I P R

Institute for Policy Research

Northwestern University

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New Grants, New Ideas

$10 million will support research projects on education and housing

Since March, four IPR faculty have been awarded five highly competitive, multi-year grants, totaling $10 million, from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences.

The grants will help shape our understanding of how housing and developmental contexts affect child outcomes, improve quasi-experimental

P. Reese

Members of the new MacArthur network discuss plans for the upcoming study.

methods in education research, train a cadre of education researchers around the nation, and examine how school leadership affects student achievement.

"These awards underscore the high caliber of IPR faculty research and the Institute's policy-relevant, interdisciplinary approach," said **Fay Lomax Cook**, IPR's director and professor of human development and social policy.

(Continued on page 9)

Inside this Issue

Improving No Child Left Behind

Capitol Hill briefing provides research-driven recommendations for revamping the law

At a February 22 IPR policy research briefing in Washington, D.C., three researchers spoke to a crowd of 65 Capitol Hill staffers, government officials, researchers, and advocates. They discussed what lawmakers should consider when they retool No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

L. Kassoff-Nordby/LK Photos

David Figlio (l.), Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, and Thomas D. Cook

NCLB: Is It Working?

The first question is simply: Has NCLB raised achievement? IPR social psychologist and education professor **Thomas D. Cook** presented the most scientifically rigorous study to date to show that NCLB has indeed raised standardized test scores in public schools since 2002.

Cook, with IPR's Manyee Wong, the paper's lead author, and Peter Steiner, designed a national study to compare public school students with students in Catholic and non-Catholic private schools, which are not subject to NCLB. Using data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), they demonstrated that public school students around the nation made substantial gains in fourth- and eighth-grade math.

(Continued on page 10)

First Joint IPR/Medical School Appointment

Position to link medical and social sciences more closely

When clinical and developmental psychologist **Lauren Wakschlag** joined IPR this February, she became the first faculty fellow to hold a joint appointment between the Institute and the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern.

P. Reese

Lindsay Chase-Lansdale (l.) welcomes Lauren Wakschlag to IPR.

The appointment will specifically link the medical and social sciences at the university by bridging IPR's Cells to Society (C2S): The Center on Social Disparities and Health and the newly created Feinberg Department of Medical Social Sciences (MSS).

Wakschlag serves as MSS professor and associate chair for scientific development and institutional collaboration, in addition to her IPR/C2S faculty fellow appointment.

(Continued on page 8)

Faculty Recognition

Recent Faculty Fellow Grants

With major financial support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, IPR social psychologist **Thomas D. Cook** will lead a MacArthur network on How Housing Matters for Families with Children. Cook also received two grants from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in the U.S. Department of Education for research and teaching on quasi-experimental best practices in education. (See cover story.)

Education researcher and statistician **Larry Hedges** received IES funding to train a group of postdoctoral fellows in education research methods (see cover story). The National Science Foundation is also supporting his efforts to conduct generalizability research through scaling up SimCalc data.

P. Reese

Wesley G. Skogan

Political scientist **Wesley G. Skogan** will continue study of CeaseFire, a Chicago violence prevention program, with a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Honors and Presentations of Note

IPR Faculty Fellows

Developmental psychologist **P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale** co-presented "The Importance of Parental Postsecondary Education and Employment for Children" at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's National Roundtable on the Educare Postsecondary Education Project, November 4–5, in Seattle.

Fay Lomax Cook, IPR director and social policy professor, gave the keynote address "Fostering Interdisciplinary Research" at the annual retreat of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, October 30, in New York.

Psychologist **Alice Eagly** was named a highly cited researcher by the Institute for Scientific Information.

Education economist **David Figlio** received the American Education Finance Association's Outstanding Service Award.

Education researcher and statistician **Larry Hedges** spoke on "Infrastructure Needed for Urban Education Research" at the America's Urban Infrastructure Conference, November 19, at Washington University in St. Louis.

S. Anzaldi

Jennifer Richeson

Sociologist **Leslie McCall** was elected to the board of the General Social Survey to serve through 2012.

Social psychologist **Jennifer Richeson** was appointed a fellow of both the Association for Psychological Science and the Midwestern Psychological Association.

The Family Defense Center in Chicago honored law professor **Dorothy Roberts** with the inaugural Family Defender Award. (See related article, p. 7.)

IPR Faculty Associates

Sociologist **Steven Epstein**, recently named John C. Shaffer Professor in the Humanities at Northwestern, received a distinguished book award from the American Sociological Association for *Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research* (University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Education and African American studies professor **Carol Lee** received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. The American Association of Blacks in Higher Education also presented Lee with the President's Pacesetters Award.

Sociologist **Ann Orloff** was elected president of the Social Science History Association for 2009–10.

Sociologist and African American studies professor **Mary Pattillo** was named Harold Washington Professor, and economist **William Rogerson** became Harold and Virginia Anderson Teaching Chair at Northwestern.

The Hong Kong Institute of Education selected education researcher **James Spillane** as a senior research fellow.

Teresa Woodruff delivered the Probstein Lecture at Washington University in St. Louis on November 3, speaking on fertility preservation in cancer patients.

IPR Media Highlights

USA Today quoted IPR education researcher **James Rosenbaum** on how counselors can help high school students who are unprepared for college. IPR political scientist **Victoria DeFrancesco Soto** made two appearances on Chicago Public Radio's "Eight Forty-Eight" to discuss immigration and how the Republican Party is dealing with the issue. The *Chicago Sun-Times* profiled a new study by IPR sociologist **Celeste Watkins-Hayes** on how Chicago-area women with HIV/AIDS manage their health and their finances. The *Chicago Tribune* and *Slate* magazine quoted IPR anthropologist **Thomas McDade** on his study of why exposure to germs might lead to better health. The *New York Times* asked law professor and IPR faculty associate **Shari Seidman Diamond** about the difficulty of finding "untainted jurors" for high-profile trials. Law professor and IPR faculty associate **Lee Epstein** also spoke with the *New York Times*, *Slate*, and others about factors that influence modern-day appointments to the Supreme Court. See these and other press clips at: ***www.northwestern.edu/ipr/media/media.html***.

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A Measure of the Common Good

Series looks at improving measures of nonprofit performance

The cliché of performance measurement has become "what gets measured gets done." Yet how does one go about measuring performance—particularly in government and nonprofit sectors, where money and mission often collide? What are the best benchmarks, the best methods to use?

To address the pitfalls and perks of measuring—and also rewarding—performance in these sectors, IPR economist **Burton Weisbrod** launched a speakers' series in 2007. Now in its third year, the IPR Seminar Series on Performance Measurement has brought a multidisciplinary cadre of researchers and professionals from around the country to share their work in myriad areas, from schools and criminal courts to hospitals and museums.

"No matter which sector they represent, nonprofit and government organizations face similar issues in how to devise incentive structures that align self-interest with organizational interest," said Weisbrod, one of the nation's leading scholars on the nonprofit sector. "These producers of 'public goods' all seek to develop reward systems while avoiding adverse side effects, such as game-strategic, opportunistic behavior."

P. Reese

Economists Julian Betts and Burton Weisbrod talk before Betts' presentation on value-added models of student achievement.

Seminars have addressed important questions of policy, such as benchmarking police performance, by IPR political scientist **Wesley G. Skogan**; tracking college fundraising efforts, by Princeton economist **Harvey Rosen**; how rankings affect public college funding, by University of Maryland economist **Ginger Zhe Jin**; developing key indicators of professionalism for nonprofits, by Stanford sociologist **Woody Powell**; and the benefits of value-added models of student achievement, by economist **Julian Betts** of the University of California, San Diego. Weisbrod, too, has presented his research comparing performance of nonprofit, public, and for-profit hospitals.

The series also reaches outside of academia to look at how, for example, a premier foundation, such as the Spencer Foundation, or one of the world's largest national history museums, the Field Museum, develops measures of its performance.

"The seminar series has demonstrated how productive it can be to integrate researchers in two ways—across disciplines and industries—to focus on how performance measurement and incentives can lead to new thinking and new areas of application," Weisbrod said.

Attendees come from a number of schools and departments at Northwestern—including its schools of education and social policy, law, communications, journalism (Medill), and management (Kellogg)—and from five other local universities.

Weisbrod sees the seminar series, which has been supported by Northwestern's Searle Center on Law, Regulation, and Economic Growth, as eventually evolving into a larger program to support research by undergraduate students, graduates, and faculty, along with conferences and a working paper series.

Burton Weisbrod is John Evans Professor of Economics, an IPR faculty fellow, and chair of IPR's Program on Philanthropy and Nonprofit Organizations. To learn more about the seminar series, see ***www.northwestern.edu/ipr/research/spm.html****.*

Improving Practices and Performance in Schools

Conference probes the research-to-practice divide

The Obama administration's $4-billion Race to the Top Fund exemplifies the current push for data-driven models and accountability in education. Yet there is often a great divide between theories of "what works" and scalable, on-the ground practices.

To this end, 385 researchers from a variety of disciplines gathered in Washington, D.C., March 4 to 6, for the third annual conference of the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE). IPR houses the society, which is currently led by IPR faculty fellow **Larry Hedges**, Board of Trustees Professor of Statistics and Social Policy.

Built on the theme of "Research into Practice," the 2010 conference welcomed several keynote speakers and panelists who influence the direction of federal research initiatives—and ultimately policy and practice. Speakers included **Cecilia Rouse**, a member of the Council of Economic Advisers; **John Easton**, director of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in the U.S. Department of Education; and **Thomas McLellan**, deputy director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Pointing to parallels between health care and education, McLellan described the process of moving from clinical research to evidence-based policy in crafting the president's drug-control strategy. He discussed the importance of supporting research designs that recognize the chronic nature

(Continued on page 8)

IPR Research Notes

Gender on the Bench: Its Role in Judicial Decisions

Courtesy of NU Law School

Lee Epstein

In the courtroom, does it make a difference whether your case is heard by a female judge rather than a male one? With one exception, not so much—according to recent research by law professor and IPR faculty associate **Lee Epstein**.

"Out of 13 areas of law, from affirmative action to abortion, our study finds gender to be irrelevant in the outcome of cases," she said, "until we look at questions of sexual discrimination, where the differences are marked."

On average, female judges are 10 percent more likely than male judges to decide in the plaintiff's favor in such cases.

Additionally, the study shows that male judges behave differently when they sit on a panel with one or more women, though again only when the case involves sexual discrimination. In such proceedings, the probability that a male judge will side with the plaintiff increases between 12 and 14 percent.

Until now, judges and researchers have debated possible differences between men and women on the bench without any causal evidence. But Epstein and her colleagues drew their findings from the most comprehensive and statistically rigorous study to date of how gender affects judicial outcomes.

The researchers surveyed federal appellate judges around the country and then paired men and women based on a number of relevant traits. Their use of statistical "matching" accounted for the role of other identity factors—such as age and political ideology—often shared by women judges.

While Epstein noted that further study is needed to explain the "panel effect" for men, she offered that heavy caseloads for judges at the appellate level and the workload resulting from a dissenting opinion might persuade male judges to follow female colleagues who have strong opinions about sexual discrimination. This "dissent aversion" might also account for some of the similarities between the sexes in the other 12 legal areas studied.

Still, the study's results indicate that appointing more female judges and possibly abandoning random assignment of judges in favor of creating mixed-sex panels would likely increase pro-plaintiff outcomes in sexual discrimination cases, should that become a policy goal.

Lee Epstein is Henry Wade Rogers Professor in the Northwestern School of Law. Her book Judicial Behavior: Theoretical and Quantitative Perspectives *with William Landes and Richard Posner is under contract with Harvard University Press.*

Quantifying Rape as a Weapon of War

M. Hanlon

John Hagan

In June 2008, the U.N. Security Council adopted a U.S.-sponsored resolution asserting that "sexual attacks in conflict zones may be considered war crimes." Yet how does one quantify these cases "with no witnesses and no victims?" asked International Criminal Court Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo.

Moreno-Ocampo has called for greater use of social science tools and analysis in bringing such charges to bear. Such instruments and methods are being honed by sociologist and IPR faculty associate **John Hagan** and his colleagues.

"State-sanctioned rape is a government-led, racially targeted weapon of war," said Hagan, lead author of the first peer-reviewed study of sexual violence in a war zone. It was published in the *American Journal of Public Health* in August 2009.

Using State Department data, Hagan and his colleagues set out not only to quantify incidents of rape in Sudan but also to chart responsibility for them.

One of the first methodological hurdles was how to confirm incidents of rape given victims' fear of retaliation and the social taboos surrounding their report. In Darfur, government health officials accompanied international investigators to the villages, effectively silencing victims. The survey got around this problem, Hagan explained, by moving across the border to Chad, where thousands had gathered in refugee camps.

The researchers then skirted the issue of self-reports by asking about the events as second-hand accounts (outcome variable) and cross-validating self-reports (control variable). The team interviewed a subset of 932 survey respondents, representing 22 different villages, about victimization they had either witnessed or heard about in Darfur. Nearly one-third of refugees reported that they or others were victimized during attacks.

The researchers also asked interviewees to recall the words of their attackers: "We will kill all the men and rape the women. We want to change the color," one victim reported.

The study showed a significant increase in both rape and racist attacks during joint ground attacks by Arab Janjaweed militias and Sudanese armed forces on non-Arab, black African farming villages.

"Sudanese authorities promoted rape as a tool for dehumanization and reproductive control," said Hagan, who places responsibility with Sudan's president, Omar Al-Bashir.

John Hagan is John D. MacArthur Professor of Sociology and Law and sociology department chair at Northwestern. He co-directs the American Bar Foundation's Center on Law & Globalization.

IPR Research Notes

The Power of Belief—Right or Wrong

A. Campbell

Monica Prasad

Some six years following the Sept. 11 attacks, one in three Americans said they still believed Saddam Hussein was behind the attacks, according to a September 2007 CBS News/*New York Times* poll.

In a May 2009 article published in *Sociological Inquiry*, IPR sociologist **Monica Prasad** and her colleagues examine why such surprising numbers of Americans continue to cling to this misperception—despite clear evidence to the contrary.

Many scholars have attributed this persistent belief to a "campaign of innuendo" by the Bush administration that implicitly and explicitly linked the two, Prasad said. She pointed out such an explanation assumes an underlying "Bayesian updating model," in which people are viewed as rational thinkers who update their opinions and beliefs once they are presented with new facts.

The researchers' findings, however, indicate that survey respondents engaged in "motivated reasoning," a psychological mechanism in which people seek information supporting their personal beliefs while ignoring conflicting information.

The data were collected in 2004 during the presidential election, a point at which the Saddam–Sept. 11 link was still robustly and widely believed; several national polls had one-third to one-half of respondents concurring on this connection.

First, the researchers used voting records to target low-income, white Republicans who voted for Bush in 2000. They chose these Republicans because of the well-documented partisan perception in their persistent belief of the Saddam–Sept. 11 link. (Prasad emphasizes that others, Democrats included, are equally susceptible to such lines of reasoning.)

Of the 246 respondents to more than 1,000 mailed surveys, 49 of those who fit the study's criteria—having voted for Bush again in 2004 and confirmed their belief in a Saddam-Sept. 11 link—agreed to be interviewed.

During the one-on-one "challenge interviews," the researchers presented the respondents with statements from the Sept. 11 Commission—and even President Bush—casting doubt on the connection between Saddam Hussein and the Sept. 11 attacks.

The result? All of the interviewees, except for one, steadfastly hung onto the connection. Several interviewees even resorted to a backward chain of reasoning, or what the

(Continued on page 8)

More than Just "Hard Work"

P. Reese

Leslie McCall

The American Dream has come to typify American beliefs about economic opportunity and inequality—that if you work hard you will get ahead.

"The idea is 'Americans want to join the rich, they don't want to soak them,' " explained IPR sociologist **Leslie McCall**. "So they don't tend to support redistributive government policies, such as taxes and welfare."

"But the picture is more complex," she continued. "We have to think about describing opportunity in ways other than just 'hard work gets you ahead.' "

To better describe the range of American beliefs on this issue, McCall identified five common tropes, or metaphors, for opportunity in society:

- "bootstraps" (hard work gets one ahead)
- "level playing field" (education opens doors for all)
- "equal opportunity" (equal treatment in the workforce)
- "rising tide" (macroeconomic forces create enough jobs)
- "just deserts" (pay is based solely on job performance and contribution)

Next, she began categorizing General Social Survey questions on income inequality and opportunity under one or more of these tropes. This allowed her to look at how respondents' perceptions of real world opportunities, or lack thereof, influence their beliefs about inequality—something that social scientists have largely ignored.

For example, belief in "just-deserts" opportunity—that people should be fairly compensated for the work they do—came into play the strongest on questions about preferred pay and perceived actual pay for five different occupations, including corporate executive, doctor, and unskilled worker.

"More and more people think that executives are overpaid, and workers are underpaid," McCall emphasized. "This leads them to the thought that inequality is a problem for society, reducing prosperity and restricting opportunities."

Thus, it was not surprising to see the public's deep anger over what they saw as excessive corporate bonuses following the 2009 bank bailouts, especially as the economy shed jobs and depressed worker wages. In fact, McCall added, such anger is not new. It peaked in the mid-1990s, a point at which middle- and working-class wages stagnated and corporate salaries ballooned.

Comparing answers to bootstraps and equal-treatment questions further shed light on a seeming paradox—that Americans continue to reject redistributive programs despite their concerns about inequality and opportunity.

(Continued on page 8)

New IPR Working Papers

Education Policy

No Child Left Behind: An Interim Evaluation of Its Effects on Learning Using Two Interrupted Time Series Each With Its Own Non-Equivalent Comparison Series (WP-09-11)
Manyee Wong, Thomas D. Cook, and Peter Steiner, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University

This paper evaluates No Child Left Behind (NCLB) using National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data between 1990 and 2009 for fourth-grade reading and fourth- and eighth-grade math. One set of analyses contrasts public schools with private schools. Another set contrasts states whose high- or low-proficiency standards result in many or few schools implementing NCLB-required changes—or fearing they will have to do so. Other analyses combine states whose standards are high or low with states whose pre-2002 accountability system did, or did not, contain sanctions for failure. Results show that NCLB improved both fourth- and eighth-grade math scores, but fourth-grade reading effects were limited to states with high standards and an accountability system that included sanctions only after NCLB's implementation.

Politics, Institutions, and Public Policy

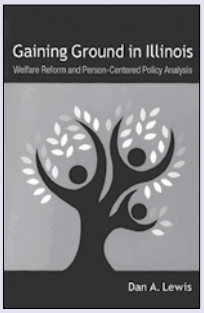
Probabilistic Polling and Voting in the 2008 Presidential Election: Evidence from the American Life Panel (WP-09-09)
Adeline Delavande, RAND Corporation, and Charles F. Manski, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University

This working paper compares the accuracy of conventional polls with an alternative survey method known as probabilistic polling. In the traditional "verbal response" format, respondents choose from multiple-choice answers that indicate the likelihood of future events or behavior, such as voting for a particular candidate in an upcoming election. By contrast, probabilistic polling asks respondents to state their predictions about future behavior in percent-chance terms. Before the 2008 presidential election, the researchers administered seven waves of probabilistic questions to participants in the American Life Panel. Comparing these responses with actual voting behavior, as reported after the election, Manski and Delavande find that responses to the verbal and probabilistic questions are well-aligned ordinally and that the probabilistic responses predict actual voting behavior beyond what is possible using verbal responses alone.

Recently Published Book

Gaining Ground in Illinois: Welfare Reform and Person-Centered Policy Analysis

By Dan A. Lewis
Northern Illinois University Press, 2010
170 pages



In 1997, then-state Sen. Barack Obama sponsored legislation in the Illinois General Assembly to study the newly passed federal welfare reform and how it would affect the citizens of Illinois. IPR education and social policy professor **Dan A. Lewis** was selected to direct the study and report back to the legislature. This book details the results of that study, including four years of qualitative and quantitative data on a random group of 1,000 people who were on welfare when the new law took effect. As the current state of the economy leads to more discussion of public aid and entitlements, Lewis' work offers a starting point for ideas about how to better the lives of the poor in Illinois and around the nation.

Quantitative Methods for Policy Research (Q-Center)

Comment on "Tests of Certain Types of Ignorable Nonresponse in Surveys Subject to Item Nonresponse or Attrition" (WP-09-10)
Christopher Rhoads, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University

This working paper points out some problems with a paper by Robert Sherman (2000). Misunderstandings about the terms "Missing at Random" (MAR) and "Missing Completely at Random" (MCAR) are clarified. Rhoads presents a necessary and sufficient condition to justify a complete case analysis of bivariate, binary data when interest is in the conditional distribution of one variable given the other. The non-existence of a test for MAR is noted. The impossibility of testing a condition that is sufficient to ensure unbiased estimates from an analysis of complete cases is also noted. Hence, Sherman's proposed tests of ignorable nonresponse are falsified.

Policy Perspective

Why Child Welfare Is a Civil Rights Issue

By Dorothy Roberts

There's a story about a foreign judge who, upon concluding a visit to a U.S. dependency court, remarked to his host, "Thank you for showing me the court for black families. When do we visit the one for whites?"

Sadly, this anecdote is mirrored day after day across the nation in dependency courts from New York City to Chicago and Los Angeles. Though black children represent only 15 percent of the nation's children, they make up about one-third of the nation's foster care population.

So where do these disparities come from? In seeking an answer to this question, we have to look both inside and outside the system: Children of color are overrepresented in foster care not only because of racial inequities in U.S. society but also because of the structure of today's child welfare system, which is designed to monitor, regulate, and even disrupt minority families.

P. Reese

Dorothy Roberts

Originally, many saw the mission of child welfare services as protecting children from social injustice. Progressive reformers, like Jane Addams here in Chicago, tied child welfare to the burning social issues of their time—especially the great hardships endured by poor families. But this was before World War II, when black children were virtually excluded from the openly segregated child welfare services.

After the 1960s, in-home welfare services plummeted, and the number of black children in foster care skyrocketed. It is no coincidence that at that time, the philosophy behind child welfare began to change. Where once the goal was to shield children from social hardships while serving them in their homes, today it is chiefly to protect children from "parental maltreatment," typically by placing them in out-of-home care. The majority of foster care cases involve some form of "neglect," or parents' inability to care for their children—not physical abuse.

The aid that families do receive from child protection agencies comes at an onerous price. States and the federal government are willing to spend billions of dollars each year on maintaining poor children as state wards outside of their homes, but only a fraction of that on child welfare services to keep families intact.

Meanwhile, the system requires many poor mothers—as if to punish them—to relinquish custody of their children in exchange for the state support needed to care for them. In a society already full of racial inequities—where people of color face widespread socioeconomic disadvantage—black children are now four times as likely as white children to be in foster care. In some cities and states, the disparity is much greater and also includes Native American and Latino children.

Unfortunately, the system's race and class geography means that most parents—especially middle-class and affluent parents—sense little risk of ever being involved with the system. The child protection system fuels this belief by sending the message that poor families' problems result from parental deficits. So there is little incentive for privileged parents to advocate alongside these disadvantaged parents for more public support for caregiving for everyone.

Imagine, though, if state agents removed middle-class white children from their parents at the rate they remove poor black or Native American children—one out of 10 children in some communities. Such an intrusion into mainstream family life would certainly create a massive demand for a radical transformation of the child welfare system.

For now, child protection in the United States is built on the presumption that children's basic needs can, and should, be met solely by parents. The state intervenes to provide special institutionalized services—primarily placing children in foster care—only when parents fail to fulfill their child-rearing obligations. At that point, the state places all the blame on parents, without taking into account the economic, political, and social barriers to providing for children.

If we can remember the burden placed on poor families and acknowledge once again that child welfare is a social justice issue, we might take the first steps in improving the lives of these children—without tearing their homes apart. Only then do we have some hope for changing the system for the better.

Dorothy Roberts is Kirkland & Ellis Professor in Northwestern's School of Law and an IPR faculty fellow. This editorial is based on a lecture she gave at the Family Defense Center's first annual awards ceremony and benefit, September 20, in Chicago.

SREE Conference

(Continued from page 3)

of addiction and facilitate the improvement of standard care and the efficacy of treatment outcomes.

Anthony Bryk, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, opened the conference by outlining a path to advance the "science of performance improvement." While providing the details of a value-added, accelerated cohort design, he emphasized the utility of a systematic means to accumulate evidence for informing problems of practice, based on a deep understanding of what occurs in learning environments.

Courtesy of SREE

Council of Economic Advisers member Cecilia Rouse speaks at the conference.

Several IPR faculty, post-doctoral fellows, and graduate students also presented their work, including David Figlio, Thomas D. Cook, Manyee Wong, Peter Steiner, and Christopher Rhoads.

Founded in 2004 by Hedges, Mark Constas, and Barbara Foorman and initially funded by IES, SREE seeks to advance research focused on cause-and-effect relations in education. It launched its flagship publication, the *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, in 2008.

For more information on the conference, including slides and video, see ***www.sree.org/conferences/2010/program***.

Research Notes

(The Power of Belief, continued from page 5)

authors call "inferred justification," noting that since President Bush—a politician they trust—started the war, there must have been a good reason for it.

The researchers' findings indicate that misinformation was not the only culprit. While innuendo might have planted the original idea, the resilience of false beliefs is likely due to cognitive dissonance, or how people process—or ignore—information in trying to resolve their support for the war.

"Such reasoning is particularly strong in high-stakes situations, such as the decision to invade Iraq," Prasad said. "It allowed these respondents to make sense of the decision."

Monica Prasad is associate professor of sociology and an IPR faculty fellow.

(More Than Just "Hard Work," continued from page 5)

"Americans see opportunity as more than just a result of individual effort—they do believe that unfair social advantages and unfair pay (i.e., inequality of outcomes) can and do diminish opportunity," McCall concluded. The fusion of these various beliefs suggests that policymakers should focus on limiting the compensation and influence of the "undeserving rich" and expanding opportunities for "deserving workers" through education, fair pay, and job creation, she said.

Leslie McCall is associate professor of sociology and an IPR faculty fellow.

Joint Appointment

(Continued from page 1)

Medical school faculty have long been part of IPR as faculty associates. This is, however, IPR's first term-appointed faculty fellow position within the medical school, further solidifying the Institute's interdisciplinary faculty network.

"With this appointment, IPR is advancing the One Northwestern initiative that seeks to integrate research conducted on the Chicago and Evanston campuses in the life, biomedical, and social sciences," said IPR's director **Fay Lomax Cook,** professor of human development and social policy. "I cannot imagine a better scholar than Dr. Wakschlag to help us operationalize this initiative."

Much of Wakschlag's work already exemplifies this type of collaboration. Together with colleagues in genetics, epidemiology, and developmental neuroscience, she studies how early-life biologic insults interact with children's genotypes and parenting environments to increase risk of, or protect against, adverse outcomes across development.

"Dr. Wakschlag is one of those rare scholars who exude a passion for research. She doesn't just talk about multidisciplinary interaction—she craves it," said professor **David Cella**, chair of MSS. "We have all been swept up by her contagious enthusiasm for collaboration."

Wakschlag will help further C2S's mission of understanding how environmental factors interact with biology to influence health outcomes across the lifespan. In research supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, she is studying etiologic pathways from prenatal exposure to cigarettes to disruptive behavior in childhood and adolescence.

The other central focus of her work, which has received funding from the National Institute of Mental Health, is developing measurements to provide an empirical basis for distinguishing emergent mental health problems from normative misbehavior in preschool children. In keeping with the outcome-science framework of MSS, these tools are designed to provide standardized methods to assess preschoolers' disruptive behavior for use in studies ranging from population-based studies of etiologic mechanisms to outcome studies with clinical populations.

"The foundation of translational science is 'engaged discourse' that crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries," Wakschlag said. "IPR has been a pioneer in fostering this type of interdisciplinary cross-fertilization. I am excited to have the opportunity to break new ground with IPR to enhance the integration of applied biomedical perspectives within the Institute."

C2S director and developmental psychologist **P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale** welcomed Wakschlag to Northwestern, "I'm thrilled that Laurie, who was my first PhD student, will be joining us as we work to illuminate pathways contributing to health inequities."

New Grants, New Ideas

(Continued from page 1)

New MacArthur Network

For the past 18 months, an interdisciplinary group of prominent social scientists has been working out the details of a major new longitudinal study on "How Housing Matters for Families with Children." Based on their proposal, they have just received a three-year, $3.9-million, renewable grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to establish a research network to conduct the study.

MacArthur calls these interdisciplinary networks "research institutions without walls" as some of the nation's most talented researchers come together to seek major improvements in policy and practice on specific social issues.

The new housing and families network will be based at IPR and led by social psychologist **Thomas D. Cook**, who is Joan and Sarepta Harrison Chair in Ethics and Justice at Northwestern. It will bring together 11 social scientists, including Harold Washington Professor **Mary Pattillo**, a professor of sociology and African American studies and an IPR faculty associate.

Over three years, the social scientists will conduct a random-assignment study of 4,000 voucher-eligible families in three to four U.S. cities with Section-8 lotteries. In particular, they will observe housing effects on children from birth until age 8 and try to understand questions left unanswered in previous housing studies. For example, why do some families who receive vouchers use them to resettle in blighted neighborhoods that mirror those they left? Why is racial composition more important than income distribution when selecting a neighborhood to live in?

Pulling together theoretical perspectives from a variety of disciplines—including statistics, sociology, economics, urban studies, education, and child development—the researchers will use quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate how the combined effects of family, schools, race, ethnicity, and neighborhoods affect children's development and outcomes.

"By the time the study is finished, we hope to have made a quantum leap in what we know about these contextual effects—and that these, in turn, will lead to better policies for our nation's poorest children and families," Cook said.

Quasi-Experimental Research and Workshops

In the world of education research, studies using random assignment reign supreme. Yet in real-world education settings, use of random assignment is not always feasible.

Thus, Thomas D. Cook and his colleagues are continuing and extending work to improve four quasi-experimental methods—with demonstrated, internally valid, causal estimates—for use when random assignment is not possible.

"The current quality of most quasi-experimental research in education is woeful," Cook said, "but practices could be easily improved with marginal improvements to existing quasi-experimental tools."

These tools include: regression-discontinuity, interrupted time-series, case-matching methods, and pattern matching. To this end, Cook has received two IES grants, totaling $2 million. One will focus on improving these four methods, which allow researchers to test a causal proposition absent an experiment. The second will support a series of six workshops held over three years to train more than 360 education faculty, researchers, and government employees in the use of these little-known methodological tools.

IES Postdoctoral Fellowships

P. Reese

Larry Hedges

IPR education researcher and statistician **Larry Hedges** will direct a new $650,000 fellowship program, with support from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in the Department of Education, to train recent PhDs in education research methods.

Aided by faculty at Northwestern and the University of Chicago, Hedges will oversee interdisciplinary training in measurement, research design, and statistics for four fellows over five years. He is Board of Trustees Professor of Statistics and Social Policy at Northwestern.

Hedges noted that in the United States, education funding—in particular for large-scale randomized experiments—has increased, yet the pool of researchers equipped to adequately construct and analyze such studies has not.

"Monumental improvements in the American education system are needed to reduce inequities and improve outcomes," Hedges continued. "Only high-quality education research can help narrow such wide achievement gaps."

School Leadership and Student Achievement

IES is also funding a four-year, $3.3-million study led by **James Spillane**, school leadership expert and IPR faculty associate, to investigate whether and how best practices by school leaders raise student achievement.

P. Reese

James Spillane

Northwestern's School of Education and Social Policy will administer the grant "Learning Leadership: Kernel Routines for Instructional Improvement." Spillane, who is Olin Professor in Learning and Organizational Change, is principal investigator on the project.

Spillane and his colleagues will use the funds to evaluate Learning Walk®, a structured school-leadership "walk-through" routine developed by the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning. It involves brief, regular visits to classrooms by school leaders to observe instruction. Focused on 80 Philadelphia elementary schools, the study will measure the effects of these Learning Walks on reading, writing, and math scores—in addition to areas such as collaboration, staff interactions, and academic rigor—in urban school settings.

NCLB Policy Briefing

(Continued from page 1)

"The size of these math effects narrows the gap between public and private schools by about half [between 2002 and 2009]," said Cook, who is Joan and Sarepta Harrison Chair in Ethics and Justice at Northwestern.

The analyses show NCLB raised math achievement by an average of six months between 2002 and 2009 for the nation's public school fourth-graders and by more than 13 months for eighth-graders.

"These are very large gains," Cook emphasized, later noting his surprise at how quickly they showed up once the law was implemented.

A slight effect for fourth-grade reading was also found. (Eighth-grade reading was not assessed due to incomplete data.)

L. Kossoff-Nordby/LK Photos

David Figlio and Diane Schanzenbach

Given that each state is free to designate its own standards for student proficiency, Cook, Wong, and Steiner then drilled into a state-level comparison. Looking at NAEP scores before and after NCLB was implemented, they find that a state's improvement under the law is significantly tied to its proficiency threshold—as well as to the consequences for schools who fail to bring their students up to par.

For example, in Maine and California, 35 percent of students reached proficiency on NAEP, on average, across these states' public schools. In Maine, the average passing rate on the state test linked to NCLB was about the same—37 percent. But in California's schools, where the proficiency threshold was much lower, an incredible 84 percent of students passed the state test. As a result, many more schools in Maine than in California failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) and faced sanctions or forced reforms.

Bringing these methods to bear across all 50 states, the researchers found that states that enacted a higher threshold—as well as those that enacted more serious consequences for failing to make AYP, such as shutting down a school or firing all the teachers—saw bigger gains in achievement by 2009.

"The bottom line, particularly for reading, is that higher standards matter," Cook said. Setting a national threshold for making AYP would also cut down on states' ability to game the system and help raise achievement, he added.

NCLB: Students Left Behind by Design

If the original goals of NCLB were to "leave no child behind" and close the black-white, Hispanic-white, and rich-poor achievement gaps, NCLB has not lived up to its promises, recounted **Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach**, a University of Chicago education economist.

"In Chicago, we commonly see that kids at the bottom are left behind—and in some cases, kids at the top as well," she said.

Schanzenbach and her colleague Derek Neal took advantage of the unique availability of longitudinal test score information on individual students in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to study how the 2002 implementation of NCLB affected students. The researchers followed two groups of children: a pre-reform group that was given low-stakes tests in third grade in 2000 and then again in fifth grade in 2002, and a post-NCLB group that was given a low-stakes test in third grade in 2001 and then a high-stakes test used to define their schools' NCLB passing status in fifth grade in 2003.

They then divided each group into deciles based on reading and math scores. In both subjects, they found scores improved for children in the third through ninth deciles under high-stakes testing relative to low-stakes testing, while scores remained the same for the highest- and lowest-scoring students—even dropping in math for the lowest 10 percent.

These findings were consistent with other qualitative research findings that document evidence of teachers and schools providing extra attention to those children clustered in a bubble around the proficiency threshold. She likened the practice to "educational triage," where those with the best chances of passing receive treatment, while the rest are left behind.

"You might think, 'Oh, one or two deciles at the bottom might not be that big of a deal,' but looking across all grades in Chicago, this is 25,000 to 50,000 kids," Schanzenbach said.

"So, can we improve some of these misaligned incentives?" she asked. "I think the answer is 'yes.'"

Under the current law, only passing or failing the test matters, Schanzenbach emphasized.

"There is no credit at all for moving a student's test score from a very low score to almost passing," she explained. As a result, there is no incentive for schools to concentrate on low-achieving students who are unlikely to improve enough to pass the test. Furthermore, the Obama administration's desire to raise NCLB passing standards implies that there will be even more low-achieving children who have little chance of passing the test, she continued.

Thus, Schanzenbach would like to see lawmakers implement a new system, similar to the one in Massachusetts, that gives partial credit for moving children up the achievement ladder, even if they do not yet pass the test.

NCLB: Aims, Games, and Accountability

IPR education economist **David Figlio** also seconded the evidence that high standards have led to improved test performance but pointed to some of NCLB's unintended—and sometimes unfortunate—consequences.

Over the past five years, he has investigated the wide-ranging effects of several high-stakes accountability systems, including NCLB, examining diverse topics such as teacher behavior and retention, student diets, real-estate markets, and public and private donations to schools.

No Child Left Behind

A Brief Overview

NCLB was signed into law in 2002 and has been one of the most far-reaching overhauls of U.S. education policy to date. Due to be reauthorized, NCLB requires states that receive federal education funding to set educational standards and administer annual reading and math tests to students from third to eighth grade. Each state is free to select its own tests and set its own proficiency standards, but schools are expected to make adequately yearly progress (AYP) in helping all students reach proficiency in reading and math by 2014. While NCLB was hailed by some as a much-needed step in the direction of standards-based accountability, critics of the law accuse it of encouraging teaching to the test; unfairly penalizing minority, gifted, low-income, and special-needs students; and using overly punitive sanctions for under-performing schools, such as replacing teachers or closing schools entirely.

"There are strong incentives for schools to engage in a lot of different ways of trying to make themselves look better," Figlio remarked.

Especially in the ongoing quest for ever-higher test scores, Figlio has uncovered several ways in which schools try to "game the system" and avoid serious reforms. In one study of Virginia public schools, he and colleague Joshua Winicki found that several districts upped the calories in their menus on testing days in an attempt to "juice" the scores—but only at those schools faced with potential sanctions under the state's accountability system.

Research has shown that a system based on gains removes such incentives for a one-time score boost and refocuses schools on learning. Figlio and his colleagues Cecilia Rouse of the Council of Economic Advisers (on leave from Princeton), Jane Hannaway of the Urban Institute, and Dan Goldhaber of the University of Washington found promising results in a study of Florida's public schools. Florida replaced its single statewide threshold with a value-added approach in 2002. Under the new system, schools paid more attention to low-performing students and spent more time on high-stakes subjects. They also increased teacher resources and implemented policies to improve the performance of the worst teachers.

In addition to reducing gaming, this gains-based system seemed to benefit students across the board, counteracting the learning "bubble" that Schanzenbach described. But such a system could have its own adverse effects, Figlio warned.

For one, it might remove some of the focus from traditionally disadvantaged groups. In addition, it might upset communities where students are mostly proficient already, since it would be practically impossible—and unnecessary—for their schools to produce sweeping gains from year to year.

Figlio presented evidence from his study of Florida housing markets to emphasize the point that school performance matters not just to schools, parents, and teachers but also to the wider community. He and colleague Maurice Lucas traced fluctuations in local housing markets in Florida to the recently implemented school report-card system. They found consistently higher housing prices in areas with "A"-rated schools, while housing prices dropped where schools were deemed to be failing.

Given these competing conditions, what is Figlio's solution? A hybrid system for accountability.

Building on Cook's evidence, it seems clear, Figlio said, that schools should set a high proficiency threshold, but also measure gains for those students who do not achieve it. They should provide additional means for those students far away from the threshold or students in targeted groups to avoid the bubble effects described by Schanzenbach.

As for now, gaming the system works, Figlio said. "So we need to be careful about what we expect out of these test scores."

Where to Go Next on NCLB?

While all three experts agreed that achievement gains have been realized under the current law, it clearly needs to be improved. The evidence gathered from their research points to an accountability system that is built on a common set of high standards and that takes into account student improvement across the achievement spectrum, either by measuring gains or implementing multiple thresholds. It would also recognize that what happens in schools has wider effects beyond just educating the nation's children and would acknowledge those high-performing schools where achievement might have reached a plateau.

L. Kossoff-Nordby/LK Photos

Thomas Cook notes the importance of a "whole-child" perspective in addition to standards and accountability.

Finally, for all the talk about accountability and measurement, Cook—who was part of the committee to review Title I, the funding mechanism for NCLB—strongly encouraged policymakers to step back and take a broader look at the issue.

"I believe in a 'whole-child' view," Cook said, which he noted is unfortunately often overlooked in the ongoing debate over education reform.

To view the video and slides from the presentations, as well as the related papers, please visit IPR's Web site at ***www.northwestern.edu/ipr/events/briefingFeb2010.html****.*

Lesson Plans

Faculty share methodological expertise in summer workshops

While they continue to uphold high research standards for their own work, several IPR faculty fellows also set aside time each year to share their methodological expertise with other scholars and researchers from around the country.

This summer, IPR will host three sets of methodological workshops, starting June 7–9 with the fifth annual Summer Biomarker Institute, a project of IPR's Cells to Society (C2S): The Center on Social Disparities and Health. IPR/C2S faculty fellows **Thomas McDade**, **Emma Adam**, and **Christopher Kuzawa** direct the workshops, which cover technical as well as conceptual issues in integrating this state-of-the-art method into population-based research.

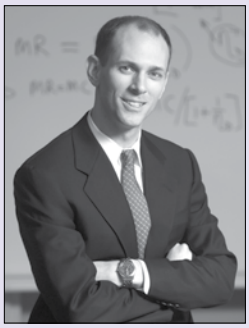
The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) is supporting two workshop series this summer that will explore methodological issues in education research. First, the IES Summer Institute on Cluster Randomized Trials will take place at Northwestern July 25–August 6. The institute, now in its third year, is run by IPR education researcher and statistician **Larry Hedges** with two colleagues from Vanderbilt University.

IPR education researcher **Thomas D. Cook** and his colleague William Shadish of the University of California, Merced, will also lead two one-week workshops in August on best practices for quasi-experimentation, covering various alternatives for when random assignment is not feasible or breaks down.

IPR's 2010 Distinguished Public Policy Lecture

Austan Goolsbee

Economic Adviser to the President



D. Dry

"The Uses (and Non-Uses) of Economic Analysis in Difficult Times"

Austan Goolsbee holds a unique perspective on the inner workings of economic policy design, implementation, and evaluation within the Obama Administration. As a member of the Council of Economic Advisers and chief economist of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board, he ensures that the president receives research and analysis on the economy to inform his decision making.

Monday, April 26, 2010
4:00 – 5:15 p.m.
Allen Center – Tribune Auditorium
2169 Campus Drive
Evanston Campus

For more information, go to
www.northwestern.edu/ipr/events/lectures/goolsbee.html.

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