



Center for the Development of Peace and Well-being

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Graduate Fellows – Project Descriptions**Kirsten Blount-Matthews, Psychology*****Forgiveness and Attachment in Human Development***

Every day, we must choose how to respond to offenses perpetrated against us--from terrorist attacks to petty theft; from friendship betrayals to parental divorce. What kinds of people choose to forgive-- rather than avenge-- transgressions? How does the inclination to forgive develop? Does forgiveness given and received within the parent-child relationship relate to forgiveness in other domains? To address these questions and others, this project will relate an interview assessment of adult "current state of mind" regarding experiences with parents to several aspects of forgiveness: abstract valuing of forgiveness, willingness to forgive hypothetical transgressions, success in forgiving actual transgressions, motivations for forgiving, memories of forgiveness within actual relationships, and forgiveness as a part of the self-concept. These aspects of forgiveness will be assessed using autobiographical narratives, computerized reaction-time tasks, structured interviews and scales.

Christine Carter, Sociology***Love Comes in Different Packages:******The effect of family social capital on childhood happiness***

Since the 1960's, researchers have theorized that non-traditional family configurations, such as single-parent and stepparent families, decrease family harmony and children's well-being. This research shows that family structure is a poor proxy for other family dynamics that affect childhood thriving, and is largely irrelevant when these other dynamics are accounted for. Using qualitative interviews and quantitative data from the National Survey of Families and Households, this researcher is examining the effect of *family social capital*—resources that emerge from parent-child relationships that are useful for a child's development—on childhood well-being.

Ruth A. Dergicz, Psychology***Individuality and Togetherness of Couples***

This research is aimed at understanding how heterosexual couples create healthy, flourishing relationships. Many researchers and clinicians suggest that the way partners resolve the tension between promoting their individual needs and experiencing themselves as part of a couple is a

crucial factor in determining the quality of their relationship. However, what constitutes an optimal resolution is still an open question. By designing a new coding system for measuring partners' experiences of individuality and togetherness that addresses measurement problems in past research, the present research aims to clarify the distinct contribution of individuality and togetherness to marital quality. The research also examines how men and women experience individuality and togetherness differently and how heterosexual couples negotiate these gender differences. The knowledge gained by this research will be helpful for tailoring effective interventions aimed at assisting spouses as they negotiate their core conflicts.

Anne Gregory, Psychology
***Toward narrowing the discipline gap:
Defiance or cooperation in the high school classroom***

Pervasive conflicts between a primarily white teaching force and their African American high school students has been shown in discipline records across the United States. Disciplinary action for defiance is a common reason for exclusion from class or from school, with teachers perceiving African Americans as more defiant and rule-breaking than other groups. Despite the pervasiveness of negative teacher and student interaction, little is known about processes linked with the escalation of conflict or the promotion of cooperation and respect. This study uses a multi-method and multi-informant design and asks, "What type of teaching style overcomes barriers related to racial, ethnic, and social class differences and sets the groundwork for higher cooperation and lower conflict between teachers and students?"

Shahla Maghzi, Jurisprudence and Social Policy Program
Dispute Prevention and Resolution in China and the Americas

In recent times, the link between our vision of social and ethical order and the development of systems of decision making has increasingly been made explicit. For example, Lawrence Friedman writes that systems of justice stand "in close relationship to the ideas, aims, and purposes of society." Sun Li Bo adds that, "differing thought processes have lead to differences in the understanding of the concept of justice and the way to put this ideal into practice." Drawing on the work of Tom Tyler, Robert Boexkmann, Heather Smith and Yuen J. Huo on "Social Justice in a Diverse Society," and emerging international rights-based principles echoed in the Comprehensive Development Framework dialogue conducted by the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department (OED) in the Summer of 1999, the aim of this project is to examine the ways in which emerging global legal and environmental standards influence local orientation to institutional integrity as defined by environmental stewardship, accountability, transparency, joint fact-finding and gender equality; and secondly, how such orientations might influence local decision making processes and methods. This study will focus in particular on natural resource decision-making in China, Peru and the United States.

Lisa Rasco, Psychology
***Relations Among Family Processes and Care-based Moral Reasoning,
Conscience, and Empathic Behavior in Adolescents***

It is of vital importance to understand factors that promote empathic caring and prosocial behavior in youth. One important context for learning to care for others, as well as the self, is within the intimate relationships of the family. This project is examining how *family processes*, including parents' internal working models of attachment and marital harmony, are associated

with parents' ability to promote a healthy sense of autonomy *and* relatedness with their teens when discussing an age-relevant, attachment-related moral dilemma (concerning separation-individuation and potential rejection vs. valuing of parent-child relationship). This study, in turn, will examine how parents' ability to promote a balanced sense of autonomy and relatedness is associated with their teenagers' 1) ability to balance self/other concerns during care-based moral reasoning, 2) self-report of interpersonal guilt/conscience, and 3) empathic/prosocial behavior at school. Study participants are 90 adolescents [40 female/50 male 14-year-olds] and their parents who are part of a longitudinal study of Bay Area families. The findings from this project will shed light on family factors associated with prosocial, moral development in adolescents and may inform education and intervention for parents of teens.

Maris Thompson, Graduate School of Education
EDGE: Stories Bridging Stories

The purpose of this study is to document the different collaborative and intergenerational learning opportunities available to high school youth, their family members and community members at a community technology center in East Oakland. Since February of 2002, high school youth have been part of E.D.G.E. (Eastmont Digital Griots Enroute): an innovative digital video program, which encourages youth to write, film, direct and edit the stories that are most meaningful to their own lives. Veteran students have stayed on to become part of a Student Production Crew which assists new EDGE filmmakers in writing their stories and editing together their images and footage. Stories Bridging Stories is an idea that was suggested by the youth and their parents during the community screenings of the youth films. This will involve opening up the program to other members of the community, to invite youth and family members or senior citizens of the community to work together in whatever capacity makes sense to the collaborators. The idea is to incorporate an intergenerational and cross-cultural storied perspective into an already successful youth video program in East Oakland.

Rose Wong, Social Welfare
Family Harmony in the Face of Trauma:
Promoting Positive Adjustment in Cambodian American Adolescents

This investigation aims to support the promotion of family harmony and healthy adjustment in Cambodian American adolescents by means of: 1) the identification and application of theoretical perspectives on the intergenerational transmission of trauma; and, 2) the description of the positive and negative developmental outcomes in terms of family, school success, and prosocial integration, and the factors that influence these outcomes. The objectives are to broaden the spectrum of thought on the transmission of trauma by examining the usefulness of diverse theories (e.g. attachment theory, symbolic interactionism, sense of coherence/shattered assumptions) and to contribute to the knowledge base regarding the factors in the family system that impact healthy development in this population. Using a qualitative approach, ten adolescent-parent dyads will be extensively interviewed using a semi-structured format. Also, existing empirical data on school dropout and delinquency will be collected and complemented with information about adolescent and family adjustment from interviews with community professionals.