lives and works in Sderot, Israel. One city survived a discrete traumatic attack, the other is continuously exposed to terrorism.

Both social workers experienced shared trauma, exposure to the same community trauma as their clients. “In both these examples, clinicians are deprived of the clinical distance usually afforded them by having a different set of external experiences than those of their clients,” said Tosone.

Clinicians’ reactions to the events affect his or her relationship—consciously or unconsciously, positively or detrimentally—with clients. Boundaries demarcating professional and personal realms are less pronounced, and clinicians are more prone to self-disclose their collective disaster experiences to clients. Shared trauma provides opportunity for professional and personal growth, and agency response underscores the need for agencies to provide supports for their social workers.

“Clinicians are great at helping clients, but not themselves,” said Tosone. “This research legitimizes and reinforces the need for self care as the basis to do work.” She notes this is especially important in today’s economic climate where social workers are expected to do more with fewer resources.

Tosone and her colleagues found that the clinician’s role at her place of employment affected her reactions to the trauma. The Israeli clinician was a faculty member at a local university and balanced roles as a professor, college administrator, and colleague without perceived support from the college administration. The New York clinician was interning as part of her NYU Silver School of Social Work MSW education. With less responsibility, she was able to take full advantage of opportunities for professional posttraumatic growth.

Tosone’s research is part of a decade-long interest in shared trauma, both national and international, which began with her own September 11 experience as she was in her office with a client when the planes struck the Twin Towers.

She conducted two studies on shared trauma—one related to 9/11, another around Hurricane Katrina—where she surveyed hundreds of mental health clinicians. In both New York and New Orleans, the perceived lack of professional support programs by an agency or workplace generally exacerbated the trauma effects on clinicians. In New Orleans, however, clinicians were more prone to shared trauma. Many of these clinicians had abandoned their homes, but were still expected to work when their own lives were critically unstable for weeks or months. Said Tosone, “The agency can serve as a kind of holding environment to shelter and protect clinicians, but often times our agencies fail.”

With the escalation of climate change and terrorism around the globe, more and more mental health clinicians may find themselves practicing in a traumatic environment. Tosone has co-edited with Ellen Ruderman a new book to be published late this year addressing the environment in which social workers now find themselves. Contemporary Clinical Practice: The Holding Environment Under Assault examines how external forces, including wars, a slow economy, and growing inequities impacts the therapeutic relationship.

“If our own traumatic reactions go unexamined, these responses can negatively impact the client-clinician relationship,” explained Tosone. “We need to train clinicians to better understand how dual exposure to traumatic events potentially alters the therapeutic process, both positively and negatively.”

Working to Realize a World without Slavery

Lauren Kalogridis, BS ’13

Youth Take Charge, an organization addressing the issue of human trafficking, was founded by Silver School students Lauren Kalogridis, BS ’13; Cordelia Brady, BS ’13; and Danielle Eagan, BS ’14; Becca Park (NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study); Sachiko Pettit (NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development), Bailey Theado (NYU Gallatin), and Sasha Weinert (NYU Liberal Studies Program). Adrian Dhanaraj (NYU College of Arts and Sciences) has also joined the team. In this issue of the Newsletter, Kalogridis writes about the development of the initiative and its work.

We sought to create Youth Take Charge after learning how little streamlined education there is in New York City high schools regarding human trafficking, and saw our opportunity to bridge the gap. Youth Take Charge is a social venture to educate high school students about human trafficking and encourage them to take action. We submitted our business plan and pitched our idea to judges in the 2011-12 Reynolds Changemaker Challenge. Our team was named the 2011-12 Reynolds Changemaker Challenge Best Overall Venture and received the Grand Prize Award, which includes full funding of our first year to inaugurate our program in New York City high schools.

Youth Take Charge will host workshops at schools and provide viable and effective ways for high school students to get involved and take action. As the next generation of change makers, high school students are valuable individuals who—given the proper leadership skills and tools—can begin to change the world today. Our mission is to foster a unified coalition of self-led, anti-trafficking clubs in New York City high schools. By providing curricular materials, mentorship components, and leadership training to teens, Youth Take Charge will empower the next generation to realize a world without slavery.

Since receiving the award last spring, we have successfully piloted our Youth Take Charge workshop at the Sadie Nash Leadership Project Summer Institute, a leadership and empowerment program for high school-age young women. We plan to expand our organization and begin facilitating workshops in local classrooms and after-school programs later this fall.

If you would like to learn more about Youth Take Charge, visit www.youthtakecharge.org or contact Lauren at lauren@youthtakecharge.org.

Class Notes

Lolly Berger, MSW ’11, traveled around South America studying violence against women, got certified as a yoga teacher, and is now studying various healing modalities. She hopes to develop a holistic empowerment program for women survivors of violence in developing countries.

Lewis Dlugasch, MSW ’89, runs support groups for parents of autistic children; does individual therapy for children with neurobehavioral disorders; is an adjunct professor of child development at Sussex County Community College Newton, New Jersey; and gives workshops and seminars on neurodevelopmental issues for teachers and parents.

Cecilia Escamilla, PhD ’09, has a private practice in Queens and also works in Long Island. She loves her work with adolescents and young adults who are striving to achieve a balanced life.

The book The Lost Tribe of the Andes: A Jewish-American Family’s Struggle with Assimilation by Jane Genende, MSW ’79, was published in February 2012. In this memoir and family history, Jane explores the challenges her family faced in the course of emigrating from Europe to America before World War II and assimilating into American culture.

Thomas Johnson, MSW ’78, continues his double life as clinical supervisor at the New York Harbor VA Health Care System in psychiatry and the coordinator of their social work intern program in Manhattan. He is also involved in private practice in Chelsea and the South Jersey Shore. He will be graduating in June from the Eastern Group Psychotherapy Society’s training program and hopes to expand his practice in groups.

Reji Mathew, MSW ’91, PhD ’05, received the 2012 Alumni of Achievement Service Award from the Dominican College Social Work Alumni Association for her work as a health advocacy journalist. Dr. Mathew maintains a website/blog at www.rejimathewwriter.com.

Meigs Ross, MSW ’10, is the new director of the NYU Silver Post-Master’s Certificate Program in Spirituality and Social Work and a psychotherapist at Dave Schwing Psychotherapy. He continues as the manager of pastoral care at New York Presbyterian Weill Cornell.

Bruce E. Saul, MSW ’96, is in private practice on the East End of Long Island with offices in Greenport and Shelter Island, working with individuals, couples, and families. He is a member of the Metropolitan Chapter of the New York State Society of Clinical Social Workers.

C. Danette Wilson, MSW ’97, recently became program manager for St. Luke’s/Roosevelt Hospital’s New Beginnings Program, which works with sexually exploited adolescents, or those at high risk, and their families.

Send class notes to ssw.alumniaffairs@nyu.edu.
Faculty Awards and Honors

The Council on Social Work Education honored Professor Jeane Anastas with the Feminist Scholarship Award at their Annual Program Meeting in November. The award recognizes someone who has advanced social work practice, policy, research, and education related to the intersections of gender and social justice.

Mary McKay, the McSilver Professor of Poverty Studies and director of the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research, has been selected as a fellow of the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.

The McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research has been awarded a $3.8 million grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to meet the urgent need to develop effective and sustainable HIV care and prevention approaches for the unprecedentedly large population of perinatally HIV-infected (PHIV+) South African youth and their families. The study, led by Professor Mary McKay, will also aim to increase understanding of behavioral and health risks in this emerging population.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Health Resources and Services Administration awarded the Silver School a three-year, $467,000 grant to support interdisciplinary education of future behavioral health care providers. In partnership with the NYU Colleges of Nursing and Dentistry and with two community-based organizations, Institute for Community Living and Community Access, the Silver School will train MSW students committed to working in behavioral health, and will provide primary and integrated behavioral health care for female civilians and veterans living in poverty-impacted, underserved communities.

Associate Professor Michelle Munson received two grants for research projects of which she is the principal investigator. She received a Fahs-Beck Fellowship of the New York Community Trust for “Just Do You!” Refinement of an Intervention to Improve Engagement in Mental Health Services among Vulnerable Young Adults. She was awarded a University Research Challenge Fund grant for Examining Positive Young Adult Development from a Multi-Context Perspective.

University Professor Jerome Wakefield has been named an honorary faculty member at NYU Medical Center’s Institute for Psychoanalytic Education and to the Advisory Board for the NYU Center for Bioethics. Wakefield also received a 2011 Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing Author Award.

Catherine Vu, assistant professor/faculty fellow, has received an Okura Mental Health Scholarship for Asian and Pacific Islander Social Workers from CSWE. She has also been named an Emerging Scholar by the Center for Nonprofits and Philanthropy at the Urban Institute.

Faculty Publications


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The Silver School gratefully acknowledges the continuing support of Connie and Martin Silver.