



THE FELLOW

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The Fellow is the official peer-reviewed publication of the Ph.D. students at the School of Social Policy & Practice at the University of Pennsylvania

SP2 Celebrates "100 years of Social Work at Penn"

It has been two years since the first volume of *The Fellow* was published. During those two years, *The Fellow* has played a unique role in sharing doctoral students' ongoing work and academic accomplishments with members of the SP2 community and beyond. We appreciate those who contributed to previous issues and we welcome new contributors. As the new co-chairs of the Doctoral Students Steering Committee (DSSC), we are excited to launch the third volume of *The Fellow*. Coupled with the School's centennial anniversary, we are moving toward another promising academic year. We are welcoming eight new students (wow!) and saying farewell to three students who have played an active role in our community (congratulations!). The Ph.D. students at SP2 continue to lead and produce cutting-edge research, and our fame in the Penn Community is on the rise. We are confident that the new cohort will soon be part of that success. We look forward to another year of innovative ideas, productivity, and some fun!

For us, as international students, the duty of co-chairing DSSC and representing the entire student body of the Ph.D. program in social welfare will be challenging. We have no doubt, though, that a collaborative approach will benefit us all. Please know that we are always here with you and for you. We are open to any comments, suggestions, and concerns as they come along.

- Sungkyu Lee and Itay Greenspan, *DSSC Co-Chairs*



This academic year is a most significant one for the School of Social Policy & Practice (SP2). The school will be celebrating its centennial anniversary under the slogan of: "100 years of social work at Penn." We will hold many interesting celebrations that I hope our doctoral students will attend. The centennial celebration opens on the afternoon of September 25th with a convocation addressing contemporary issues in social justice and featuring a keynote address by Ralph Nader on "Social Justice in the Post-Bush Era." On October 30th-November 2nd, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) will hold its Annual Program Meeting in Philadelphia. This is a tribute to the school and a good opportunity for advanced students to hold preliminary job interviews. On



November 20th-22nd, the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) will come to Philadelphia in conjunction with the centennial celebrations and the new Nonprofit Leadership program at SP2.

We will also publish two books – one chronicling the history of SP2 written by the university archivist, and the other, an edited volume reviewing and presenting 100 years of intellectual contribution. Melissa Dichter, an SP2 doctoral student, is one of the three co-editors of the second volume, and many of the other doctoral students proofread chapters before the final printing.

This year will be characterized by a significant increase in the number of students in the doctoral program. This is the result of two trends. First, very few people graduated last year. I am hoping that many more of you will graduate this coming year and find wonderful jobs. Also, we have a large entering cohort of eight new students (one part-time). This is the first year in the history of the program that we had a full yield (yield is the technical term for students who were admitted to a program and committed to come to that program). Every year, I interview some 80-100 people who are interested in our program. Of them, 60 or more submit a formal application, but very few are admitted. This year, we extended an invitation to a relatively large group of eight students, all of whom accepted.

So, for those of you who are joining us: Welcome! For those who are already with us, may the year be productive and successful. On all fronts, this will be an exciting year and I am, of course, here to support you in the process.

- Ram A. Cnaan, *Associate Dean for Research and Doctoral Education*

PEER REVIEW

We all work hard writing papers for classes, and many papers are worthy of more than just a letter grade. *The Fellow* provides an outlet to share unpublished manuscripts, essays, book reviews and editorials with colleagues in an effort to distribute ideas, spark debates, obtain feedback, encourage journal submissions, and support interdisciplinary collaborations. Full references are available upon request to the authors.

Discussion-based Education and Democratic Policymaking

by Kerry Dunn* | kvdunn@sp2.upenn.edu

Part of the goal of SP2's MSW curriculum is to teach students how to be agents of social change. Students are required to design and carry out a "change project" at their first-year field placement, thinking through ways to reduce "-isms" within the agency. They are taught how to write policy briefs and intervene as advocates within the policymaking process. During my time in the program, I was inspired by the message of change and have continued to struggle with how social workers can do more to work against status quo inequalities and systems of social exclusion.

To me, social work is not about being an expert who tells others what to do or a helper who fixes people's lives. It is about being a facilitator, communicator, and bridge builder. When I started teaching at SP2, I had to think about how my views about social work - specifically, what social work is - related to how I wanted to teach. Around the same time, I was reading a book by public policy scholar Frank Fischer (2003) called "Reframing public policy: Discursive policy and deliberative practices."

According to Fischer, policymaking in the US has become the work of politicians and experts who are often completely detached from the realities of the people directly affected by the policies they design. The result is bad policies that exacerbate the decline in political and civic participation in US society. "Rather than provide technical answers designed to bring political discussions to an end, the task of the analyst as facilitator is to assist citizens in their efforts to examine their own interests and in making their own decisions" (Fischer, 2003, p. 221).

After reading Fischer's work, I started to think about the importance of training MSW students - social change agents - to facilitate dialogue on social issues. Can social workers play a role in re-democratizing the policymaking process? What skills would they need in order to do it? One of the core classes in our MSW curriculum, SWK 601: History and Philosophy of Social Work, focuses on the values and ideologies that have historically shaped social policy and social work practice. This provided a

perfect opportunity to try a new technique aimed at increasing democratic spaces within our society.

The first week I explained the assignment. I asked each student to sign up for a week to present the readings in small groups. I explained that by 'present the readings,' I did not mean stand up in front of the class and talk at people. Instead, students should design an exercise that gets their classmates engaged in a discussion with each other.

The second week, I gave an example of a discussion-based exercise on the readings, breaking the class into groups with different discussion questions to get at part of the issue, then having each present so we could cover all the facets. The third week, I gave an example of an experiential-based exercise I designed that illustrated a lesson from the readings. Students were instructed that they could use whatever model they wanted, but that their exercise should get their classmates thinking and talking about the issues raised in the readings.

Some students decided to do a more traditional presentation, while others were extremely creative in designing intricate experiential exercises. At the end of each class, we debriefed the exercise so that students could think about what worked and what did not work in terms of stimulating and facilitating discussion, and getting at the issues raised in the readings. It was a bit of a risk to trust students in this way, particularly in a core class where it is important for students to gain an understanding of the material given in a standardized syllabus. But every week, students surprised and impressed me with the thought and care they put into their exercises and how each one of them managed to get the students talking about what they had read. Does this mean they put me out of a job? Almost - but not completely. If any important issues were missed, I could interject additional questions. Also, I facilitated the debriefing process, helping students think through the pros and cons of the experience.

I am pretty sure the students learned to trust in their ability to facilitate policy-relevant discussions. I also hope they learned to trust that, together, people are capable of discussing, listening, and finding solutions. And most importantly, I hope that they see a different kind of policymaking is possible - one in which social workers play a more active role.

* Kerry Dunn is a doctoral candidate in SP2 and in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania.

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Introduction to Hierarchical Linear Modeling: Part 1

Currently, one of the most popular statistical techniques in the social sciences is Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM), or Multilevel Modeling. Social work researchers use HLM in various areas such as mental health, social work administration, and comparative welfare study. *Why do we need this brand new statistical technique? And what is it?* To answer these questions, we must first understand the unique data structure called multilevel data. Multilevel data refer to datasets that contain information on more than one micro-level unit from the same macro-level unit. This kind of data structure is very common in social work research. For instance, data collected on clients using service agencies frequently contain variables describing the client (micro-level unit), such as age and gender, as well as variables describing the agencies (macro-level unit), such as number of staff and agency type. Researchers collecting such data wish to analyze both micro-level and macro-level variables to examine the factors affecting client satisfaction, which is influenced not only by individual characteristics but also by agency characteristics.

Whenever researchers encounter multilevel data, they commonly choose one of the following two strategies. They may conduct the analysis at the organizational level (macro-level) by aggregating the information of all individuals from the same organization and using this aggregated information as a measure of the organizational variable. Conversely, they may conduct the analysis at the individual level (micro-level) by repeatedly allocating the same organizational information to all individuals from the same organization and using this organizational information as a measure of the individual variable. The drawbacks of the organizational-level analysis are threefold. First, aggregating individual characteristics into organizations (e.g., using mean age of clients in the agency) overlooks individual information and, therefore, omits important variation among individuals within the same organization. Second, the findings of organizational-level analysis are no longer applicable to individuals, since the unit of analysis has changed from the individual level to the organizational level. Applying these findings to individuals leads to an *ecological fallacy*. Finally, in some cases, it is virtually impossible to conduct the analysis using organizational-level data. For example, analyzing 200 clients from 5 agencies on an organizational level reduces the sample size from 200 units to 5 units. This process severely threatens *statistical power* to the point where statistical analysis is meaningless.

To avoid problems of organizational-level analysis, many researchers utilize traditional individual-level analysis, which regards all individuals as independent. However, this approach leads to a statistical problem,

especially when using a family of regression estimation techniques. In multilevel data, all of the un-modeled organizational information, which results from unobserved variables, ends up pooled in the single individual error term of the model. This violates one of the basic assumptions of multiple regression called *uncorrelated disturbances*, since individuals belonging to the same organization will presumably have correlated error terms. The general consequence of correlated errors is that standard errors are almost always biased downward. This phenomenon results in a tendency to conclude that relationships exist when they really do not. Moreover, this non-independence problem is directly connected to the sampling method employed. Much social work research depends on *multistage cluster sampling* in which researchers first choose a number of organizations and then subsequently select individuals within these organizations. Once researchers employ multistage cluster sampling, they need to pay particular attention to the possibility of correlated disturbance and the biased estimation that results from this non-independence problem.

A more serious problem for researchers analyzing multilevel data with conventional multivariate methods is that the results may differ according to the unit level of the analysis. Kreft, de Leeuw, and Aiken (1995) examined the relationship between education level and income, based on the data collected on workers from 12 different industries. These investigators found that an analysis executed at the micro-level (individual level) resulted in a positive relationship between education level and income, while an analysis executed at the macro-level (industrial level) showed the opposite result. This example clearly shows that aggregated data analyzed at the micro-level of the hierarchy can produce results different from results produced on a macro-level.

All of these problems demonstrate that researchers need a more appropriate statistical method to analyze multilevel data. We'll see how HLM deals with the uniqueness of multilevel data in the next section.

* Kim is a Ph.D. candidate at SP2 and author of "Applied regression: Data analysis for social science."



Did You Know...

The 54th Annual Program Meeting of The Council on Social Work Education is being held right here in Philadelphia from Oct. 30 – Nov. 2. The theme this year is 'Social Work Policy & Practice: Linking Theory, Methods, and Skills'. Many of our Ph.D. students and faculty are presenting their work. A preliminary program and online registration is available at: www.cswe.org/CSWE. This is a great chance for learning, networking, and supporting your SP2 colleagues!

Publications

Wineburg, R. J., **Coleman, B. L.**, Boddie, S. C., & Cnaan, R. A. (2008). Leveling the playing field: Epitomizing devolution through faith-based organizations. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 35, 17-42.

Cullen, S. W., & Marcus, S. C. (2008). Suicide in inpatient settings: Are our hospitals safe enough? *Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety*, 34, 472-473.

Handy, F., & **Greenspan, I.** (in press). Immigrant volunteering: A stepping-stone to integration? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*.

Greenspan, I., & Handy, F. (in press). From discovery to recovery and beyond: The role of voluntary health sector organizations in the lives of women with breast cancer. *Advances in Medical Sociology*.

Berger, I., & **Greenspan, I.** (2008). High (on) technology: Producing tourist identities through technologized adventure. *Journal of Sport Tourism* 13, 89-114.

Berger, I., **Greenspan, I.**, & Kohn, D. (in press). Identity re-creation through recreation: The case of the Alyn Charity bike ride. *Canadian Jewish Studies*.

Kim, T. K., Solomon, P., & **Zurlo, K. A.** (in press). Applying hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to social work administration research, *Administration in Social Work*.

Matejkowski, J., & Draine, J. (in press). Investigating the impact of Housing First on ACT fidelity. *Community Mental Health Journal*.

Presentations

Coleman, B. L., & Cnaan, R. A. (2008, April). *Faith and politics: Congregational political engagement in Wilmington Delaware*. The Fourth Biennial Symposium on Religion and Politics, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Lawental-Schori, M., & Lawental, E. (2008, June). *The correlation between intake procedures to methadone maintenance treatment, entry to treatment, and retention*. The National Institute on Drug Abuse International Forum and College of Problems on Drug Dependence (NIDA/CPDD) conference, Puerto Rico.

Funding/Jobs/Awards

Julie Cederbaum and Dr. Steven Marcus were awarded a Pilot and Feasibility Program Grant from the Developmental Core of the Center for AIDS Research (CFAR).

Sungkyu Lee was accepted for a competitive workshop sponsored by Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) entitled "Collaborative Psychiatric Epidemiology Surveys (CPES): Investigating Cultural and Ethnic Influences on Mental Health."

Tae Kuen Kim has been selected to receive the Y. H. Park Dissertation Fellowship for 2008-09. This is a competitive fellowship offered by the University of Pennsylvania that covers tuition, health insurance, and offers a \$22,000 stipend.

Kate McHugh was inducted as Fellow into the American College of Nurse-Midwives in May 2008.

Kate McHugh received the Regional Award for Excellence, American College of Nurse-Midwives in May 2008.

**Beyond SP2:
Expanding your knowlegde
base and list of contacts**

Whether you are a new student at SP2, or even a seasoned one, you may not be aware of the many sources of knowlegde (and contacts) that are at your very fingertips! Many departments across Penn offer colloquium series, often held during lunchtime and sometimes come with free lunch or refreshments:

1) The Leonard Davis Institute holds Friday lunchtime seminars (with lunch) in the Colonial Penn Building on Locust Walk on various health care issues. This year's theme is Health Care Reform – (National & Global). Look for dates, times and speakers on their website: <http://www.upenn.edu/ldi/>

2) The Department of Sociology holds lunchtime lectures from 12-1:15 on Wednesdays in Room 103 of the McNeil Building. Look for dates, times and speakers at: http://www.ssc.upenn.edu/soc/News_Events/

3) The Annenberg Scholars Program in Culture and Communication offers many public lectures with renowned speakers from across the globe. Look for dates, times and speakers on their website: <http://scholars.asc.upenn.edu/index.php?page=3>

4) The Women's Studies Center is hosting a number of speakers this Fall. Look for dates, times and speakers on their website: <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/wstudies/events/calendar.htm>

5) The Drexel-Health Partners Public Health Grand Rounds Lecture Series is a weekly series of lectures focused around issues related to public health practice and research. All lectures are held on Thursdays at 4:30 PM from October through May and are open to the public. Check it out at: http://publichealth.drexel.edu/Academics/Drexel_Health_Partners_Grand_Rounds_Lecture_Series/123/

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