Greetings from the DSSC,

Spring represents new beginnings: flowers are blooming, birds are chirping, and students are coming out from behind their books and computers to enjoy the sunshine and warmer weather. Of course new beginnings follow endings, and several SP2 students are seeing an end to their PhD studies and a beginning to the next phase of their careers. Congratulations to all the students who have graduated within the past year: Casey Bohrmn, Michelle Evans-Chase, Itay Greenspan, Katy Kaplan, Jonathan Lukens, Maayan Schori, and Julie Tennille. Two of our newest or soon-to-be graduates have also accepted tenure-track faculty positions. Julie will be headed to Westchester University, and Stacey Barrenger has accepted a position at the Silver School of Social Work at New York University. Way to go!

This year the DSSC continued its goal of building community among PhD students with monthly happy hours and a great trip to the Rodin museum. Although we enjoyed the sculptures, it may have been even more enjoyable to watch Daniel's children experience the museum. The End of Year Celebration last week also brought students, faculty, and staff together to commemorate the success of another year at SP2. Please let us know if you have any ideas for activities you would like to add to the calendar next year.

Marlene Walk and Dexia Kong organized and recruited presenters for two student-led research seminars supported by the G12 Synergy Fund. Marlene, Daniel, Dan Treglia, and Alexandra Schepens articulately presented research projects to SP2 students. Based on the positive reviews, Marlene has volunteered to work with the DSSC next year to continue the series and offer more opportunities for SP2 students to workshop ideas and projects.

The completion of this academic year marks the official transition from a three-year to a two-year class structure in the PhD program as well as the inception of Proseminar. Thanks to Malitta Engstrom for leading us through the first year. As always, feedback is welcomed about curricular changes, and Liz Knoll will continue to represent students on the advisory committee.

A special thanks to Daniel for two years of service as DSSC co-chair! We will miss his thoughtful contributions but will continue to look forward to his enthusiastic participation at events. We are excited to welcome Angelina Ruffin as the new DSSC co-chair, and we welcome feedback from all students about how to shape DSSC activities for the coming academic year.

Finally, the first-year cohort has successfully navigated their first year at SP2, and we wish them luck with qualifying exams this summer! Please feel encouraged to send well wishes or study care-packages to all seven who will be diligently studying throughout May and the first half of June. Good luck Tutun, Eunhae, Jeffrey, Ryan, Alexandra, Angelina and Dan!

DSSC co-chairs,
Daniel & Ryan
I was lucky enough to receive funding from the School of Nursing’s NewCourtland Center for Transitions and Health to conduct the following study. I am honored to have the opportunity to work with an interdisciplinary team including faculty members from SP2 and the School of Nursing. My sincere thank you goes to my faculty mentors on the research team who provided extensive support and expert knowledge, Drs. Hirschman, Bourjolly, Davitt, and Cacchione, and the NewCourtland Center for Transitions and Health. I am looking forward to sharing my results once I have them ready.

**Project Title: Exploring perceptions of dementia and the culturally appropriate services in Asian communities**

**Purpose:** To explore perceptions of dementia and facilitators and barriers in accessing/providing culturally appropriate services in Asian immigrant communities

**Significance:** It is estimated that the age-specific prevalence of dementia among Asian Americans is comparable to that of the general U.S. population. As the number of older Asian immigrants grows rapidly, so does the number of those affected by dementia. Diverged from Western biomedical perspectives which construct dementia as biomedical diseases, Asian populations tend to view dementia as a consequence of normal aging, psychosocial distress, and traumatizing life experiences. This culturally-based explanation of dementia hinders medical and social service utilization in the Asian community, including clinical diagnosis and treatment, and supportive and respite care for family caregivers. Additionally, in the Asian community, dementia brings stigma, shame, and embarrassment to both the persons with dementia and their family caregivers. Such cultural values in the Asian community further prevent the affected families from reaching out for necessary medical and social interventions until behavioral symptoms become unmanageable, leading to premature institutionalization of older Asian immigrants. Because the limited effective treatments for dementia depend on early diagnosis and interventions, examining perceptions of dementia in the Asian community is indispensable to improving dementia care outcomes among the population.

A few studies have examined perceptions of dementia among older Asian immigrants and their family caregivers. Little is known about ethnic Asian health providers’ perceptions of the disease, which may influence the quality of care received by the older persons with dementia. The innovation of this proposed study is the triangulating of the perspectives of older Asian immigrants, family caregivers, and ethnic home care providers, which has not been done before. The triangulation process, which adds confidence to the reliability and validity of data, allows for a more holistic and accurate picture of the perceptions and experience of dementia in the community. Particularly, since perceptions of dementia and the facilitators and barriers in providing care to the families affected by dementia among ethnic home care professionals have been neglected in previous research, this study has the potential to bridge a significant gap in the field. Additionally, facilitators and barriers to accessing/providing culturally appropriate care will be explored among the three groups.

**The specific aims of the study include:**

1. To explore the perception of “dementia” among older Asian immigrants, their families and home health providers (e.g., home health aides, nurses, etc.);
2. To determine whether the perceptions of dementia among older Asian immigrants and their families who have a formal diagnosis are different from those who do not have a diagnosis;
3. To examine the perceived facilitators and barriers in accessing culturally appropriate care in the home among older Asian immigrants and their family caregivers;
4. To examine the perceived facilitators and barriers in providing culturally appropriate care in the home among home health professionals.

**Design:** This qualitative study aims to recruit 10 patient-caregiver dyads and 30 agency staff from a local home health agency. The 10 family dyads will participate in tape-recorded semi-structured interviews exploring their perceptions of dementia and facilitators and barriers in accessing culturally appropriate services. Thirty agency staff will participate in two tape-recorded semi-structured focus groups discussing their perceptions of dementia and facilitators and barriers in providing culturally appropriate care for individuals with dementia. Qualitative descriptive analysis of the interview and focus group data will be used to identify major codes and overarching themes of perceptions of dementia and related culturally appropriate services.

**Implications:** Findings of the proposed study will inform how dementia is perceived in the Asian immigrant community, which can be used to design educational interventions to raise awareness of dementia in Asian populations. In addition, these findings will further our understanding of the barriers and facilitators to accessing/providing dementia care and will be used to develop outreach programming tailored to Asian immigrants and their families. Ultimately, the findings will facilitate improved clinical communication and health outcomes for older Asian immigrants with dementia.
Tell us about your work in your current position as an assistant professor at the University of Haifa in Israel.

My position is a tenure-track one, and has many similarities to tenure-track positions in the US, especially in terms of the requirements for tenure. One of the main differences is the teaching load. On average, I am required to teach 8 hours a week (3-4 classes). Building the courses and tweaking them has been my focus this past semester. This has been more time consuming than I originally anticipated, and I am just now starting up some exciting new projects and collaborations in my field focused on women’s treatment, medication use and misuse in older adults and ADHD & substance abuse.

What experiences at Penn have been the most valuable for you – as a student and now in your current position?

While at Penn I took quite a few research methods and statistics classes, and I was also a TA and later taught some of those classes. The knowledge and expertise I gained through these experiences have been invaluable for my current position. I was asked to teach a cohort of 150 first-year MSW students during my first semester, and having done so before (though in much smaller classes) it required much less preparation - practically and mentally. Also, one of my responsibilities here is to serve as a thesis advisor for MSW students from day one. At first I was apprehensive about this, but later found that am well-equipped to undertake this task because of my experiences at Penn.

What were your key considerations in deciding to take your current position?

My original plan was to seek a tenure-track position in the US. However, life had other plans, and during my final year in the PhD program, I had to return home to Israel. My options were quite limited, as we have handful of research institutions, only some of which have a school of social work. The University of Haifa (a 5 minute drive from where I live, and where I received both my bachelors and my masters) had a position open in my field, and luckily, they seemed to think I was a good fit. After getting over the fact that my original plans of staying in the US would not be possible, the decision to take this position was a no-brainer… Apparently, you can go home – and like it!

Tell us about your transition from being a graduate student to a faculty member. What, if anything, has been challenging about this transition?

The transition has been surreal. A very large proportion of my colleagues were once my professors and it is only now that I realize what a pain I must have been as a student… One of the biggest challenges of this transition for me is having to say things like ‘no’ or ‘B is a perfectly good grade’ to my students. I know that as a student I would have seldom settled for a ‘no’ or a B, yet as a faculty member I am now aware of other considerations that sometimes make these perfectly acceptable answers to give a student. However, I think that the greatest challenge I have faced, has been trying to strike a balance between my work life and my personal life. Juggling between my responsibilities as a junior faculty, my consulting side-gig at the Ministry of Welfare, and my new status as a single mom of (the best) two little girls, is a constant struggle.

Do you have any advice for current SP2 Ph.D. students vis-à-vis the job market and their career prospects and options?

At the risk of being repetitive – publish, publish, publish! And, most-importantly, do it in peer-reviewed journals. I had just what I needed to get my current position. However, looking back, there were definitely a few book chapters that I said yes to that should have been journal articles, and they count much less. I would also recommend that if possible, have 2-3 papers ready to go post-graduation. It will make your first year in academia go a lot smoother. Meanwhile - whatever you do, wherever you go, and whoever you take with you: wear sunscreen!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQlJ3vOp6nI
PEER CITES from January to March 2013

Papers


Conferences


Tennille, J., Solomon, P. The gap is in the field: An innovative EBP teaching model for dyads of field instructors and social work students. Bridging the Research and Practice Gap Symposium, Houston, TX, April, 2013 (Poster)


Awards/Funding
Walk, M., 2013, Award Participant in the Network for Social Work Management’s Research to Practice Institute, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ.

Walk. M., 2013, Individual Travel Grant for the SSWR 2013 conference, Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA), University of Pennsylvania (USA), January 2013, San Diego (California)

Defended Dissertations
Casey Bohrman, “Police Officer Assessments of Mental Illness, Substance Use and Co-occurring Mental Illness and Substance Use: It’s Common Sense.”

Michelle Evans-Chase, “Mindfulness Meditation with Incarcerated Youth: A Randomized Controlled Trial Informed by Neuropsychosocial Theories of Adolescence.”

Katy Kaplan, “Assessing the Impact of an Internet-based Parenting Intervention for Mothers with Psychiatric Disabilities: A Randomized Controlled Trial.”

Julie Tennille, “An RCT of an Evidence-Based Practice Teaching Model with the Field Instructor/Social Work Intern Dyad: A Randomized Controlled Trial.”
Did you know that there are a great many things in the world that are not social welfare related? It’s true! It’s easy to lose sight of that fact during finals and midterms and dissertating and article revisions and teaching and—well, you get the idea. So to start, here’s a refresher of some of those things: airplane travel, bicycling, chocolate, dinosaurs, enchiladas, football, giraffes, hamburgers, ice cream, jokes, koalas, lemonade, music, nature, orthodontics, palm trees, Queen, seesaws, theoretical physics, Ugaritic, violas, water sports, xylophones, yellow wallpaper, and zebras.

To be honest, it wasn’t easy to think of a name for this page. Arts & Culture, Arts & Leisure, Leisure & Culture, even Antisocial Welfare and Welfare Brain Retrenchment were all rejected. “Not Social Welfare” won in the end because that, plain and simple, is the idea here, to help us share with each other some of the things we like which are not social welfare. So what belongs here? Basically anything that fits that description: favorite recipes, great Philly finds, original artwork, essays about hobbies, travelogues, jokes, astronomy—again, you get the idea. And please, do get ideas, because contributions will be solicited, if for no other reason than my reviews of literary fiction and children’s books will probably get old rather quickly.

Speaking of literary fiction, here’s a taste of what this page can be, with suggestions of three short story collections for summer reading. Short story collections make for great pleasure reading in busy lives because you can read a couple of stories, put the book down for a few months, and then come back to it much more easily than you can with a novel. So here are three great short story collections, not listed in APA format.

**Dubliners, by James Joyce** – I reread “The Dead,” the collection’s final and perhaps most famous story about a year ago: it’s a beautiful story of life, memories, relationships, and more. And unlike Joyce’s Finnegans Wake, Dubliners is actually in English.

**Homeland and Other Stories, by Barbara Kingsolver** – I’ll admit that I haven’t read any of this in several years so I don’t particularly remember details of this book, but I can confidently say that in her stories and novels Kingsolver is a master of painting daily life and so much more.

**Winesburg, Ohio, by Sherwood Anderson** – This is a great choice if you’re looking for a collection that’s a bit more cohesive. The stories all take place in the eponymous town, and characters featured in one frequently pop up in another.

Enjoy!